



# BVARC BEACON



Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club  
AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT  
BEND COUNTY

JULY 2020

VOLUME 44 ISSUE 7

## BVARC JULY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

For Thursday, July 9th, 2020, there will be an online meeting. The venue announcement will be on the website and email reflector. At newsletter deadline a program had not yet been confirmed. It might be Riley Hollingsworth and it might not.

We won't be having IN PERSON meetings for at least another month or two. Club Business meetings will be held over a conference call, and Club meetings will not be held in person (Facilities are closed) but we are arranging a streaming meeting.



## BVARC Rag Chew Net

Below is the BVARC Rag Chew Net check-in information:

05/20/20, K5LKJ(NCS), W5TKZ, K2MPP, W5VOM (RCS), WW5PA, K5LJ, W5RH, KI5HOV, WA5ANF (T), WB4KTF (Austin), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), AA5OA (Ft. Smith, AR)(T), K5PGF, KF5PHA, KL7AX (Katy). (15 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 69, SN = 0, A = 4, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

05/27/20, K5LKJ (NCS), K2MPP, W5RDY, K5LJ, K5IZO, KF5PHA, KB7QL (Rustin, LA), K5JPP, W5VOM. (9 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 79, SN = 14, A = 4, K = 0 / Band Rpt: Good

06/03/20, K5LKJ (NCS), W5RH, K5JPP, K2MPP, AA0ST (Dickinson), W5TKZ, KI5HOV, W5VOM/5 (Port O'Connor)(RCS), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), K5PGF, K5LJ, KL7AX (Katy). (12 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 70, SN = 0, A = 14, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Good

06/10/20, K5LKJ (NCS), K2MPP, K5LJ, W5TKZ, WW5PA, KB7QL (Rustin, LA), AA0ST (Dickinson), KG5SXG, KL7AX (Katy). (10 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 71, SN = 14, A = 5, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

06/17/20, K5LKJ (NCS), W5TKZ, W5VOM/5 (Port O'Connor)(R), K5LJ, W5RH, KI5HOV, KG5WDF, WA5ANF (T), WB4KTF (Austin), K5TNL, AA0ST (Dickinson), WA5CYI, K2MPP, KL7AX (Katy). (14 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 71, SN = 14, A = 5, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Good

(M) = mobile (P) = Portable (R) = Relay (RCS) = remote controlled station (T) = telephone check-in

Net conditions have been fair to good this month. Fire up the rig and hear what others are doing and share in their experiences. Come join in the conversation each Wednesday evening. Regards. John K5LKJ

## June VE - FCC TESTING SESSIONS RESULTS

Bayland Community Center re-opened about a week before our scheduled June 6<sup>th</sup> session. They have imposed a restricted headcount, which required us to split up into 2 test sessions. We pretty much filled the required capacity for each session in the room provided. We were able to work through the backlog of candidates at these two sessions.

For this particular session, we had the honor of proctoring a technician candidate who is totally blind. We placed a test as a .pdf on a laptop and used Adobe's "Read Out Loud" for audio transcription. With a couple pairs of earphones on a split connector, the VE proctor and the candidate could hear the test being read. After each question and the list of answers was read via computer, the candidate would voice her selected answer and the VE proctor would mark it down on the test answer sheet. I'm proud to announce that Nancy – K15JMH is now a newly licensed ham. We're hoping she'll study up for her general exam and visit us again.

For the Saturday's June 6th test session(s): We had 13 candidates and conducted 20 tests.

### New Licensees:

Ryan, D. (General)

Pietri, R. (General)

Trenkelbach, K. (General)

Trenkelbach, N. (Technician)

Hetrick, B. (Technician)

Koralturk, G. (Technician)

Weeks, R. (Technician)

Ewer, K. (Technician)

Present, E. (Technician)

Rokohl, T. (Technician)

### Upgrades

K7BRJ (Extra)

K9PEB (Extra)

Congratulations to all!

A great thank you to the VEs in attendance – K5IZO, K5LJ, W5JAZ, and W5GX.

The next BVARC test session is Saturday July 18<sup>th</sup>, at 10:30 (we think).

When times are normal, examination sessions are held each month, usually on the same day as the Saturday BVARC Board meeting. These sessions are at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston TX 77074

Details for candidates are found at [www.bvarc.org/home/amateur-license/](http://www.bvarc.org/home/amateur-license/)

Call Mark Janzer, K5MGJ at (832) 875-0526 or eMail: ([k5mgj@yahoo.com](mailto:k5mgj@yahoo.com)) to pre-register.



# The Prez Says

First let me apologize for not getting out "The Prez Says" last month. Between AC failure at home (that warranted a complete replacement) and a nasty car wreck on 610 in the Galleria, I was a little occupied. Things are better and I am slowly getting back to the "new normal" that we have been living in for the last few months.

Unfortunately, we are still dealing with the COVID-19 virus. As of today, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the reports for the Greater Houston area are not good. The Houston mayor said we are going moving very fast in the wrong with nearly 1800 new COVID cases in the last two days. It appears we are still a long way away from being virus free in the community. That means we will have to live the "new normal" for several more months.

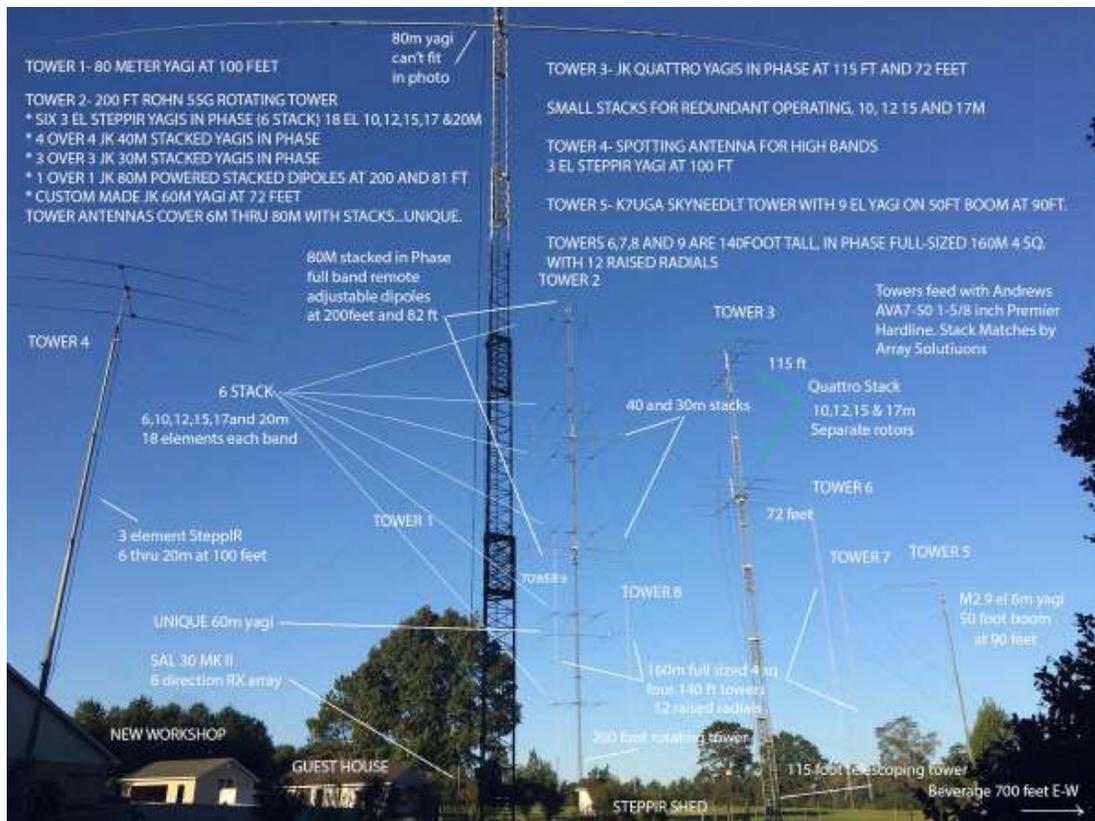
Luckily, we have been able to work around the no meetings and get-togethers. With Zoom with have been able to conduct club business and have our general meetings. We have had some great meetings ranging from vanity call sign history to zombie satellite chasing. I was hoping that the club could return to our first face-to-face meetings with the annual ICE cream social. Unfortunately, with COVID cases increasing, this is no longer possible. The July meeting program is open at this time so keep up with the NETS and the newsletter for info. For the August program though will have a program by Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, on the new ARRL Volunteer Monitoring Program. So, get ready for the presentation.

If you are not aware, the following Hamfest have been cancelled: Texas City, Austin Summerfest and, as of this writing, Belton Tailgate/Swap meet. So, it may be a while before anyone can satisfy their scavenging and equipment buying. This may be a good time to bring back an on-the-air swap meet. If anyone is interested in this, please let me know.

By the time you read this, Field Day should be over. This year, due to COVID, there was no Quad Club Field Day event. With rule changes in Field Day, it made it easier to operate at home this year so hopefully everyone had a great time this year.

So, everyone should wear their mask, keep social distancing in mind and keep those hands washed.

I leave you with a picture of a "NON-contest station of KE5EE.



# The Radio Hotel— A Fool for the (noisy) City

## A cursory look at ‘receive only’ antennas

by Rick Hiller – W5RH

Many a Ham has “Gone Up the Country” to escape HOA restrictions or maybe the added noise that the city brings to our Ham Radio stations. However, some of us are not so lucky, or inclined, to be able to leave. So, with apologies to Foghat.....

*Strug’lin to hear DX, cursing at the sun,  
When I get my Remote Rig, I’ll QSY and run  
But now I’m ready in the city, band pollution here I come  
Cause I’m a fool for the city.....I’m a fool for the city!*

( paraphrased first verse from “A Fool for the City” – Foghat 1975 )

Back in the April Beacon, K5JPP hit on solutions for RFI in the Ham Shack. But, what about the noise coming in on your main antenna? Locally generated garbage or even sky noise can be a problem. What can be done about that? Separate receive antenna(s) seem to be the answer, at least on the lower bands, where much of the noise appears. It is all about improving the signal to noise ratio of the received signal. These dedicated receive antennas provide a level of noise reduction due to 1) noise versus signal direction or 2) the noise type.

Over the years receive antenna suggestions stretch from shortened dipoles, to magnetic loops to EWE’s, Pennants, the Wave (Beverages), BOG’s, LOG’s and many others. Some are band specific, some are wide-band. Use the QST search engine to find many articles about any of these receive antenna types, starting with the original “Wave Antenna” by H.H. Beverage in the November 1922 QST. FYI – My QST search for “Receive Antenna” showed 99 articles from 1923 to present.

Want more information? The Web is your friend, but also specific Ham Radio antenna books:

- Contest University 2020 [W3LPL – “Effective Low Band Receiving Antennas”](#) @ Contestuniversity.com
- The latest **ARRL Antenna Handbook** has 32 pages of Receive Antenna information.
- ARRL published the excellent 150 page **Receiving Antennas** in 2018 by Eric Nichols, KL7AJ
- Joe Carr’s 1993 **Receiving Antenna Handbook** has 184 pages of info.

The goal of a receive antenna’s use is one of 2 things – 1) noise reduction or 2) S/N signal to noise ratio improvement. Your signal strength on these antennas will be low, but, hopefully, the noise component will be even lower still, hence a S/N improvement. One simple trick is to use an antenna for a higher band to receive on your operating band. Por ejemplo: using a 20 meter dipole to receive on 40, 80 or 160 meters. Feed it thru a tuner and peak for maximum signal. Note: your xcvr pre-amp has 20 dB of gain, which is the same gain as the dedicated, external pre-amps for the popular receive loops. So, no reason to buy one, just push the button. The results just might surprise you. And what antennas are now popular? The Shared Apex Loop Array seems to be a small format, electrically steerable, receive array for your easy-up backyard deployment. See QST, October 2012.

To end with -- My two \$64,000 questions -- With the popularity and excellent performance of the new, software rendered “signals in the noise” digital modes, are these receive antennas necessary? At what point do receive antennas stop being beneficial? My guess is that receive antennas are useless when your ears don’t need to “listen” or when we stop using the received signal as a demodulated audio bandwidth. But, I hope I’m wrong....cause I truly am a fool for the city.

*Enjoy your hobby, 73*

# Cutting Through the Static – A Column for Newbies

JP Pritchard, K5JPP

## Random Dits and Dahs

Field Day is now behind us for another year (unless you're look forward to the Winter Field Day at the end of January). The only Field Day exercise I've ever been part of is BVARC's and it has always been an impressive operation.

--This year's event was a great disappointment to many, thanks to Covid 19. ARRL finally amended field day rules to allow for club participation without a gathering of club members (as a function of social distancing). It's a poor substitute for the group joy we've experienced during the recent glory days of W5VOM's elevated beam antenna arrays and WB5TUF Glenn Anderson's networked logging system.

But for those of us with limited Field Day experience, it was kind of exciting, giving us a sense of independence to participate as individuals. I think this was particularly important since I know there are some among us who don't appreciate the pressure some feel in the push to gather Q's for the club score, instead of just enjoying the experience.

I realize that's heresy for the master competitors in the group, but for some of us, operating as individuals, it gave us the opportunity to operate at our own leisurely pace, enjoying the ride without worrying about winning and losing.

--Strangely, that brings me to SOTA. That's "Summits on the Air," where a ham, usually acting as a lone operator, climbs to the top of a hill or mountain somewhere, carrying a rig, an antenna and a power supply.

I don't think there are any high spots that qualify as mounds, much less actual summits around Southeast Texas, so here's an idea, no doubt suited for little more than fantasy land.

We have some of the tallest buildings in North America right here in Houston. Why not attempt to operate from one of our many roof tops. Granted, building management might have a lot to say about some gung-ho ham seeking roof access, but what the heck, it might be worth a try,

--Hill, mound, summit or park, I really do have a secret desire to gather up the proper elements for "picnic benches on the air" (PBOTA). I've been thwarted from that by a murky understanding of battery power. But I recently found a simple explanation of the various battery types and how'll they'll work for a radio operator in the most efficient possible way.

Do a Google search for “Choosing a Battery for Ham Radio” to link up with the “SmokinApe” YouTube explanation. And for instructions on building off-the-grid power packs, check out OH8STN.org. Julian Oulu takes you through the process step-by-step as he operates, sometimes off the grid, close to the cold shores of Finland near the Arctic Circle.

--Noise is a problem for those of us using vertical antennas, so I recently assembled from parts, old and new, a receive-only antenna – in this case a loop antenna that’s exceedingly simple, to help in hearing distant stations when I’m pursuing DX Q’s.

I started with the purchase of an HF antenna preamp from W6LVP, who by the way, also sells a highly rated loop antenna to go with it. But I chose to purchase the “Experimenter’s Package” which includes the preamp, a module to power it through the feed line and a quiet transformer-based wall wart power supply.

I combined the preamp with a donated but defunct 31-inch loop in which the electronics had gone up in less-than-magic smoke. I’m still experimenting with it, but it does seem to help with hearing through the noise, especially on 80 meters.

--As a new ham, you might want to check out the new bimonthly ARRL magazine “On the Air,” designed just for you. It’s meant for “new to intermediate” hams and is available for members at the ARRL website, as is the “On the Air” podcast.

This month’s issue has a lot of information about Field Day, worth saving for next year, building a “go kit,” and more.

--Once again, I’m urging new BVARC members, especially new hams, to participate in club activities. BVARC is a so-called “special interest group,” but it’s also a social club.

No, I know it’s not described that way in the club blurb, but if you look at the pictures on the BVARC website, you’ll see what I mean. We hams are social creatures and we learn more and enjoy more when we do things together, whether it’s Field Day, at IHOP on Saturday for breakfast, on Zoom for meetings, or hopefully in the near future, once again in person at the Sugar Land activity Center. In fact, I’m hoping we’ll all be able to get together soon for our annual BVARC Ice Cream Social, even if we have to cut a slit in our masks to get to the ice cream.

73 my friend. K5JPP, JP Pritchard



# Organic Amateur Radio by Eric Nichols KL7AJ

If you're the typical baby-boomer radio amateur, you probably didn't become a ham as a result of some orchestrated PR campaign. Nobody had to tell you that ham radio was cool. It was something that just happened to find you. You probably discovered amateur radio by osmosis, being around, consciously or not, radio enthusiasts and experimenters. You might not have understood it at first, but something instinctively told you it was something you had to find out more about. Amateur radio interest and growth occurred naturally. Hams got into ham radio because they wanted to play with radios...and all the fascinating hardware that made radios work. Like any other organic process, it took on a life of its own; it didn't need any kind of intentional life support.

For the past couple of decades, it seems that amateur radio "recruitment" efforts are becoming more and more desperate. And while they may create temporary ballooning of ham radio numbers, they don't create the passion for radio that keeps hams in the hobby for decades....or a lifetime.

I'm not sure, (at least a lot less sure than I used to be) that it is our job as "elder statesmen" of amateur radio to recruit new hams into the hobby. But if it IS our job, we certainly haven't been doing it right.

Those of us with solder in our veins need to remember...seriously remember...what it was that got US into the hobby. And it almost certainly was not because of some sense of obligation. Does anyone here seriously think any 15 year old kid gives a rat's patoot about EMCOMM? This is not to denigrate EMCOMM in itself, but that is NOT what is going to attract lovers of radio (which is the actual definition of radio amateur). Public service is all well and good, but even THAT should be a natural result of technical and operating competence. I've performed every sort of radio public service there is...both commercial and amateur....but if I didn't love radio in the first place, I never would have gotten involved in any of them.

Using non-radio methods to attract people to radio is putting the hearse before the horse. Get people into radio because of the intrinsic wonder of radio is the way to keep folks in the hobby. After "settling in", they will soon enough find their niche...whether it's EMCOMM or contesting, or DXing, or just twiddling wires.

We really need to stop looking at the numbers...at least as an end in themselves. They can be great indicators of the health of ham radio....as long as they aren't "forced."

One thing we can do is keep our eyes and ears peeled for kids who would already likely have a natural bent toward radio...the science geeks, nerds, and makers. But this is really hard to do if you're never around any kids! Part of the problem is a rather unnatural, systemic segregation of the generations. It may not seem like it, but kids are looking for authority figures...as well as something to be passionate about. Amateur radio is one of the few activities that is not subject to the whims of fashion....it is primarily ruled by physical law...something rock solid that "yutes" need in their often chaotic lives. In amateur radio you have absolute control over at least a small aspect of your universe.

If we want long lasting hams in future generations, we can capitalize on these basic needs.

Reprint from **e-Ham.com** 20-04-18 with permission from the author Eric Nichols, KL7AJ

Editor's note: Thank you Rick Hiller, W5RH, for responding to my last minute request for a short article to fill out the July BEACON!

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**Where in the World is . . .**  
**Brunei (V8)**  
**CQ Zone 28**  
**IOTA OC-088**

Brunei, officially known as the Nation of Brunei, the Abode of Peace. OR Negara Brunei Darussalam in Malay. It's located on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo. On three sides bordered by Malaysia and facing the South China Sea.



It's a good place to live, with its principal product being oil. Considered a "fully developed" country by the IMF. According to Forbes Magazine it ranks as the fifth richest nation on the planet. The country has zero debt.

Brunei's government is a constitutional monarchy. Under Brunei's constitution, the Sultan is the head of state with full executive authority. Since 1962, this authority has included emergency powers, which are renewed every two years. The country has been under

hypothetical martial law since 1962. The Sultan, Hassanal Bolkiah also serves as the state's Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Defense Minister. As Mel Brooks observed, it is good to be king.

Petroleum was discovered in 1926. Oil and natural gas have been the basis of Brunei's development and wealth since the late 20th century.

This is a devoutly Muslim nation; land of gold-plated mosques and wooden water villages, a nation so rich from its oil and gas resources that no one pays tax. It is a seven-hour flight from Melbourne but Brunei is little known and very much underrated for travelers. Brunei is clean and virtually free of crime with pristine rainforests, palm-fringed beaches and palatial resorts.



In this land of over 400,000, there are approximately 400 licensed amateurs. According to Club Log, it is 109th on the Most Wanted DX entity, List

Reporting from the Dark Side,

Ron, K5HM



**MINUTES**  
**Board of Directors Meeting, May 2020**  
**Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club**

As this issue goes to press, this information is not available.

## 2020 Officers:

President (2020-2021)  
Michael Hardwick, N5VCX  
[n5vcx@att.net](mailto:n5vcx@att.net)

Vice President (2019-2020)  
Mark Janzer K5MGJ  
[k5mgj@yahoo.com](mailto:k5mgj@yahoo.com)

Recording Secretary (2020-2021)  
Jon Noxon KF5TFJ  
[jon@noxon.cc](mailto:jon@noxon.cc)

Corresponding Secretary (2019-2020)  
Jeff Greer, W5JEF  
[greerj@hotmail.com](mailto:greerj@hotmail.com)

Treasurer (Finish 2019-2020 term)  
David Ely, N5EKW  
[Davidely@prodigy.net](mailto:Davidely@prodigy.net)

2 Year At-Large Board Member A: (2020-2021)  
Rick Hiller, W5RH  
[Rickhiller73@gmail.com](mailto:Rickhiller73@gmail.com)

2 Year At-Large Board Member B: (2019-2020)  
Scott Medbury KD5FBA  
[smedbury@windstream.net](mailto:smedbury@windstream.net)

1 Year At Large (2020)  
JP Pritchard, k5JPP  
[jppnews@comcast.net](mailto:jppnews@comcast.net)

### Regularly Scheduled Club Happenings:

#### General Meeting

Second Thursday each month, 7:30 PM  
Imperial Park Sugarland Recreation Center at  
234 Matlage Way, Sugar Land TX, 77478  
Due to COVID-19, as this goes to press, the meeting will be held  
online. Check [www.BVARC.org](http://www.BVARC.org) for more current info.

#### Board of Directors Meeting

The Saturday before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday, 9:00 AM (For Sept., check  
website)  
Bayland Park Community Center  
Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston.  
Due to COVID-19, as this goes to press, the meeting will be held  
online. Check [www.BVARC.org](http://www.BVARC.org) for more current info.

#### Volunteer Examiner Program

The monthly ham testing session takes place on the same day and  
location as the BOD Meeting, but at 10:30 AM. However, please  
check the BVARC website for any last minute changes or updates.  
Note: As this issue goes to press, the meeting location is closed due  
to COVID-19. Please check the [www.BVARC.org](http://www.BVARC.org) for updates.

#### Rag Chew Net

3910 KHz +/-3KHz Wednesdays  
at 7:00 p.m.

#### Public Service Net

Monday night on 146.94 (167.9) at 8:00 PM

#### SPECIAL NETS during these COVID-19 times:

A breakfast net is held on Saturday mornings and a "Stir Crazy" net  
is held each weekday at noon. Check [www.BVARC.org](http://www.BVARC.org) for current  
info.



#### **Advertising in the BVARC Newsletter**

Rates are as follows; \$25 per month for ½ page, \$125 for six months  
and \$250 for one year. The rates for a full page are as follows; \$50 per  
month, \$250 for six months and \$500 for the year.



### **BVARC EATING SCHEDULE**

**Most of these events have resumed while complying to  
the Social Distancing and Mask requirements. Check  
with the respective entity to see the actual status.**

#### SATURDAY MORNING BREAKFAST

IHOP, 7:00a.m., SW Freeway inbound service road,  
near Kirkwood. A modified version of this has resumed.  
We are let into IHOP, but we must wear masks (except  
while actually eating) and must stay at least 6 feet  
apart. We still have the back room pretty much to  
ourselves, so come over and have that scrumptious  
food that we all love.

#### OTHER HAM GROUPS:

#### WEDNESDAYS – WEDNESDAY LUNCH BUNCH

LUBY'S CAFETERIA, 10:30a.m. to 12:00Noon +,  
South Post Oak Road, just south of the I-610 Loop in  
Meyer Park Shopping Center. This has resumed.

#### WEDNESDAYS – AMSAT & QRP GROUP

PAPPAS BARBECUE. 11:30a.m., SW corner  
Westheimer & Gessner.



### **Hamfests**

(typically within 200 miles of Houston)

Hamfest info for the next few months. More information at:

<http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html#listing>

#### **06/12-13/2020 - HAM-COM**

Plano TX Convention Center. - **CANCELLED**

<https://sites.google.com/hamcom.org/ham-com>

#### **07/11/2020 - Swapmeet**

**Location:** Texas City, TX

**CANCELLED**

**Website:** <http://www.tidelands.org>

#### **08/7-8/2020 Austin Summerfest**

**Austin, TX**

**CANCELLED**

# BRAZOS VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

This newsletter, the BVARC BEACON, is a monthly publication of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club. For a full listing of officers and information about BVARC, please go to [www.bvarc.org](http://www.bvarc.org). Detailed information will be published in the BEACON every 3 or 4 months. Similarly, the "Eating Schedule" will be published every 3 or 4 months unless there is a change.

General membership dues are \$25.00 per year, with student dues \$10.00 per year, additional family members \$5.00 per member per year.

Club meetings are normally held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Imperial Park Sugarland Recreation Center at 234 Matlage Way, Sugar Land TX, 77478. Check the above website for any possible changes.

**BVARC** amateur radio testing has resumed. It takes place typically on the Saturday before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 10:30 AM. Location: Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, 77074. BEFORE GOING, please check the BVARC website for any changes.

A Public Service Net is held each Monday at 8 p.m. on the 146.94 (minus offset, PL 167.9 tone) repeater.

A rag chew net is held each Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 3910 KHz +/- 3 KHz.

To obtain information about joining **BVARC** or its activities, see the BVARC website: [www.bvarc.org](http://www.bvarc.org)

Other contacts include:

President:, Mike Hardwick, N5VCX, [n5vcx@att.net](mailto:n5vcx@att.net)

Newsletter Editor, John Chauvin, K5IZO, [k5izo@yahoo.com](mailto:k5izo@yahoo.com)

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JP Pritchard, K5JPP, [jppnews@comcast.net](mailto:jppnews@comcast.net); Esther Pritchard, [elop@comcast.net](mailto:elop@comcast.net)

NOTE: Officers, advertising and eating schedule are on the website. They will only be published in the Newsletter every few months.

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JULY 2020

**BRAZOS VALLEY  
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB  
P.O. BOX 2997  
SUGAR LAND, TX 77487-2997  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

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July 9 – Virtual Monthly Meeting via Zoom. See the meeting notice citing the details.



*If your mailing label is  
highlighted in color, it's time  
to renew your membership!*