



The SPARC

Amateur Radio - Communicating Worldwide for A Century
Newsletter of the Boston Amateur Radio Club

Serving Hams in the Greater Boston Area

September 2026 - VOLUME 38, NUMBER 9

www.barc.org - w1bos@arrl.net



Message From the President – Brendan Baldonado, NW1S



Welcome back, BARC, from a great summer. We had an amazing Field Day! We didn't host as many events as I personally would have hoped but I think everyone has had a lot going on. As the temperature cools we can hopefully hold a few more events. This year we will continue to host speaker events, and learning topics for our members. What is the topic you want to learn more about, or have us healthy event on, or what are you working on doing ham radio? Let us know! I'll try to find a speaker or interactive event to host.

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BARC General Meeting, Thursday, September 17, 7:30 pm

“What I Did This Summer”

The next BARC General Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 7:30 pm, at Artisans Asylum in Allston and on the Zoom teleconferencing platform. The club will be recapping the Field Day and POTA events that were held over the summer, and there will be an open discussion period for attendees to present about their own ham radio adventures from this past summer! Zoom information will be available on www.barc.org.

Repeaters: 145.230 (-) CTCSS 88.5 in/100.0 out

Simplex: 147.420

449.175 (-) DMR CC1

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Minutes of the June, 2026, General Meeting – Joe Chapman, NV1W

A General Meeting of the Boston Amateur Radio Club was held on Thursday, June 18, 2026, at the Artisans Asylum in Allston and simultaneously on the Zoom teleconferencing platform. Members attending: AB0YT, AC1JL, KB1EKN, KE1L, N1QD, N7RPY, NK3H, NV1W, NW1S, W1PAC, WC1U, WJ1GFO. Guests: ex-KA1HAY, Steve Provost, Nathaniel B. The meeting was called to order by President Brendan Baldonado, NW1S, at 7:30 p.m.

Officer reports:

- President (NW1S): No report.
- Vice President (N1QD): Field Day preparations continued. In addition to our other radios, we will be using a K3 supplied by Eliot, W1MJ. It has been tested under SSB, CW, and digital modes.
- Secretary (NV1W): The club has 130 members. Half-price memberships for the rest of 2026 begin on July 1.
- Treasurer (KB1EKN): The repeater fund has \$2925, checking account \$11,442, and the A2 account has \$11,793. Upcoming expenses include \$150 for a new 40-meter dipole and a \$296 reimbursement to the club President for this year's insurance payment. Incidental Field Day expenses, mostly for food, are expected to run to \$500–600.

Elections:

- As none of the races for club officers were contested, **a motion to direct the Secretary to cast a single vote for the slate of officers was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.**
- **The following officers were elected: President Brendan Baldonado, NW1S; Vice President Joe Harris, N1QD; Secretary Joe Chapman, NV1W; Treasurer Mark Duff, KB1EKN.**

Field Day:

- Brendan, NW1S, gave an overview of Field Day for newcomers and people who have never been to a BARC Field Day before.
- We will be operating four HF stations plus VHF (class 4A) once again this year.
- Mark, KB1EKN, reported that the 40-meter dipole the club voted to purchase has been acquired. Mark will tune it before Field Day. He is putting off buying the 225-foot cable we voted to purchase until more exact measurements can be made on-site. He noted that the second 40-meter filter will fit in the patch panel.
- Mark, KB1EKN, recommended that people come prepared for heat and sun, with a hat and sunscreen. People setting up on Friday should consider bringing work gloves and water.
- Setup on Friday will begin at noon.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

— *Respectfully submitted, Joseph Chapman, NV1W, Secretary.*

Learning CW with Parks on the Air – Joe Chapman, NV1W

The Parks on the Air program, or POTA, which you can read about at <https://parksontheair.com>, has taken both amateur radio and BARC by storm. If you haven't heard of it by now, how is the weather under that rock?

POTA is a program in which you go to a state or national park, set up a portable radio station, and make contacts. If you make ten or more, that qualifies as an “activation” of the park. Most people use small radios, batteries, and portable antennas, though there are crazy people who take amplifiers out into the field. Generally the action is on the HF bands, so with the sunspot cycle where it is and where it's going, a General or Extra license is preferable. BARC has, however, held a “Tech POTA” in the Blue Hills, which was even the subject of this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeU_9CGhl1g. If you are going to give it a try as a Technician, choose a park that has some elevation and make sure you have a good antenna.

One thing that POTA offers is a low-stress way to start making CW contacts. As in a contest, the information exchanged in a typical QSO is short and mostly predictable, so if you're hunting (looking to make contacts with someone in a park) it's possible to know most of the information you're going to have to copy in advance. You can get an idea of what a QSO is like by listening to a few, or by looking at the excellent YouTube videos by Thomas Witherspoon, K4SWL.

Before doing any of this, you should sign up for Parks on the Air by going to the website and clicking on “Getting Started” in the menu along the top.

If you're hunting, you can make contacts from the comfort of your own shack. Fire up your rig, then go to the spots page at <https://pota.app/#/>. At the top there are various filters; I recommend hiding stations that have gone QRT (closed down), and if you want only CW spots or ones on a single band, you can filter appropriately.

What's a good speed? The rules of thumb are (a) don't send faster than you can copy, and (b) accuracy transcends speed. Most people will slow down for you, either by dialing their keyer speed down, or using Farnsworth spacing (sending characters with more space between them), and *there is no shame in using a speed you're comfortable with*. If you're running low power, it might be advantageous to go a little slow anyway.

A typical exchange goes like this. The hunter, W1ABC, is responding to WP0TA; the hunter's side of the QSO is in bold:

- CQ POTA WP0TA
- **W1ABC**
- W1ABC GA UR 55N 55N BK
- **BK TU 54N 54N MA BK**
- BK R TU 73 DE WP0TA dit-dit
- **dit-dit**

So, what the activator sends in response to your call is GA, or “good afternoon”. You may also hear GM (“good morning”) or GE (“good evening”). UR means “you are” and introduces your signal report using the Readability, Signal, Tone (RST) system. This is the same as it is on SSB, with the addition of Tone, which runs from 1 (dental drill in need of a lube job) to 9 (classical radio station announcer). In CW, 9 is often sent as N, especially in RST reports where it's expected. Tone is actually a relic from the early days of radio; with modern and even not-so-modern rigs it's rare to hear anything that merits a report other than 9. Even if you're in a QSO with a dentist.

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BK stands for “break” and essentially means “back to you” or “back to me”. You send TU (“thank you”) because you’re polite, then an RST report and the state you’re in, in this case Massachusetts. DE stands for “from”. The final dit-dits are a common friendly close to a CW QSO.

What if things go wrong? If your call gets messed up, a good way to correct it is to say “DE W1ABC” before you say “TU” in your part of the exchange. If the activator sends your call with a question mark, just send R if it’s correct—if you send a full call sign that implies that it was wrong. You may also hear a question mark, especially if conditions are lousy, or AGN (“again”).

After you’ve become comfortable hunting, you can try doing an activation yourself. In addition to your normal field radio kit, you’ll need a pair of CW paddles or a straight key and (possibly) a keyer. Most activators use smaller paddles or keys, especially if they’re carrying everything on their backs, though resident BARC CW meister Joe, N1QD, finds them compromised enough that he often takes his full-sized Bencher paddles into the field. Nearly every rig has a built-in keyer these days, even the Altoids tin-sized RockMite, but you still might consider an external keyer if the one in your rig has too few memories (like zero) or they require a lot of complicated button presses to access. I use an Ultra Pico Keyer (https://hamgadgets.com/UPK-Ultra-Pico-Keyer-kit_p_32.html) with my Yaesu FT-817.

I set up memories as follows:

1. CQ POTA NV1W
2. US 8405 (*i.e.*, the park number)
3. BK R TU ES 73 DE NV1W

I put the park number in memory #2 so I don’t have to look it up or remember it if someone asks for it, and I also often mess up sending strings of numbers. By putting the whole closing part of an exchange in memory #3 I can push a button and finish my log entry as it’s playing. I then add a dit-dit by hand. On YouTube you’ll see that The Spoon parrots back the other ham’s state after the TU when he finishes a QSO, but that isn’t mandatory. I find having a fixed message on #3 easier to manage. Another thing you can do if you’re a hard-core QRP person is send 72 instead of 73.

What usually goes wrong is you don’t hear all of the call or mishear something. If you get W2-*something* just send W2? and if it’s *something*-BC send ?BC. I tend to be fussy about logging sent/received RSTs, but if you miss them or the state it’s not a big deal.

One of the nice things about doing POTA using CW is if you pre-schedule your activation on the POTA website, when the Reverse Beacon Network (RBN) picks up your CQ it will spot you automatically! This can be really convenient if you’re at a park without great cellphone coverage, or you tend to make mistakes when you spot yourself. It’s also a good check to see that your signal is getting out.

Personally, I think if you’re activating a park, you have a moral obligation to submit your logs to the POTA program, even if you didn’t manage to get ten contacts. Part of the reason you have so many hunters coming back to you is people are collecting points for awards, and if you don’t submit logs, you’re not holding up your half of the deal.

Of course, you don’t have to do all your POTA contacts using CW; you can do a regular activation using SSB and then try CW for a contact or two, or you can turn into a hunter and try a few park-to-park contacts. You might even set up a schedule with a friendly (or grouchy) BARC member.

While I’ve focused on POTA, the same strategy will work for Summits on the Air (<https://www.sota.org.uk>), Islands on the Air (<https://www.iota-world.org>), and even a lot of Special Event stations—anything where they’re trying to turn a lot of QSOs around won’t put you at risk of someone who wants to ragchew. And if you are living under a rock, that’s QTH UNDER ROCK WX QUITE DARK.

BARC's New Discord Server! – Patrick Mannion, W1PAC

Hello All! 🙌

👤 Guess what! 🧑🎨

🔊 BARC has its own Discord server!

🐦 What is Discord you might ask? It's a chat program that allows instant messaging, voice and video calls. The server is broken up in various chat rooms and we have a lot, however, the general chatroom is called #general and after that it branches off into various other chat rooms for more specialized content such as ones for POTA, ARES and various digital modes.

If you want to join, you can use it right in your favorite browser or use the Discord software, it's available for desktop on all 3 major operating systems such as Windows, Mac and various Linux distributions. It's also available for iOS and Android phones.

Just go to <https://discord.com/download> and download it.

To get to our server you'll need an invite link which is: <https://discord.gg/F6hqmgFMjW>

We've set it to never expire, but if it accidentally does, just let us know in the groups.io and we'll generate a new one.

Hope to see you on there!

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BARC's Online Discussion Group – Joe Harris, N1QD

BARC has an online forum at Groups.io. The group serves as a sounding board for members to post their suggestions and comments, and is intended to foster discussion. The group can also be used to share photographs from club events! Come visit us at: <https://groups.io/g/BostonARC>. You can join, if you're not already there, by sending an email to BostonARC+subscribe@groups.io.

New Course from HamRadioPrep – Joe Chapman, NV1W

Our friends at HamRadioPrep have just announced a new course: *HF Masterclass*. Unlike their licensing courses, this one aims to lead someone with a General or an Amateur Extra license from the first steps of buying a radio and assembling a station through becoming a competent operator on the HF bands. You can read more about it at <https://hamradioprep.com/hf-masterclass/>.

As with all of HamRadioPrep's courses, you can use the coupon code **bostonarc** to receive a 20% discount. BARC also receives a commission for every sale that uses our coupon code, so you help the club as well.

Member News – Joe Harris, N1QD

This space is reserved for your news! Send it to N1QD at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Net Preamble

The control operator for the BARC Net is Joe, W1JJF. He rarely misses a net, but when he does any ham can take up the position and run the net. To assist you in opening and closing the net the BARC Net Preamble is printed below. Do not be afraid to step up and take the challenge.

Is there any further business for the repeater before we begin the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net? This is «YOUR CALL». Calling the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. This is «YOUR CALL», my name is «YOUR NAME» and I am located in «YOUR TOWN». This net meets each Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time on the 145.230 Boston repeater; PL 88.5. This net is an informal round table discussion concerning matters of interest to the members of the Boston Amateur Radio Club and the Boston Amateur Radio community in general. When checking into the net, please say, "this is" and drop your carrier to check on doubling. Then give your call sign, name and location. All amateurs are welcome to join the net. Any check-in's for the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net please call now.

[Compile the list of the check-ins and proceed with the net.]

Is there any further business for the net before I close? Hearing nothing, this is «YOUR CALL» closing tonight's session of the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the net and those who stood by while I ran the net. The Boston Amateur Radio Club Net will return next Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time. This is «YOUR CALL» returning the repeater to general amateur use. 73.

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I See the Future

17 September	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
20 September	Flea at MIT
26 – 27 September	CQ WW RTTY DX Contest
2 – 3 October	NEARFest, New Boston, NH
15 October	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
18 October	Flea at MIT
24 – 25 October	CQ WW SSB DX Contest
7 November	FARA Fest flea market, Bourne, MA
7 – 8 November	ARRL Sweepstakes, CW
19 November	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
21 – 23 November	ARRL Sweepstakes, SSB
28 – 29 November	CQ WW CW DX Contest

▲ *Note change from usual date and/or location*
(Rp) = BARC Repeaters will be used for these events

As you might expect, there are many more events (public service, hamfests, flea markets, etc.) taking place—some only peripheral to ham radio. For information on these, covering much of the Northeast, the “Ham - Electronic Flea Market” and the “PSLIST” lists tell the story. Of course, if you know of an event that would be of interest to the readers, please let the Editor know. For an up-to-date calendar of events, including web links, visit <http://www.barc.org/calendar>.

Businesses Can Advertise Here

The SPARC accepts commercial advertisements. BARC encourages monthly promotion of your products and services which would be of interest to hundreds of our members and others interested in the Amateur Radio Service.

The rates for display advertising are:

1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$15 per issue
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$75 per 6 consecutive months
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$125 per 12 consecutive months
1 col × 4 in. (½ column)	\$30 per issue
1 col × 9.5 in. (full column)	\$60 per issue

Originals of ads must be presented to the Editor in MS Word or .jpg format to print 1:1. Other composition will be at extra cost. We will be glad to quote other ad sizes and durations. Members are urged to seek prospective advertisers who are appropriate to our readers. For additional information, contact Joe Chapman, NV1W, at 617.267.6349 or nv1w@arrl.net.

Two Ways to See Yourself in Print! (well, PDF) – Joe Harris, N1QD

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter. I have reserved this space for your articles, reviews, tips, how-tos, hints ‘n’ kinks, photos, schematics, or other ham related information. Photos of you operating or your shack are especially welcome. Send your submissions to the Editor, Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org. Articles for the July issue must be received by July 4.

Are you a depressed BARC member because you have a treasure you must turn to cash? Cheer up, Bunky! The SPARC will run your (non-business) ad for free. Of course, a 10% donation if you sell it will be cheerfully accepted. Just send your ad to Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Volunteer Exam Sessions

The Boston Amateur Radio Club offers license exams quarterly. The next session will be held on Monday, July 13, at 7:30 pm. Test sessions are held at Artisans Asylum, 96 Holton St., Boston, MA 02135.

We give all exams (Technician, General, and Extra). *Testing is by reservation only.* Please bring the following with you:

- Your current license and a photocopy for the ARRL, if you are upgrading
- Any CSCEs you are claiming, and a photocopy of them
- Valid picture ID or two valid non-picture IDs
- A pen and a calculator (if you want to)
- **\$15.00** (good for all the tests you take at that session, except for retests)

Note: Written tests can be taken sequentially at the same session for the same \$15 fee. The needed FCC forms will be provided.

To reserve a seat or for further information, contact: Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net, or Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net.

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NEW ENGLAND SCI-TECH

New England Sci-Tech Inc is a new 501(c)(3) STEM education center, amateur radio training center, and maker space located at 16 Tech Circle, Natick. It is home to New England Amateur Radio Inc (NE1AR) and the youth radio club Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS). NE Sci-Tech welcomes memberships and donations via www.NESciTech.org or www.NE1AR.org.

BARC Officers and Staff

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The Boston Amateur Radio Club is a non-commercial association of persons interested in the Amateur Radio Service. The Club is organized for the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and education, for the establishment of emergency communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies, for the advancement of the radio art and the public welfare, for the representation of the radio amateur in legislative and regulatory matters, and for the maintenance of collegiality and a high standard of conduct.

The Club is open to all persons interested in Amateur Radio without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual preference. Our General and Business meeting locations are handicap accessible. Other meeting and activity locations may be handicap accessible by arrangement.

The Club is an ARRL-affiliated club, and is a member of the New England Spectrum Management Council (NESMC). The Club is also an associate member of the Courage HandiHams system.

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Greater Boston Net Directory

Daily 7 pm	MARI (Mass/Rhode Island CW Net) (NTS)	3.565
Daily 8 pm	Eastern Mass 2M Traffic Net (NTS)	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Daily 8 pm	Slow Speed CW Net	28.160
Sun–Fri 9:45 pm, Sat 10 pm	Heavy Hitters Traffic Net (NTS)	MMRA-linked repeaters: 146.610, 146.670, 146.715, 146.820, and all 222 and 440 repeaters
First Mon 8:30 pm	EMA Section ARES Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Mon 7 pm	Two Meter SSB Net	144.244 USB
Mon 8 pm	New England DMR Net	DMR New England Talk Group (TG 3181)
Mon 9 pm	BARC Club Net	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Mon Wed Fri 6 pm	The 6 O'clock Net	145.130 (PL 107.2)
Tue Thu Sat 5 pm	MA RI Phone Net (NTS)	3.978
Tue 8 pm	Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS) Net	446.325 (PL 146.2)
Tue 8 pm	MMRA Club Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Wed 8 pm	Wellesley Amateur Radio Society Net	147.030; 444.600 (PL 88.5)
Wed 9 pm	Waltham Wranglers Swap Net	146.640 (PL 136.5)
Sat 9 am	Northeast SATERN Net	7.265
Sun 9:30 am	Yankee SSB Net	50.272
Sun 8 pm	Algonquin Amateur Radio Club Net	446.675 (PL 88.5)
Sun 8:30 pm	NSRA Net (with Newsline)	145.470 (PL 136.5)
Sun 7 pm	CAARAnet	145.130 (PL 107.2)



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1



2



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Association
Learn and Live

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