

President's Trip Report

FCC Meetings – Washington D.C.

Mt. Airy VHF Club 50th Anniversary Celebration – Horsham, PA

March 31 – April 1, 2006

The FCC meeting information contained in this report, especially the information concerning Hollingsworth, is ARRL Board CONFIDENTIAL and is not to be discussed outside the ARRL board at this time.

I have just completed a round of meetings, accompanied by Sumner & Imlay, with various FCC representatives in addition to attending the 50th anniversary celebration of the Mt. Airy VHF Club.

I traveled into the Baltimore-Washington International Airport Thursday afternoon, March 30, and stayed at a hotel in the airport area. BWI, being a Southwest Airlines hub offers attractive airfare to the area, and a Thursday through Saturday hotel stay takes advantage of some reasonable weekend rates. Dave and I met for breakfast Friday morning and then traveled by train from BWI into D.C., meeting Imlay at the FCC at 9:45 AM.

FCC Office of Engineering & Technology

We arrived for our scheduled 10:00 AM meeting with Julius Knapp, Acting Chief, OET which was also attended by the following OET personnel:

Bruce Romano, Deputy Chief, OET

Alan Scrimme – Chief, Policy & Rules Division

Alan Stillwell – Senior Associate Chief

Karen Rackley - Engineer

Geraldine Matise – Deputy Chief, Policy & Rules Division

Anh Wride

FCC Laurel Lab was tied in via teleconference

Our objective was to inquire as to the status of our Petition for Reconsideration on the BPL rules the FCC adopted as well as our Petition for Further Rule Making regarding the same. In addition, we further pursued action on our complaint about UTC's handling of the on-line BPL "public" database.

Chris very ably stated (in addition to providing a volume of written documentation) our factual case that we have cooperated extensively with BPL providers to resolve spectrum pollution and interference problems and progress has been made, citing Cincinnati, Texas Utilities, and the Motorola system as areas where amateurs have been able to coexist without harmful interference. However, two very egregious situations still exist, Manassas and Briarcliff Manor that require FCC intervention and action to resolve. This illustrated the need to differentiate in the FCC rules between the harmful BPL systems and those that are more benign to Amateur Radio.

We also emphasized the importance of FCC acting on our Petition for Further Rulemaking, and if it assigned an NPRM then our Petition for Reconsideration (as well as the other 16 that were filed) could be addressed in the NPRM and the Commission could address two matters at one time. We told them our continued work and cooperation with BPL providers in resolving interference issues provided a winning situation for FCC if they would act our petition and also act in resolving the outstanding interference issues where the provider refused to acknowledge an interference issue.

Dave and Chris were both pretty direct with the group concerning the BPL database, emphasizing that UTC just flatly did not meet the FCC requirements for a public database.

Knapp and group were attentive. It was my opinion the meeting was not very productive, however I have no past experience with OET or anything to base this on other than an initial opinion. Dave and Chris, however, have dealt with OET under Bruce Franca and they noted the response from OET under Knapp at this meeting was much more responsive than previous visits. While Franca was combative, Knapp was less so about BPL issues, and seemingly more interested in a resolution. Knapp did, however, disclaim any knowledge about the outcome or timetable for action on the reconsideration petitions. It was good to have their perspective based on previous meetings with OET.

We did meet our objective, however, and clearly got our point across to the group, so in that respect this particular meeting was successful.

Congressman Mike Ross

Upon our arrival at the FCC just prior to our morning meeting, Chris showed Dave and me the current NPSTC (National Public Safety Telecommunications Council) newsletter that contained an article about the interference potential of BPL and the impact it could have on public service agencies still using the 30 MHz band for communications (there are several) and called for their members to support H.Res. 230. The newsletter was the product of the good work of Tom Abernathy, W3TOM, with NPSTC after attending only one meeting on ARRL's behalf.

During a meeting late last year when Imlay and Chwat were summoned to Ross' office, Ross complained about our inability to promote the House Resolution, especially among public safety agencies. When I saw this article, I told Dave and Chris we needed to get a copy of this in Ross' hands, and we agreed that since we had time after our morning FCC meeting we could drop by Ross' office and do so.

I didn't expect Ross to be in his office that day, and in fact he was not, however the objective was to get the newsletter in his staff's hands so they could make him aware of it. Aaron, Ross' assistant who I know and is a personal friend of my daughter-in-law, was in the office so I was able to give her the copy and explain to her that the Congressman needed to see it. She assured me she would personally take care of it and we were then on our way.

Lunch Meeting – Harrison, Sumner, Imlay

Dave, Chris and I met for lunch at a local D.C. establishment to discuss a number of general items including a debriefing of our meeting with OET and to discuss our approach for the upcoming meeting with Commissioner Tate's staff.

FCC Commissioner Tate's Office

A 2:30 PM meeting had been scheduled with Commissioner Tate's Legal Advisor Aaron Goldberger and Dana Shaffer. Tate is a new commissioner so our objective was to introduce ARRL and amateur radio to her staff.

The meeting began about 15 minutes late owing to some issue they were completing, and as soon as we assembled in the conference room Goldberger was summoned to assist the Commissioner with some issue that arose. Although that may have been a pre-arranged thing, it was actually a plus. It provided an opportunity to have a discussion with Ms. Shaffer, who has been a Deputy Bureau Chief in the FCC Wireline Competition Bureau, which led to a casual remark that she is from Arkansas. Interestingly, we have quite a bit in common and personally know some of the same people. It set the tone for a pleasurable atmosphere for the meeting.

Ms. Shaffer was familiar with amateur radio from our presence on the FCC's Katrina Panel convened in Jackson, MS attended by Director Leggette where Greg Sarrat spoke. Other than that, she didn't know much (or pretended to not know much) about amateur radio.

We gave her a general introduction to amateur radio and the League, and then discussed our Petition for Further Rule Making regarding BPL. She was familiar with the interference potential of BPL, and made several notes in the side margins of the written copy of our Petition that Chris gave her.

I also took the opportunity to ask if she could speak with Fred Campbell in the Chairman's office about expediting (actually, kicking it off Dwana Terry's desk) WT 04-140 (Novice Refarming) that had been stalled for quite some time. I noted it was a non-controversial matter and all that was required was for it to be called up by the Chairman and action taken. She promised to discuss it with Mr. Campbell.

We took the opportunity in closing to tell her about our "Hello" campaign and provided her with a brochure and CD.

The meeting was cordial, our objective was met, and the potential exists for a warm relationship with Commissioner Tate's office with Ms. Shaffer's involvement.

Riley Hollingsworth Dinner

Friday evening Dave, Chris, and I scheduled a 7:00 PM dinner with Riley Hollingsworth. Our objective was to determine Riley's plan for retirement and the impact that will have on continued amateur enforcement activities.

Riley plans on retiring in the next couple of years, and has a successor in mind to replace him that works in broadcast enforcement in Gettysburg. This person is not a radio amateur, although he is quite familiar with the amateur radio service and has expressed an interest in obtaining a license.

It is Riley's intention, if this does happen, to have him officially given the responsibility for amateur enforcement and for Riley to hang around for about one year to work directly with him before leaving.

Riley would also like to turn more responsibility over to the OO's. There was talk about this sometime ago when Riley came on the scene, and he has always had a desire to so, however he didn't believe (rightfully so) the FCC had any credibility in the enforcement area. That has changed, and he now believes there are some situations where the OO program could function very well with some expanded responsibility. Of course, this would all have to be worked out in detail with the board and Riley's direct involvement.

I'm convinced that Riley wants to leave amateur enforcement in good hands at the FCC when he leaves. He is proud of the work that has been done the past few years and wants to see that continue. He is committed to developing a transition that will continue to function well into the future.

Mt. Airy VHF Club (The Pack Rats) 50th Anniversary Celebration

On Saturday evening I attended, along with Director Edgar and First Vice President Craigie, the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Mt. Airy VHF Club, popularly known as the Pack Rats. The event was a formal banquet in Horsham, PA and was attended by about 150. Bill, Kay and I were both provided an opportunity to make brief remarks, and a letter from Dave Sumner was read. The speaker for the evening was Frank Bauer, AMSAT VP for Manned Flight Operation. For those of you that don't know Frank, professionally he works for NASA at the Goddard Space Flight Center. Frank spoke about ARISS, providing an excellent historical background of the program as well as the future plans. He also discussed the "SuitSat" experiment in detail that was quite interesting. Frank made a special point to mention the work and support ARRL had provided for the SAREX/ARISS program over the years.

In all, a very good evening and I was very pleased to have the opportunity to celebrate the evening with the Pack Rats.

Summary

Our objectives for this round of meetings were met, however there is much work still to do in bringing a workable resolution to BPL as well as obtaining action on WT 04-140.

I'll be happy to address any questions you may have and will be receptive to any comments.

73 Joel W5ZN