

DURHAM FM ASSOCIATION



October 2006 Newsletter Sidney Edwards W4QWM Reporting

Tuesday October 10

October Meeting Location

The DFMA meeting will be at Mayflower Restaurant at 6:00 PM which is located across the street from South Square, 3742 Chapel Hill Blvd. The program will be presented by Steve Jackson (KZ1X), of OCRA. He will give a presentation on antennas.

Minutes from September Meeting

DFMA Meeting Minutes for September 12, 2006

Minutes taken by Lenore Ramm.

Attendees: Dee (KU4GC, Treasurer), Lenore (KF4PAB, Secretary), M.K. (W4MKR), Rhett (KE4HIH), Joanna (KE4QOZ), Joseph (KF4QYY), Mac (WQ8U, Vice-President), Derek (KO4T), Don (KE4UVJ), T.D. (KG4FTT), Jim (WB4YYY), Sue (KA4AVM), Sid (W4QWM), Sandy, Jannell (KI4BZG), Bram, Tanner (KB4TYE), Charlie (WA4WTX), Lowell (KK4PH), Nate (KK6FK), JR (KG4NNT, Board Member)

Mac presided at the Mayflower Seafood Restaurant.

Treasurer's report: --- in savings and no checking report, but had --- last month.). The number of paid members now matches what we had at the end of last year.

Secretary's report: Don, Dee, Mac and Rhett volunteered to be net controls for the DFMA Thursday night net (9pm on 147.225).

Introductions. There was an update on the MCU. A USB/firewire 12volt car power adapter was awarded to Sid as a door prize. MK won an electromagnetic spectrum poster.

Mac talked about the Classic Exchange. Rhett mentioned that there is a strong need of net controls for the Possum Trot Net.

JR suggested that we broadcast the meetings on the air, for those who are not able to attend in person. The legality and practicality of this suggestion were discussed.

Charlie gave a talk on the history and the architecture of the DFMA repeater system.

Minutes from Board Meeting

DFMA Board Meeting Minutes for September 26, 2006

Minutes taken by Lenore Ramm.

Attendees: Dee (KU4GC, Treasurer), Lenore (KF4PAB, Secretary), MK (W4MKR), Rene (KE4UCR, President), Mac (W8QU, Vice President/Acting President), Wilson (W4BOH, ex-officio), Tanner (KB4TYE, Website Coordinator), JR (KG4NNT, Board Member)

Discussed Tanner's website proposal and what members get for their dues. Determined that nothing needs to be migrated from the old website. Everyone who had seen it liked the calendar of events feature on the new site.

Dee mentioned that Dave Snyder (W4SAR), of OCRA, reserved the library for the VE session. He also noted that we currently have 91 members.

The reaction to the Mayflower as a meeting site was favorable. Unfortunately, the new cafeteria at Northgate does not have a meeting room. The Golden Corral policy may have changed, so that needs to be investigated. There is value to stability, so we have the Mayflower penciled in through December. Steve Jackson (KZ1X), of OCRA, will do a presentation at next month's meeting on antennas.

Mac suggested having a white elephant gift exchange and invite past DFMA presidents and founding members to the December meeting. We discussed some of the club traditions, such as the donations of gifts to Durham Social Services, the collection for the Durham Rescue Mission and last year's catered dinner from the Shrimiboat with potluck dessert. The McMannen United Method Church has a lot of advantages for that kind of event, so we'll need to check with Rhett and see if reserving it is still an option for December.

Tanner talked more about the new website. People can upload to their own areas, so the content will stay more up to date. It uses Joomla software, which he has also been setting up for Skywarn. He may be able to set up his own server or use a virtual server. There is also an e-mail reflector available.

Rene was interested in the possibility of our getting shirts or caps. There is a place that advertises on QRZ.com that does shirts and badges. We could also do something with Café Press.

Discussed access control for membership list on the website and the pros/cons with having an on-line directory. Discussed ways to get the word out, including letters to members, the Possum Trot Net, the Link (newsletter), e-mail and the repeater. JR mentioned his idea of transmitting during our monthly meetings. Hamfest - We will probably stick with the Armory for at least one more year, despite rising costs. JR reported that Joseph said that he would do it for one more year. We need to find out if Paul van Doren

(KE4OXN) and Linda Jackson (KF4LJZ) are still willing to provide their vital contributions. We need more patrons. Tanner expressed his dislike of parking garages.

Treasurer's report: As of 8/31, we have --- in savings and --- in checking.

Tanner asked the board if he could register the website software. Tanner assured us that all of his services are voluntary.

Survey analysis – The audio levels on the repeater continue to be a problem and this should be easy to fix. The voter problem is much more difficult. Mac asked Wilson to get a group to work with Charlie and get working on this.

Mac told us about Joseph's interest in taking the MCU to the Boy Scout Jamboree on October 14th. The board officially approved this. Joseph would also like the MCU to participate in the Durham Christmas Parade. We need to create a pamphlet that we could hand out. Bahama apparently have an even bigger parade. The Board almost unanimously disfavored the idea of taking the MCU to tailgating events. JR reminded us that there is a Kids' Day event on New Year's.

New Addition to our Ranks

Dave and Cindy Love had a little girl, Kristin Renee Love, August 19, 2006; 6lb. 10 oz.; 20.5 in; blond hair and blue eyes. Congratulations Best Wishes from all of us.

DFMA Survey Results

Lenore Ramm, our distinguished Secretary and KF4PAB, designed and conducted a web based member survey for the DFMA. After an interesting evening discussing the results, the officers asked me to summarize the results for the members, so here goes.

The survey was composed of ten "multiple choice" questions dealing with matters like "Do you attend DFMA meetings?" with several answers like "yes, every few months" or "no, but I plan to" and six "open ended" questions to which members responded with their own answers and opinions. Rather than reproduce the several pages of data generated, I'll summarize the findings here and pass on the most common member feedback.

In general, responders are as interested, or more so, in ham radio than they were five years ago. About half are maintaining similar levels of interest and about a quarter are actually more interested. That leaves about a quarter are diverted by computers, mobile phones, work, or family. Almost half attend meetings regularly or frequently, with about half not coming for various reasons.

Numerical Results

Our membership is composed largely of hams with experience. About three quarters have been hams for ten years or more and a third for more than twenty years! Only about ten percent have been licensed for two years or less!

Members are typically attracted by several activities. About half consider the repeaters important parts of their membership experience, but 65% consider meetings important. Durhamfest, field day, Hamnics, the weekly net, and MCU work all scatter around 50% (+/- 10%) as important activities, but people have trouble remembering the net or being able to schedule it. Only about a third check in "now and then".

Meetings are important chances to meet other hams and hear interesting program material. Socializing is important to over 90% of the respondents, followed by program topics. Some people want general interest programs and some want more technical material. Eating is an important part of the meeting experience for about 40% of respondents, as we have heard several times at meetings. Over half of our members also belong to other clubs!

Essay Questions

The open ended questions were designed to learn more about what members like and dislike about the club and its activities. There were many clear indications of what reduces participation and some good suggestions for raising interest. A welcoming atmosphere is important to new people and technical programs, including "how it works" material are requested. Increasing use of the newsletter and repeater announcements were suggested to help get members out. An outstanding suggestion not heard (by me) before was that we should develop programs that members can take out to other technical groups in the area. What better way to generate some new interest?

On the negative side, many factors were given to explain declining participation. Obviously, we have lost people to age and health issues, as evidenced by the age distribution discussed above. People are also diverted by intense work situations, family obligations, and computer based activities. Some feel they are not welcomed to take leadership positions and some feel the monthly programs are not technical enough. Several respondents want more ham activities, like MCU work, digital mode stations, and public service work. Repeater activity (low) and repeater performance are mentioned as negatives. Some members dislike not meeting at restaurants, or dislike the restaurants where we meet.

Wilson's Comments

Since I was President for a while, I'll take some responsibility for not generating more interest/activity within the club. Like everyone else, there are competing interests and obligations in my life, including not living in Durham. I'd also like to take a few minutes to share my reactions to the survey and make some suggestions. Consider them starting points for more discussion, if you like.

WE NEED MORE NEW/YOUNGER MEMBERS, like most every club to which I've ever belonged. Losses are inevitable, so we need fresh blood to keep us alive. Do you bring your kids/wife/friends to meetings? If you are old like me, grandkids? Do you tell them about radio, the good friends and knowledge a good hobby can bring? Do you call a buddy to see if he/she is coming to the meeting?

WE NEED PROGRAMS. A (very) few dedicated members have found and generated programs for many years. Lots of people want great programs, but not enough people work to bring them in. Do you have friends, relatives, or coworkers who could give us a talk? It's not really hard to generate a half hour of interesting material. There's always tension between those wanting general interest programs and those wanting technical stuff. Well, if we want wives and kids, we have to have some sort of balance. What can they get out of a complicated block diagram or board full of equations? This matter has mostly been

addressed by letting the programs fall as they come in. There are rarely enough available to let us be selective.

WE NEED A STABLE MEETING LOCATION. Members have worked on this for years. We thought we had made some progress when we started at Shoney's, but then we lost it. Members have brought ideas and most have been checked out. If you think you have a wonderful location, take it to the Board. If it works out, you'll be a hero and may get the Lid!

WE NEED TECHNICAL HELP. One person has carried almost all the load of repeater operation for years and years. Can you help install equipment, transport it, carry heavy batteries? The repeater manager could use help and will be glad to provide some technical instruction if you want to learn how to do some hands on radio. Almost no one knows what's really behind all the wonderful facilities we mostly take for granted!

And don't forget our great little MCU. You can play with engines and radio at the same time by helping to equip and maintain our great mobile unit! We can arrange to have it at your church event or fund raiser, as long as enough members are available to support it.

TURN ON YOUR RADIO. There are so many repeaters, ours and others, that we are dispersed across the bands. It's easy for me to jump in the car and turn on the news, forgetting the ham side. If more of us lurked when we could, we'd run in to each other more and have more chances to chat. Nearly every time I talk to someone on the air I get something rewarding out of it. Ask people what they do, where they work, what their hobbies are. Meet for a doughnut, or bowl of granola if you are dieting. Friendliness is contagious and leads to a more active club.

REACH OUT TO NEWCOMERS. I honestly don't understand how anyone could feel unwelcome at our meetings, but some responders said they felt unwelcome to the club or closed out of leadership. So if someone is hanging back, let's take the extra step to reach out. Perhaps they are shy and just need the extra pull to feel at home. We always have trouble generating a slate of officers and nominations are always opened from the floor, so there's no real obstacle to someone putting their name in the hat.

Well, that's more of my opinion than I expected to put in. Let's use the survey results to beef up the DFMA and make it better for everyone. And on the **POSITIVE SIDE**, remember that although we are smaller than before we are still a group of fine people interested in helping fellow citizens and learning from each other through participation in a great hobby! There are few clubs that would not love to have our capabilities, financial strength, and great equipment resources!

Hats off to Lenore for producing this great chance to look inside our club and ourselves!

Wilson Lamb
W4BOH

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Meets 2nd Tuesday Every Month 6:00 PM