



# BVARC BEACON

Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club

AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT BEND COUNTY



VOLUME 50 ISSUE 3

MARCH 2026

## General Membership Meeting – Thursday March 12 at 7:30 PM

*Community Volunteer Fire Department Community Center, 16005 Bellaire Blvd, Houston TX 77083*

Join us for a presentation by Richard Bonica.



## From the President’s Desk

### President’s Message – Thank You for a Great Hamfest!

What a fantastic Hamfest!

By all accounts — and by the steady crowd from start to finish — this year’s Hamfest was a tremendous success.

On behalf of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club, I want to sincerely thank everyone who played a part in making it happen. Events like this don’t just magically appear on the calendar. They take planning, teamwork, patience... and more than a little problem solving along the way.

First, I would like to extend a special thank you to Michael Hardwick for leading this year’s Hamfest efforts. Michael’s organization, leadership, and countless hours of hard work were instrumental in making the event run smoothly. If something looked easy, it’s probably because Michael handled the hard part long before the doors opened. From early planning to the final teardown — when the rest of us were wondering where all those tables came from — he was there making sure everything stayed on track. We are extremely grateful for his dedication and steady leadership.

To our volunteers — thank you for the early mornings, heavy lifting, last-minute problem solving, and willingness to jump in wherever needed. Whether you were setting up tables, helping with registration, coordinating VE testing, directing parking, or answering the same question for the tenth time with a smile, you represented our club well.

Thank you as well to our vendors and tailgaters for bringing great equipment, expertise, and plenty of temptation for all of us who promised we were “just coming to look.” Somehow, many of us still went home with something we didn’t know we needed!

Most importantly, thank you to everyone who attended. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces and to welcome newcomers to the hobby and to our community. The fellowship, learning, storytelling, and friendly bargaining are all part of what keeps amateur radio thriving.

We should all be proud of what we accomplished together. A successful Hamfest doesn’t just happen — it’s built by dedicated members who care about their club and their community.

Thank you again for your hard work, participation, and support. Get some rest... and then we’ll start planning the next one!

73,

Richard Bonica, KG5YCU  
President  
Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club



## March 2026 –Amateur Radio Events Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>B:</b> IHOP Breakfast 6:30 AM Sat <b>P:</b> Public Service Net 8 PM Mon			<b>R:</b> Rag Chew Net 3910 kHz 7 PM Wed <b>S:</b> Stir Crazy Net Noon Mon-Fri <b>T:</b> 10-10 Net 8 PM Tue			
1	2 <b>P S</b>	3 <b>S T</b>	4 <b>R S</b>	5 <b>S</b>	6 <b>S</b>	7 <b>B</b> VE Testing 10:30AM --- Irving Hamfest
8 BVARC Board 6:00 PM via Zoom	9 <b>P S</b>	10 <b>S T</b> Brews w/ BVARC 6:30 PM	11 <b>R S</b>	12 <b>S</b> BVARC Meeting 7:30 PM	13 <b>S</b>	14 <b>B</b>
15	16 <b>P S</b>	17 <b>S T</b>	18 <b>R S</b>	19 <b>S</b>	20 <b>S</b>	21 <b>B</b> Buffalo Bayou Regatta --- POTA Huntsville
22	23 <b>P S</b>	24 <b>S T</b>	25 <b>R S</b>	26 <b>S</b>	27 <b>S</b>	28 <b>B</b>
29	30 <b>P S</b>	31 <b>S T</b>				

**3/7/2026 Irving Hamfest**, Sat 8 AM – 2 PM. Betcha Bingo, 2420 W Irving Blvd, Irving TX.

<https://irvingarc.org/hamfest-2026/>.

**3/10/2026 Brews with BVARC**, 6:30 PM - 10 PM, No Label Brewing Company, 5351 1st St, Katy TX 77493.

**3/21/2026 Houston POTA at Huntsville State Park**, 565 Park Road 40 W, Huntsville TX 77340.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/huntsville>.

**3/21/2026 2026 Buffalo Bayou Partnership Regatta**, 8 AM – 2:30 PM. Contact Lee Glassman WA5LEE for details. <https://buffalobayou.org/event/2026-buffalo-bayou-partnership-regatta/>.

**4/10-11/2026 Ham EXPO Spring 2026 (Belton Hamfest)**, Fri tailgating, Sat 7 AM – 1:30 PM.

<https://tarc.org/hamexpo-schedule/>. If you miss this one, mark your calendar for October 2-3.

**5/16/2026 Houston POTA at Galveston Island State Park**, 14901 FM 3005, Galveston TX 77554.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/galveston-island>.

**6/5-7/2026, Museum Ships Week End**. More details soon.

**6/6-7/2026, DFW Ham Expo 2026**, Fri 1 – 6 PM, Sat 8:30 AM – 3 PM. NTX Arena at Vista Mall, 2401 S Stemmons Fwy, Lewisville TX 75067. <https://www.dfwhamexpo.com/>.

**6/27-28/2026 ARRL Field Day**. Details will be on <https://www.bvarc.org> as plans develop.

### Additional Volunteering Opportunities

**4/18/2026, 2026 Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas**. <https://www.woodlands-event-comms.info/events/ironman-texas>. <https://www.ironman.com/races/im-texas>.

**4/25-26/2026, Bike MS: ACC Texas MS 150**. <https://events.nationalmssociety.org/bike-ms-acc-texas-ms-150-2026>. <https://texasms150hams.org/>.

**10/10/2026, The Woodlands 10 for Texas**. <https://www.woodlands-event-comms.info/events/10-for-texas>. <https://www.thewoodlandsparks.com/Events/Races/Memorial-Hermann-10-for-Texas>.

## FEBRUARY 2026 VE - FCC TESTING SESSION RESULTS

For the February 7<sup>th</sup> test session, at Bayland - we had 4 candidates and conducted 8 tests

New Licensee:

Branch D. (Technician) KJ5OGR  
Brower J. (Technician)

Upgrade:

Garza, R. (General) KJ5NOR

VEs in attendance – K5LJ, K5GOL, W5ICR, WM5N and KG4NDS – **THANKS!**

For the Greater Houston Hamfest on February 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds -  
we had 11 candidates and conducted 16 tests

New Licensee:

Fontenot, H. (Technician)  
Kageler, D. (Technician)  
Ramirez, J. (Technician)  
Nease, C. (Technician)  
Rivera, S. (Technician)  
Schade, J. (Technician)

Upgrade:

Barr, D. (General) KJ5NFA  
Clark, A. (General) KJ5IVF  
Everling, E. (Extra) KJ5MHV  
Moore, T. (Extra) N5RIV

VEs in attendance – K5LJ, K5GOL, W5ICR, and WX5KR – **THANKS!**

Congratulations to All!

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The next BVARC test session will be at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston TX 77074, on **Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup>**, starting at 10:30.

**Pre-registration is required (BVARC VE Team).**

<https://hamstudy.org/sessions/arrrl/77008/inperson>

For new licensees the testing fee, paid at the session is \$15. An additional \$35 license fee (totaling \$50), will be collected by the FCC separately for new, renewal and vanity calls. License upgrades **do not** pay the added \$35 fee, just the \$15 session fee.

### YOUTH LICENSING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The ARRL has created a youth program (18 and under) to defray the licensing costs to a total of \$5 (deducting the \$35 increase and \$10 off the \$15 VE session fee). See: <http://www.arrrl.org/youth-licensing-grant-program>

Also, BVARC is implementing its own program for **youth** licensing. We'll provide a **new VHF/UHF transceiver (Baofeng, limited supply)** at the VE session, to youth that successfully pass their Technician test. The HTs are a very generous donation (Dec. '23) from a BVARC member, THANKS!

**Bottom line, a young person for \$5, can walk into a test session and walk out with a new radio and a pending license.**

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Details for candidates are found at <https://bvarc.org/home/ham-radio-license-testing-houston/>

Pre-register to attend a test session at: <https://hamstudy.org/sessions/arrrl/77008/inperson>

Become a VE! <https://www.arrrl.org/become-an-arrrl-ve>

For questions, Email Mark Janzer, K5MGJ at ([k5mgj@yahoo.com](mailto:k5mgj@yahoo.com)).

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## The 80 Meters Versus 75 meters Naming Convention

The IARU Region 2 (US, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America) received the full 3.5 to 4.0 MHz 80 Meter band at the **Third National Radio Conference October 10, 1924**. The CW portion near 3.5 MHz equates to 80 meters, whereas 4.0 MHz, near the Phone end equals 75 meters. Immediately US and Canadian AM Phone ops referred to it, colloquially, as 75 meters.

IARU Region 2 has the full 3.5 to 4.0 MHz band, whereas Regions 1 and 3 have only 3.5 to 3.8 and 3.5 to 3.9 MHz, respectively. This leaves the upper 100 KHz or “75 Meters” as solely a Region 2 allocation.

*(also see this month's "The Radio Hotel" for more BVARC history related to 75 meters)*

## Update – the Electrically Small Antennas Development Challenge

In the Beacon issue of November 2022, I made you aware of an DARPA/IARPA Three Phase Antenna Challenge project presented to a few antenna labs in US companies. They were given 45 months to come up with new ESA's – Electrically Small Antenna designs that exhibited 6dB to 10 dB gain over existing technology and therefore, improving the Chu-Harrington data rate limit. Their targets were ESA's specifically for cell phone frequencies, but the applied methods would be applicable to other frequencies, etc. The companies are currently in Phase Three of the challenge, with no reported results yet. The 45-month finish line is in April of 2026...2 months away.

It is an interesting challenge that incorporates non-foster elements, metamaterials, active matching networks and other esoteric elements. Read what **The Radio Hotel Column** stated in November of 2022 and May of 2023 in regard to this competition. A report will be posted in the Beacon, once any results are known. 73 -- Rick W5RH

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### BVARC Rag Chew Net

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

01/21/26, K5LKJ (NCS), W5VOM, K5LJ, K5DBL (Manvel), K5RBC (Lake Jackson), AA0ST (Collins, MO), W5ICR, KA5LPH, K5LZD, KI5HOC, NE5EA, W5RH, W5KK. (13 Check-ins)

Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 188, SN = 166, A = 74, K = 3, Band Rpt: GOOD

01/28/26, K5LKJ (NCS), K5LJ, K5DBL (Manvel), KI5HOC, WA5CYI, W5ICR, AA5OA (Percy, AR), AA0ST (Collins, MO). (8 Check-Ins)

Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 133, SN = 135, A = 21, K = 3, Band Rpt: FAIR

02/04/26, K5LKJ (NCS), KI5HOC, W5ICR, K5RBC (Lake Jackson), KA5LPH, K5LZD, K5LJ, W5RH, AD5US (Friendswood), KF5AIE (Woodville), KI5SKL. (11 Check-ins)

Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 176, SN = 106, A = 5, K = 3, Band Rpt: FAIR

02/11/26, K5LKJ (NCS), K5LJ, K5DBL (Manvel), W5ICR, KI5HOC, W5LIC (Channelview), K5BGP (Opelousas, LA). (7 Check-ins)

Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 129, SN = 84, A = 16, K = 3, Band Rpt: FAIR

01/14/26, K5LKJ (NCS), WB4KTF (Austin), AA0ST (Collins, MO), K5LJ, AA5OA (Percy, AR), KI5HOC, K5DBL (Manvel), W2WF (Katy), WA5CYI, W5ICR, KA5LPH, K5LKS, W5RH. \*\*\* K5RBC (Lake Jackson), W5RH. (13 Check-ins)

Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 127, SN = 61, A = 7, K = 2, 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 learn what others are doing and share your experiences. Come join in the conversation each Wednesday evening. Regards.

John K5LKJ

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### Ham Exam Question

Which of the following may transmit encrypted messages?

- A. Telecommand signals to terrestrial repeaters
- B. Telecommand signals from a space telecommand station
- C. Auxiliary relay links carrying repeater audio
- D. Mesh network backbone nodes





# Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club



## Minutes

February 8, 2026 @ 18:00  
Online Zoom video meeting

### Board Members

President - Richard Bonica - KG5YCU	Vice President - Kori Rahman - WX5KR
Treasurer - John Brockus - NE5EA	1 Year At-Large (Past Prez) - Mike Hardwick - N5VCX
2 Year At-Large - Lee Glassman - WA5LEE	2 Year At-Large - Kirc Breden - N5XJB
Corresponding Secretary - Eddie Runner - NU5K	Recording Secretary - Blake Alley - N5BAA

### Board of Directors Meeting

- ❖ Called Meeting to Order: 18:00
- ❖ Established Quorum
- ❖ Opening Statement: N/A
- ❖ Agenda Review: Approved.
- ❖ Treasurer's Report: Approved. New simplified format - more detail and extra breakdowns requested.
- ❖ Corresponding Secretary's Report: Memberships report given. Life badges mailed out.
- ❖ Recording Secretary's Report: Improvements made to minutes document for newsletter. Expressed desires to investigate archiving docs/photos and improving viewability online.
- ❖ Old Business
  - Bank signatories - to be handled
  - ARRL insurance - paid and reimbursement needed
  - Antenna party - Richard working with groups to organize.
  - Fundraiser
  - Communication path - establish public list of recipients for certain topics (ex. Monday net check-in archive). Establish standard procedures.
- ❖ Programs
  - February - Rick Hiller W5RH
  - Outside programs: develop teams and online marketing designs for college career fairs, farmers markets, etc. Strive to mention upcoming events on nets, reflector, website, etc.
- ❖ Committees
  - Election: Chuck KF5UXP
  - Newsletter: Donovan
  - Historical Archives: Eddie NU5K - archives in BVARC Admin.
    - Establish standard list of publicly available monthly archives.
  - By-Laws: Terry K5PGF and John K5IZO
  - Finance: John NE5EA and Eddie NU5K
    - John NE5EA and Rick W5RH to audit treasurer's report.
    - Finance committee members to be reviewed by President to stay compliant with non-profit guidelines.

- Events: Eddie NU5K assisting
- Membership/retention: Eddie NU5K
- Food Team: President to re-establish team for general meetings.
- Elmer/ Subject Matter Experts
  - Elmer interests to be integrated in roster.
- Museum Ships Wknd – Mark Janzer
- Field Day – Richard Bonica
  - SOP to be established with help from Mike KI5NPM
- Greater Houston Hamfest – Mike Hardwick
  - Online charge discrepancy resolved.
- Banquet
- Net controllers: Chuck N5CHB
  - Sign-up sheets on website
  - Net control reminders to be sent
- ❖ New Business
  - Robert Polinski memorial service by BVARC to be discussed in future meeting.
- ❖ Next Meeting: BVARCBOD March 8, 18:00 – online Zoom video meeting
  - Email reminders to be standardized to 1 week before, 1 day before, and day of event.
- ❖ Closing Statement(s): [Kori, Richard]
- ❖ Meeting Adjournment: 20:03

Recorded by Blake Alley, N5BAA.

## Your Club Needs Your Voice!

**BVARC is looking for Net Control Operators!** Running a net is one of the best ways to sharpen your "radio muscles" and give back to the hobby. We are currently seeking volunteers for our **Stir Crazy** (Noon daily), **Monday Public Service**, and **Wednesday Ragchew** nets.

Don't worry if you've never run a net before—we'll provide the scripts and the "elmering" to get you comfortable. Help us keep our frequencies active and our community strong. Contact the Net Team today to sign up for a slot!

If you can not RUN as net, at least please check in.

*Ham Exam Answer: B. § 97.3 Defines telecommand as: A one-way transmission to initiate, modify, or terminate functions of a device at a distance. § 97.211 (b) says that a telecommand station may transmit special codes intended to obscure the meaning of telecommand messages to the station in space operation.*

# The Radio Hotel -- The Club's HF Rag Chew Net

*If you like the noon time 94 Stir Crazy Net, you'll love the Wednesday night 80 Meter Rag Chew Net*  
by Rick Hiller W5RH

A significant amount of verbiage has been written about the BVARC Rag Chew Net (RCN) since its initial appearance in January of 1982. All of those articles are listed below and are available on the BVARC Newsletter Archives on the club web site at <https://bvarc.org/newsletters.php>.

BVARC was established in 1973. A Wednesday evening 10 Meter HF Rag Chew Net was started in January of 1982 with Steve WA5OEN as Net Control (NC). The Net switched to 80 meters (*75 meters actually – see the associate article this month*) in January of 1985 with Steve Gottleib as NC, then Sam Wilson, N5CPA, took it over until Joe Morgan, K5JWM, commanded the helm in the early 2000's. The final NC switch was to the current NC, John Whiteman, K5LKJ, in July of 2007. Since then, referred to as the 80 Meter Rag Chew Net. All of this according to our online newsletter archive.

Other than being a social, HF watering hole for those BVARC'ers that love HF phone, it is a weekly look at low band propagation over the course of each year. Quiet band noise in the winter gives way to us hearing (and interfering with) the Montana Traffic Net. The Spring and Fall Equinoxes are a time when things get noisier, local/regional propagation changes, then summer comes around with its plethora of noises of the neighborhood, thunderstorms and just plain noisy band conditions. All in all, it is an excellent chance for you to see the varying conditions on low band HF throughout the year.

For the Harris and Fort Bend County hams, the local distance of 15 to 30 miles from NC's QTH of Stafford, typically comes and goes in signal strength throughout the year. In fact, the net calls this effect the "Donut Hole". A few articles in the BVARC Beacon have been written about it. (See the list below).

10 meters was initially chosen as the Net frequency due to the popularity of that band at that time. The switch to 80 meters was chosen to allow General Class hams to check in (along with Advanced and Extra Class ops, of course). A telephone number is typically given during the Net to enable check-ins from SWL's, licensed Techs with no HF privileges and those that listen and are unable to transmit on the frequency. A few members listen to the Net on WebSDRs located in Texas and, surprisingly, Utah. Each month, since its inception, a list of check-ins appears in the monthly newsletter.

One major issue for BVARC members to get on 80 meters is the length of the antenna needed. A simple dipole is 134 feet long at the 3910 KHz fundamental. Of course, antennas can be made shorter with expedient loading by coils or capacitive hats or simply bending the actual wire elements to fit the available space. (See the articles list). One benefit of using the 80-meter band is that the regional coverage is typically NVIS (Near Vertical Incidence Skywave) and workable antennas can be closer to the ground for the radiation to then travel up to the Ionosphere and be reflected down within a few hundred miles. An amplifier helps too, but one is certainly not necessary.

## **Beacon Newsletter and BVARC Tech Website Articles**

The Radio Hotel – Oct 2016 ***Antennas for the 3910 RCN***

The Radio Hotel – Aug/Sept 2019 ***Designing and Building a Coil Loaded (Short) Dipole***

The Radio Hotel – June 2021 ***The Donut Hole*** (abridged version)

Tech Page – More Great Tech Papers – ***The Donut Hole*** – (unabridged version)

Tech Page – More Great Tech Papers -- ***Shortened Dipole Study for Conditions On BVARC's RCN***

– Larry Jacobson K5LJ

Tech Page – More Great Tech Papers -- ***The LKJ Wednesday Night Special Antenna***

– John Whiteman K5LKJ

QST -- ***The Bent Dipole***, May 1997 – K0NM, Nizar Mullani (club member)



**Join John, K5LKJ, and the group at 7PM (local) Wednesday evening on 3910 KHz LSB**

# 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 per year, with student dues \$10 per year, additional family members \$5 per member per year.

Club meetings are both in-person and via Zoom on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. If you have signed up for the email reflector, you will receive notice and the attendance password, etc. It will also be on the website a few days beforehand.

BVARC amateur radio testing takes place typically on the Saturday before the 2nd 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 PM on the 146.94 (minus offset, PL 167.9 tone) repeater.

A "Stir Crazy Net" is also held weekdays at 12 Noon on the 146.94 (minus offset, PL 167.9 tone) repeater.

A rag chew net is held each Wednesday at 7 PM 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:

**BVARC President** Richard Bonica KG5YCU [kg5ycu@gmail.com](mailto:kg5ycu@gmail.com),

**Newsletter Editor** Donovan Balli KG5BDZ [dballi@mail.com](mailto:dballi@mail.com),

**Editor Emeritus** John Chauvin K5IZO [k5izo@yahoo.com](mailto:k5izo@yahoo.com).

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MARCH 2026

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


FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Board of Directors Meeting – 6 PM Sunday, March 8, 2026, via Zoom

General Membership Meeting – 7:30 PM Thursday, March 12, 2026, 16005 Bellaire Blvd, Houston TX 77083



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