

## 20170905 - Trailer Committee Report

Details

### NPARC Trailer Committee Report by John Eagle VE3HWE Sept 5, 2017

In January 2017, I was appointed as the Chairman of the Trailer Committee by our then president, Eric Meth (VE3EI). The committee consisted of Henry VA3OV, Mike VE3CKO and myself.

#### Our Objective:

- Demonstrate the feasibility of using an enclosed trailer as a temporary radio station for events as opposed to using gazebos or tents

In order to achieve this objective, it was deemed that a rental trailer needed to be found and set up in various event settings where the club participates. A trailer was found at a reasonable cost and was used at the following events...

- Initial setup and demo at Charles Daley Park
- Ride for Roswell net control station
- Field Day HF station (actually had 2 trailers but only one was used as a radio station)
- Niagara Falls Canada Day Parade
- Canal Days in Port Colborne

#### Charles Daley Park:

- The first event at Charles Daley Park was to set up a station as a trial run to see what equipment was required and to see how it would be perceived by the attendees. It seems that we enough gear to set up a 2M station and an HF station. Our HF antenna was only a North-South dipole sloping from the top of 3 10-foot pieces of 1"-1/2" mast. We tried to work the 3 stations that we heard on SSB (Puerto Rico, Mexico City and California) but were unsuccessful. However, Rick VE3MM rode his bicycle to the Park. He brought with him a collapsible antenna and an Elkraft radio and worked half a dozen stations on CW!!
  - The weather for this event was sunny with wind gusts.



## Ride For Roswell:

- The Ride for Roswell would have been set up as a 2M net control station. However, it wasn't needed as the weather was very cooperative.

## Field Day:

- For Field Day, there were 2 trailers. The first was a 6x12. However, the request for the second trailer was late and we could only get a 5x8 unit. There was one HF station working FON but it had originally been thought to have a second station had there been other antennae available.
  - The weather during this event was variable. It went from windy to sunny to rainy to windy to sunny etc...



## Niagara Falls Canada Day Parade:

- The Niagara Falls Canada Day Parade was set up as a 2M net control station.
  - The weather this day was rainy. Up until the parade started at which time the sun came out to light up the parade.

## Canal Days at Port Colborne:

- Canal Days would have cost us over \$100 in trailer rental fees since this is a Friday to Monday event. However, there were no volunteers to pick up and setup the trailer for this event.

## Equipment:

- The trailers were rented from Hitchman Trailers in Grimsby. The trailer was either 10 feet or 12 feet long (whichever was available) by 6 feet wide and 6.5 feet tall.
- The following items were supplied from the NPARC inventory
  - The 2M station consisted of a 2M radio, power supply;
  - The HF station consisted of an HF station and power supply;
  - GFI devices, extension cords, safety cones;
  - Tables and chairs.
- The following items were loaned/borrowed from NPARC members...
  - Generators;
  - Antennae;
  - Antenna mounts;

- 12V Batteries (for 2M net control stations);
- Tow vehicles.
- Incidentals and other miscellaneous pieces were acquired from resourceful members.

### **Equipment Setup:**

- Setup of the radio stations took less than 1 hour. Once the trailer was positioned ...
  - Tables were set up
  - Equipment was unpacked
  - NPARC Banner affixed to trailer
  - Antennae were setup
  - VHF and HF rigs were connected

### **Using a Trailer for NPARC Events:**

For the most part, everyone was pleased to see how easy it was to set up a radio station using the trailer as a ham shack. Most of the comments were in favour of using a trailer for events.

Here are some observations that were made those attending the events...

#### **PROS (Using Trailer):**

- Ease of transporting equipment
- Ready-made shelter from the weather
- Can be used to support antennae using appropriate fixtures
- No time and effort spent on handling, erecting, dismantling and packing gazebos and/or tents
- Can be pulled by any vehicle with 2000 lb towing capability

#### **CONS (Using Trailer):**

- Not everyone can pull a trailer
- The trailer is made of aluminum and/or fibreglass which makes a magnetic mount useless
- Extra equipment to purchase to properly outfit the trailer (Generator, Batteries, Antenna Masts, etc)
- Equipment needs to be loaded at the beginning and unloaded at the end of each event and inside the trailer needs to be cleaned
- NPARC signage needs to be somehow affixed to the trailer or a convenient location ( Aluminum construction rules out magnets)

## Owning a Trailer vs Renting a Trailer:

### PROS (Owning Trailer):

- NPARC advertising can be painted on the trailer
- Equipment can be stored in the trailer
- Ready for use on short notice
- Trailer can be customized to our particular needs

### CONS (Owning Trailer):

- Cost of Ownership
  - Initial outlay (~ \$4K + \$500 for signage)
  - License plate (~ \$72 - no yearly renewal fee)
  - Storage (~ \$60/month)
- How many events will require a trailer?

### PROS (Renting Trailer):

- Cost of Rental
- \$35.00 per day. Most of our events are one day or two days on Saturday and/or Sunday.
- Unit can be picked up the previous day. Consequently, it can be loaded and ready for the day of the event.
- Hitchman doesn't charge for Sundays as they are closed

### CONS (Renting Trailer):

- Need to reserve well in advance (cannot guarantee availability on short notice rental)
- Trailer cannot be returned on Sundays (Hitchman is closed)

**NOTE:** Insurance for the trailer while being towed is covered by the vehicle's insurance. Insurance for equipment is already an expense to the club.

## Recommendations:

It is the opinion of this committee that the use of a trailer for NPARC events is a great idea. A trailer makes transportation and setup of equipment required for a temporary radio station quite easy and simple. Protection from the elements is the biggest plus.

Provided that we do pursue using a trailer for events, the question is do we rent or do we buy.

It is recommended that, at this time, we continue to use the rental trailer for NPARC events. Purchase of a trailer at this time is not warranted.

It is also recommended that the following items be considered for purchase to better equip the trailer for event and possible emergency usage:

- Honda generator
  - This unit has been approved by the ARRL technical lab as it has a proper sine wave and minimal generated electrical noise. This unit is quiet and economical to run and demonstrated at our 2017 Field Day.
- Portable Antenna mounts for 2M and for HF antennae
  - This could be in the form of PVC pipe and/or conduit which will support our R7 HF antenna.
- Dual band VHF/UHF vertical antenna (ie Diamond X50).
  - This could be attached to an antenna mast above
- Lengths of RG8X and/or RG58X Coax (50 ft, 75 ft, 100ft)
- Plastic storage containers to be used exclusively for the trailer
  - This will facilitate loading and unloading of the trailer

These are the conclusions of this committee. And, as always, ALL of these decisions are left up to the membership.