

Special AARC Board Meeting Minutes 8/3/2023

Attendees: Bill Pond-N0WP, Dave Damon-K4DND, Larry Eicher-K4JZQ, Stephen Kramer-KN4CJI, John Porter-KK4JP, Bob Romanko-AK4BR, Ed Berkowitz-N3US, Ian Callahan-KN4YBG, Warren Yursik-KN4LYF, Leroy Caudill-KO4JMH

Board meeting held via Zoom.

Meeting called to order at 8:02 PM by Bob Romanko, President. Special board meeting called to discuss Proposal for the Installation Services for Antennas at Bucks Elbow. Bob said according to bylaws of club if at least 3 Board members request special meeting, the club president must call special board meeting.

Bill Pond presented Proposal comments (proposal is attached to meeting minutes):

He reviewed history of Bucks Elbow antenna/repeater. Club had antennas and repeater equipment at Bucks Elbow using old County tower and shed. Club repeater was there for 15-20 years and bought equipment from previous owner. County decided to relocate their antennas and equipment to new tower and shed requiring club to relocate its equipment and antennas. Since antennas were no longer functional, club had to purchase new antennas. Decision was made to purchase commercial grade antennas that would hold up better against the weather on Bucks Elbow. Antennas were purchased and now sit in Bill's basement.

The County requires us to use a licensed, insured and certified installer to put anything on their tower. Dave Damon sent emails to several installers in area and received no responses. He did find one private contractor from West Virginia who visited site but did not appear excited to do job as he had other installation commitments. Installer Tim Jellison gave quote of \$5000 for installation which did not include materials which club would need to purchase. We would also need to provide people for ground labor.

Bill was concerned about getting correct parts. Antennas have to be installed on side mounts six to seven feet away from tower. Problem is to find correct parts. Grounding of each feed line is required in 3 places at tower, on ground and at shed. Must be professional installation meeting

County specs. Antenna mounting hardware is more complex due to triangular tower.

The Tech committee found another professional contractor, Hightower Communications located in Harrisonburg, VA. They gave us 2 estimates for a complete turn-key installation. Estimates include all antenna mounting hardware, feedlines, connectors, grounding and other equipment and installation in communications building. Quote could be impacted by installation specifics, e.g. include only hardware actually used and is based on a 2 day installation. Cost would be \$9,355 or \$9825.

We would be responsible for moving club equipment to new comms shed and run feedline connections to equipment.

New installation duplicates functional operation of old antenna and tower.

Two antennas will be installed, each one consists of 2 separate dual-folded dipoles. Total of 4 feed lines. Antennas will be mounted at different heights with downward tilt.

Our old tower and old antennas are gone. Right now we are operating on a 10 foot pole donated by Dave next to old shack.

We will relocate equipment to new communications shack provided by County which is a big stepup for us since shed larger, equipped with power and AC. There won't be any monthly fees.

We will have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the County and the club. Dave is working on the MoU.

Comments from other board members:

John said our investment in the new antennas should last 20 years. It makes sense to get quality equipment and installation. Antenna setup will provide backup for both VHF and UHF operation. He has concerns about Public events coverage without the new antennas.

New installation supports WinLink gateways. Trend on repeater operation is toward more Winlink email operation.

Bob R. raised some concerns about low usage on repeaters. MNIN had only 11 people checked in on Monday night. He monitors traffic and noticed there was very little on repeaters. He felt if we do this installation the club needs to encourage more members on the repeaters.

Larry also expressed concern about low useage.

Dave said to consider what happens if no Bucks Elbow repeater. This affects operation of Heard Mtn and Martha Jefferson repeaters since these

are all linked. The Bucks Elbow location is nearly 4000 ft high and helps link repeaters together and provide broader area coverage. Larry asked if there were other anticipated expenses down the road related to this project. He wants to protect club balance in accounts. No new expenses were anticipated.

Bill said he wants to change overall repeater linkage and use repeaters as central hub. This will occur after antenna project is completed.

Bob R. reviewed the 2 quotes from Hightower:

- version 1 is a for \$9825, full turnkey quote with all 4 feedlines using 7/8" cable along with all connectors, clips, etc.

- version 2 is for \$9355, only difference is the feedlines. VHF would have 1/2" feedlines and UHF 7/8" feedlines. All lengths at 100 ft. Using 7/8" feedline minimizes db loss.

Bill has spoken with Hightower several times. They had prior experience on the new County tower putting in cell equipment for Century Link. Latest response from Hightower contact Bryce is a not to exceed price with quote. Bill: payment is due 30 days after completion of project.

Bob comments: spoke about old 95 ft tower that club is getting. He feels we should do what is right for club and the community we serve. He has concerns about 2 things that we need to commit to with this contract. First, is to get a written MoU with County and secondly, get more and younger members using repeaters. Reminded everyone that this expense is about 1/3 of our clubs treasury balance.

Ed reminded us that it may take several months for county to approve MoU. Dave said that we have emails from County about ok for us to use tower. He is working on updating MoU for new tower.

Larry said several people monitor 895 repeater. Get incentive for new tech licensees to use repeaters. He stated that he wouldn't write check until we're sure of satisfactory completion of antenna project from Hightower.

Warren: he feels it would be disastrous if we don't go forward with proposal. New antennas increase coverage especially for emergency services.

Discussion completed.

Dave Damon made formal proposal to go ahead with Hightower project using version 1 quote at \$9825.

Ed Berkowitz seconded proposal. Board voted unanimously to approve proposal.

Proposal will be sent to general membership of club and discussed and voted on at August 8th meeting.

Other business:

John Porter said August presentation will be from vice director of Roanoke division of ARRL, Bill Morine, N2COP, via Zoom.

We agreed to have do presentation first, then hold business meeting.

Board meeting adjourned by Bob Romanko at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Kramer
Secretary