

The Rochester VHF Group

The VHF



Journal

Volume 61, Issue 6

Feb. 2010

The next regular meeting of the Rochester VHF Group will be Friday, February 12th, 2010, 7:30 PM

Spencerport Wesleyan Church
2653 Nichols St., Spencerport

Map and directions in back

In this issue:

The Chairman Speaks!
Secretary Report
Treasurer's Report
The Vice Chairman's Report
January VHF Contest Reports
Upcoming Hamfests
Classified

Topics:

6M Propagation, Operation, Tips & Techniques

The Chairman Speaks! Dave Hallidy K2DH

Groupers: First, let me speak about the status of our upgrade to the club website. Nick Ibarluzea has been contracted by the RVHFG to move our website into the 21st century, and he's doing a good job. There's been a slight slowdown to the project, though- he was injured over the holidays in a snowboarding accident and his recovery has been a bit slower than expected. But, we have a "beta" web front page and what has been done so far is very impressive. We believe that we're only weeks away from having a web presence we can show the members and be proud of. In the meantime, we may make some temporary changes to the current web pages to at least make the content there accurate. Stay tuned.

Second on the list of good things is that we are going to have a banquet. Once again a joint effort with our good friends of the RDXA, this year's affair will be a bit different. It will be on April 24th, from 1-4pm (yes, during the daytime) at Nick's Seabreeze Inn on Culver Road in Seabreeze. Nick's is a very good restaurant specializing in Italian food. This will be more of a luncheon, but we will have the whole place to ourselves and as it was described to me a "quality buffet".

Continued....

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The Chairman Speaks! continued...

...I don't have pricing information yet, but I can tell you from previous research we've done considering Nick's in the past, the prices will be very reasonable. As soon as I have that info, I'll post it to the club reflector. But mark the date and plan to attend- I guarantee it will be a good time!

The 2010 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes is history. How did you do? It seemed like there was a fair amount of local activity. I didn't have a lot of time to participate, but managed to make QSOs on all the bands I have active, including down into NJ and CT on 1296. Reminder: If you operated in the contest, don't forget to send in your log, and be sure to list the Rochester VHF Group as your club in order to have your score included in the club competition.

I've recently acquired an SDR (Software Defined Radio). This is a big step for me, because I like radios with knobs and switches. I bought an SDR-IQ, which is just a receiver. It operates from 50 kHz to 30 MHz and costs about \$500. This thing is about the size of an Altoids box, has absolutely NO hardware controls on it, and it's even powered by the USB port of the computer, so it doesn't even have a line cord or power switch! The software is the key (as you might guess, since it's called a **SOFTWARE Defined Radio**), and there are lots of different programs out there (many are free) which will make the radio behave differently. I've only just scratched the surface of this relatively new technology, but suffice to say it's pretty amazing and a real learning experience. As I discover more about this, I'll put an article together and maybe a program for the club.

The next meeting of the RVHFG will be held at 7:30pm on Friday February 12th, 2010 at the Spencerport Wesleyan Church on Rte 31 in Spencerport (see the back page of this newsletter for directions if you haven't been there before). This month's program will be very interesting! Mark Hoffman K2AXX, who has been Chairman of this great group in years past and always a very active VHF'er, will be speaking about "The Magic Band"- 6 Meters! Mark is VERY active on 6, and will tell all he knows (well, as much as will fit into the evening, anyway) about propagation, equipment, DX, and making QSO's on 6 Meters. Mark is a very engaging speaker, so you won't be bored- come to the meeting and be both entertained and educated!

PLEASE pan on attending the meeting this month- the club is its members, and it's only as good as YOU make it- come, tell us what you like/don't like, and your BoD will listen and work to make the club greater than it already is. I know you'll enjoy what we have for you this month!

73

Dave Hallidy K2DH

Secretary Report

Judy Stonehill, N2KXS

Rochester VHF Group Meeting Minutes for January 11, 2009

The general meeting, held at the Spencerport Wesleyan Church, was convened at 2021, local, by the Even Year Director, Fred, WO2P.

Attendees were W3OAB, WB2QCJ, AB2YI, K2OS, WO2P, and N2KXS.

OLD BUSINESS

Frank, K2OS, moved that the minutes of the December 2009 meeting be accepted as printed in the Journal. John, W3OAB, seconded the motion and the motion was passed by the attendees.

Dean, WB2QCJ, moved that the December Treasurer's report be accepted as printed in the Journal. Dave, AB2YI, seconded the motion which was then passed by the attendees. There was no updated information to relay on the status of the beacons.

NEW BUSINESS

Wiring for an audio system in the lower level was installed for the Spencerport Wesleyan Church by the meeting attendees this evening. There was discussion about other things we could do for the church in return for the use of their meeting facilities each month.

Attendees talked about their plans for the upcoming January VHF contest including the installation and testing of equipment.

John, W3OAB, told the group about this year's Science Days at the Rochester Museum and Science Center. He emphasized what a great opportunity it is to introduce youngsters to amateur radio. Attendance is enormous and includes many youngsters. The group discussed possible approaches that could be used to introduce young folks to ham radio, e.g., code sending and receiving with a demonstration of how much more efficient Morse code is than texting. A slow-scan demo might also be of interest.

Dave, AB2YI, who has not worked the January VHF contest before, described his mobile setup and his plans for the contest. He had some questions on modifications he is considering to the configuration which generated a lot of discussion. Fred suggested that Dave submit photos of his mobile setup to the RVHFG Journal.

Fred, WO2P, moved that the meeting be adjourned. Judy, N2KXS, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2144, local.

Rochester VHF Group Treasurer's Report – January 2010

CHECKING ACCOUNT

<u>Previous Balance</u> (as of 12/31/09):	\$ 1,945.26
Income:	
Membership dues	\$ 10.00
Expenses:	\$ 0.00
<u>Current Balance</u>	\$ 1,955.26

*Respectfully submitted,
Judy Stonehill, N2KXS, Treasurer*

The Vice Report February 2010

The January VHF Contest was great fun. I can't say I worked out further than usual, or hooked into any unusual propagation, but I got to exercise a lot of equipment that has been quiet for a while, and made some improvements to boot. I was able to get my 222 SSB gear running, at least to the 200 watt level and make a few Q's. I put up a short tower on the west side of the property that looks out from the trees and placed 6M and 432 on that rotor. The end result was a little more agility for the four lower bands. How about your station...any thing new? Please feel free to share some images, comments, cool new gadgets.

February Meeting: Coming up here in February on Friday the 12th, we will present **Mark Hoffman, K2AXX** and a program loosely titled "6M Propagation, Operation, Tips and Techniques". Mark is an accomplished HF/VHF/UHF/SHF operator, former President of the RVHFG, active contester, engaging speaker, equipment builder and all-around knowledgeable guy.

This should be a great mid-winter warm up for the return of some good conditions, springtime antenna plans, and stories of DX past, present and future. Experienced VHF'ers and those just interested in learning more about the "Magic Band" will find this a must hear and see.

Please bring a friend, and noise it around on the bands!

Plans for the springtime include **Dale AF1T and Mickey W1MKY** presenting an **Introduction to VHF/UHF Antennas**. I have seen what they have been doing at several of the conferences and it is an entertaining as well as fascinating presentation. This is something that will appeal to old timers and new hams as well. Dale and Mickey come from Henniker NH, and are very active during the summer months especially from Martha's Vineyard and Block Island on 10 GHz.

Also in the agenda for speakers in the spring months is **Jeff Ach W2FU**, coming in to update us on advances in wireless rotor controls and other new stuff of interest to the HF/VHF/UHF/SHF operator.

We are looking forward to all of these upcoming presentations. Stay tuned for more.

As always, we need to know what you would like to see and hear at the Monthly meetings.

Please forward me any of your ideas, interests, criticisms or comments to wb2byp at arrl dot net. Seriously folks, we can only do this with feedback. Catch any one of the Board members or Directors on the air, on the Net, email or just give a call at 585-415-4973.

Our Monday Night Net and the Thursday Night Nets continue to be well attended. Continuing on the topic of 6M activity, there was a Sporadic-E opening on 01 February bringing some activity in from the central mid-west and mid south states. That is a little bit shorter than usual, but due to timing in the early evening there were still a fair number of stations active. We held our usual net on 144.260 at 2100 local, and when it came time to go to 50.200, we elected to forgo the Net and just get in there and mix it up with the ongoing activity. Just for something different, I tuned up the band to see if there was any activity on 50.400 AM and sure enough there were several stations. Tuning up further I landed on 52.525 FM and listened to the multitude of stations coming in. I worked KB0DKE in EM40, W4RRA in EM67, N0TOP in EM48, W1JWS (nice call sign...) in EN50 and W0WIE in EN21. I missed several others in the chaos of simplex FM and the band opening to a widespread geographic area. Many of the stations were running multi-mode transceivers. I used an antiquated RCA Carfone base station that makes about 50W out into a 3 element yagi. It was fun to blow the dust off of an old rig in the process.

Here's a short list of other things coming up:

June 12 - 14 ARRL June VHF QSO Party

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/calendar.html?year=2010>

July 17 - 18 CQWW VHF

<http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com>

August 7 - 8 ARRL UHF Contest

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/calendar.html?year=2010>

September 11 - 13 ARRL September VHF QSO Party

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/calendar.html?year=2010>

Springs Sprints - Start in April. Single band and run for 4 hours per night for 5 weeks

Fall Sprints - Start in September. Single band and run for 4 hours per night for 5 weeks

73,

John, wb2byp

The 2010 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes Reports

K2QO Goes Limited Multi-Op

About 2 weeks before the contest, my rover partner Paul (W2TAU) and I were trying to figure out our plans for the January VHF Sweepstakes. We were hoping that the new K2TER/R super rover would be going out and I was salivating over what could be a new record score for us. W2TAU enthusiasm was muted noting that on the face of it, the K2TER team had whopping task to get their rover ready and doubted that could find the time to finish.

About that time, my boss at work asked if I'd go to some asbestos training which I'd been putting off and he had the dates in hand. He noted that an office mate was going. That seemed good and I signed up. A day or two later I realized that it was the two days before the contest. When would I put the rover together? I did not want to drive it into downtown Buffalo for two days. So Paul was fine with scrapping the contest and I suggested that if he'd help me get 2M up on the tower that we could do a Limited Multi from home. With thoughts of lots of hot coffee, easy access to food and the head and space to stretch, we decided to give it a try. For the past 7 years we've been wondering how a VHF contest from home might work out and we were about to find out.

A 2M Yagi had to be ordered up and since my tower is at its rotor limit it had to be fairly small. The M² 2M7 looked good and R&L had it at my door in 2 days with standard shipping. So far so good. With the Yagi in hand, the rover rack was dismantled and two operating positions were setup. One was almost ready to go as it was my HF/6M setup.

With only a few days to the contest, I was wrestling over computers and software. I knew that when I presented Paul with a computer on which to log, he could likely whip out a silver spike and hammer it into the CPU. Whatever I did it had to be SIMPLE. I was toying with N1MM and RoverLog, figuring out keyers and trying to get my Dell to work with 2 radios for my operating

position. After loads of emails and trouble shooting I was out of time and had to decide. So, VHFNet by N3FJP would have to do. I've used his software for general logging for a long time. I also use the contest modules for contests where I'll only make a few QSOs thereby saving me a step or two merging with my main log. The logging program was met with some skepticism but in the end W2TAU did fine. The huge bonus is that instead of entering all off his paper logs, I can instead write this article!

So, the setup ended up as follows:

Station 1:

Dell laptop, WinKey USB, Logikeyer for 222

2M: FT100D, 150W Amp, 7-el Yagi up 55' on the tower

222: K2/Elecraft 222 Transverter, no amp, 8-el Handbook Quagi on a ladder at roof level.

This station was setup with dual monitors, the second being a 24" LCD that allowed multiple windows to be open including aprs.fi to follow the ONE rover in the area, a DX cluster to look at VHF spots and the semi live Hepburn tropo maps to ensure that we'd be pointing in the right direction should some "red" appear.

Station 2:

Dell Laptop, Keying via parallel port interface

6M and 432: Icom 706 MkIIg,

6M: 4-el Yagi at 60' on the tower, 100W

432: 100W, 15-el Handbook Quagi on ladder, just above roof level.

2M FM: Yaesu FT1802, 50W and 3-el Vertical Yagi on ladder tower.

On the rover, we use antennas that top out at 6' boom length so these antennas were a nice upgrade terms of gain and it turns out we'd need that gain. The downside is of course pointing. We did not realize just how sharp the Quagis were until well into the contest. Also, the ladder tower was not as high as I had originally planned and the Quagis ended up around the same height as the peak of my roof. These antennas had a good shot from about SW > N and through E. The rest of the run back to SW is clogged with trees and the house.

So, at 2PM Saturday we were ready to go and hoping for great things. What materialized was mediocrity. Conditions were just OK, many Qs that we make from the rover with ease were a bear and the deal killer, at least for me, was that we could only work each fixed station ONCE! Who came up with that rule! After noon on Sunday, finding fresh meat was very tough.

Radios? Yes we had four in play and in the end one did not play at all. Testing before the contest I noticed that 222 did make power. I traced it back to my FT-817 and its finals that were putting out a whopping 30 mW. The Elecraft transverter will work well with 1 mW, 250 mW or 5 W. W2TAU brought his 817 as a backup and while it worked fine, it was only driving the transverter to 15W. I made a command decision and pressed the K2 into service. It is not my favorite radio for SSB but it is plug and play with split RX/TX, I/O control and the like. In the end, the K2/XV222 combo was putting out a full twenty watts and made some good 300 miles Qs.

The FT-100D and IC-706 work well on the road being small and having a nice feature set. Unfortunately, both are pretty deaf on 432 making this band somewhat limiting. Tripling the feed line length for the home station did not help matters.

On the bright side, the new 2M M² Yagi played very nicely, the new Yaesu rotor on the tower

with point and shoot was a hit, and the N3FJP software was solid. I would not recommend it for a serious run but for a casual operation it is fine.

So, what is bottom line? No more VHF contesting from home. K2QO is going back to roving! Yes, look for K2QO and W2TAU out on the open road for future contests. I started roving out of necessity because it was easier to set up a rover than to put up a tower at my previous QTH. And with 18 plus roves in the books for the K2QO crew, I've become addicted to operating from the best locations available. It is an absolute rush driving up the big hill and hearing the increasing signal levels. The excitement and anticipation of pileups build as well.

One thing is clear regardless of how you approach VHF contesting. GET ON THE AIR! The more people that get, the better. That entices even more to join in.

73 es CU in the next VHF contest, Mark K2QO/R

WA2ZNC' Report

I set up for the contest, as usual for me, on Saturday morning. I encountered many of the usual problems and a few terrible ones. I was in and out of the house, with the family needs, and the football games, left little time, for radios (my fault). I worked 5 bands, got 15 multipliers with 37 contacts, equals 663 points (not very good). Log in the mail to ARRL.

Len WA2ZNC

W2LC's Report

Here is what not to do. Don't run an FT-817 without a power amplifier. I figure I have 2.0W at the antenna on 6m; 1.25W at the antenna on 2m; and 0.5W at the antenna on 432.

Needless to say, I can hear more than I can work. I can work most of the big stations provided they turn their antenna towards me and can copy CW.

I'll send in my measly score for the RVHFG, about 30 QSO's and 15 grid squares.

73 Scott W2LC
Section Manager - Western New York

K2TER/R's Report

Paul's, W2TAU, observation that the K2TER team had whopping task to get their rover ready was correct but we did find the time to finish about an hour into the contest. It wasn't easy as Bill had to fly off to the west coast a couple of times as part of his job. Our plan was to have the lower six bands operational and travel around the local grids. We would start out in FN13 (Bill's driveway) for the first few hours of the contest then travel to FN12 for the evening, visiting Judy, N2KXS, and Fred, WO2P, along the way. We would spend Sunday in FN02, FN03, and finish up at Woodcliff in FN13. But after a couple hours operating Saturday, Murphy showed up so we never left Bill's driveway. The generator was making all sorts of funny noises resulting in a decision to stay put. We got together again Sunday to see if we could make some repairs but decided it was best left to the professionals. This was a good chance to get some experience with the new rover as we ran the generator and extended the mast, turned the rotor, and best of all we made some Qs!

Tom, KV2X



The new K2TER Rover



Bill, K2TER



Tom, KV2X

Upcoming Hamfests

Ev, W2EV, was kind enough to forward me WNY Hamfest info for this year from the ARRL Western New York Section Manager: Scott J. Bauer, W2LC. So be sure to mark your calendar.

27 Feb 2010 29th Annual Winter Hamfest located at the NYS Armory, Colonial Drive, in Horseheads NY, sponsored by the Amateur Radio Association of the Southern Tier, Inc. Talk-In: 147.360+ (no tone). Contact: Charlie Santi, KA2BED, 6 Hickory Grove Road, Horseheads, NY 14845. Email: 2010WinterFest@arast.org.

14 Mar 2010 Greater Buffalo Hamfest, located at the Ismailia Shrine Center, 1600 Southwestern Blvd, Route 20 in West Seneca, NY. Sponsored by the Lancaster Amateur Radio Club. Talk-In: 147.255 (PL 107.2). Contact: Luke Calianno, N2GDU, 1105 Ransom Road, Lancaster, NY 14086. Email: luke48@gmail.com.

17 Apr 2010 Drumlins Hamfest sponsored by the Drumlins ARC will be held at the Marletown Fire Department, 6416 Silver Hill Road Newark, NY. Talk-In: 146.745 (no tones). (Backup 146.685 no tones). Contact: David Taylor, KB2KBY, 228 West Jackson Street, Palmyra, NY 14522. Phone: 315-597-4293. Email: kb2kby@rochester.rr.com.

18 April 2010: BARA Hamfest sponsored by the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, located at the Port Crane Fire Company, 844 Route 369 in Port Crane NY. Talk-in 146.865 (PL 146.2), contact: Brian Adee K2DLB, 1060 Bunn Hill Rd., Vestal NY, 13850, email: k2dlb@arrl.net.

5 June 2010: Atlantic Division Convention (**Rochester Hamfest**) sponsored by the Rochester Amateur Radio Association. Talk-In: 146.280/146.880 (PL 110.9). Contact: Duane Fregoe, K2SI, 46 Denishire Drive, Rochester, NY 14624. Email: k2si@arrl.net

17 July 2010: RADIOCOMM 2010 located at the Herkimer County Fairgrounds, Cemetery Street in Frankfort, NY, is sponsored by the Utica Amateur Radio Club, Inc. Talk-In: 146.760. Contact: Marty Benedict, w2mvp, 315 Marion Street, Herkimer, NY 13350. Email: w2mvp@arrl.net

24 Jul 2010 Batavia Hamfest located at the Alexander Volunteer Fire Department Grounds, Route 98, in Alexander, NY, is sponsored by the Genesee Radio Amateurs, Inc. Talk-In: 146.52. Contact: Harold Hay, W2ABQ, c/o Genesee Radio Amateurs, PO Box 572, Batavia, NY 14021. Phone: 585-343-2844. Email: abqhay@rochester.rr.com.

7 Aug 2010 Ithaca Hamfest also known as the Finger Lakes Hamfest, located at the Trumansburg Fairgrounds, Route 96 in Trumansburg, NY, is sponsored by the Tompkins County Amateur Radio Club. Talk-In: 146.97 (PL 103.5). Contact: Kevin Romer, KC2MLC, 6462 State Route 227, Trumansburg, NY 14886. Email: kc2mlc@arrl.net.

14 August 2010 Rome Hamfest sponsored by the Rome Radio Club will be held at the Westmoreland Fire Department grounds on Station Rd in Westmoreland NY. Talk-in is 146.88 (PL151.4). Contact info: Tony WA2GBE, 134 Glen Rd. South, Rome NY, 13440. Email is WA2GBE@verizon.net. Directions: NYS thruway to exit 32, after the toll turn right at the light, then left onto Rt 233. Left at the next light, Station Rd, the Fireman's Field is on the right.

21 Aug 2010: 2010 Ham-Jam sponsored by the Central New York Amateur Radio Association, will be held at the Deerfield Volunteer Fire Department, 5476 Trenton Road in Deerfield, NY. Talk-In: 145.210(-). Contact: Brian Lekki, KC2UQR, 458 Butler Road, Poland, NY 13431. Email: KC2UQR@gmail.com

18 Sept 2010 RAGS Hamfest at the Pompey Hills Fire department on the corner of Academy St., and Henneberry Rd in Pompey NY. Talk-in 147.30 (no PL). VE exams at 10AM, walk-ins accepted. A great breakfast and lunch is available courtesy of the fine FD cooks. Indoor and outdoor flea market spaces available. Contact: RAGS, BOX 88, Liverpool, NY 13088.

25 Sept 2010 35th Annual Elmira Hamfest sponsored by the Amateur Radio Association of the Southern Tier, Inc., at the Chemung County Fair Grounds, Grand Central Ave in Horseheads NY. Talk-In: 147.360+ (no tone). Contact: Charlie Santi, KA2BED, 6 Hickory Grove Road, Horseheads, NY 14845. Email: 2010Septemberfest@arast.org.

73 Scott W2LC ARRL WNY Section Manager

Classified Listings

Excellent TS-850s w/mod for external RX antenna is for sale. Set up that way for Transverter use. I have the original packaging. Make offer or let me know if you're interested and we'll haggle.
Jeff, W2FU

Wanted: 3456 Antenna. If you have one you want to sell, contact Ken Kent, KA2LIM

For Sale by K2TER

IF Rigs:

See January 2000 QST "Hotwiring the TS-690" by Rus Healy K2UA for transverter mod docs. These are the 3 radios mentioned

Kenwood TS-690SAT (2) – email for condition, IF filter choices, and price.

Kenwood TS-450S

Others:

Realistic HTX-100 (2) – with NJ2L transverter mod \$60 each

Brand new in box HTX-100 - \$150 – unconverted

Transverters:

Built by DEM 2304-144 transverter - 1W \$375 firm

DEM 144-28 - 30W output \$250 firm

Microwave Modules 432-28 – 10W w/two LO frequencies - \$80

Rochester VHF Group 432-28 - \$50

Amplifiers:

2304 MHz 60w amplifier module - \$100

3456 MHz Toshiba 20w Amplifier - \$60

5760 – Avantec 10W amplifier - \$110

10 GHz – Avantec 5W amplifier - \$150

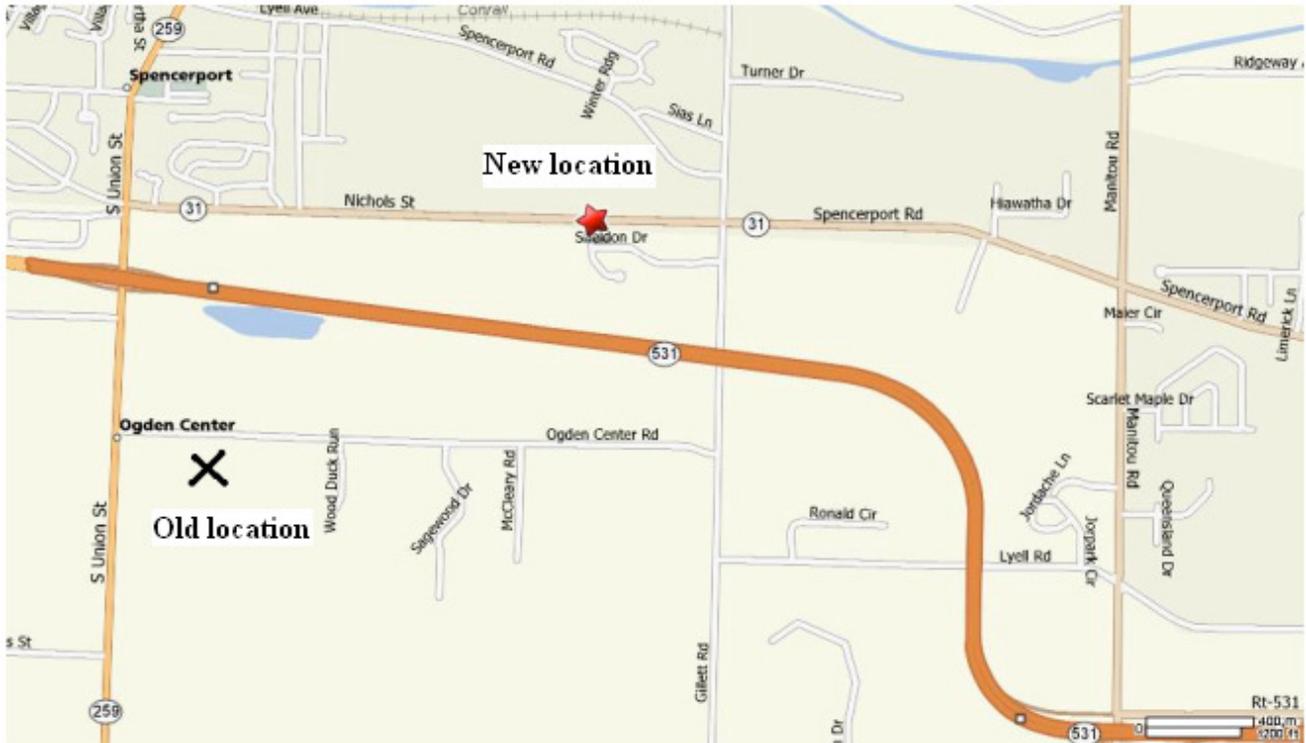
Accessories:

DEM Transverter interface for TS-850 - \$45

2 - 22' Military crank up towers – call for details

If interested, please email Bill Rogers, K2TER at k2ter@rochester.rr.com

Meeting Location and Directions



Spencerport Wesleyan Church on 2653 Nichols St. (actually Hwy. 31).

Directions from Rochester:

531W exit RT. to 259N

259N turn Rt. on 31E (first Rt. at traffic light)

Look for Spencerport Schools Bus Garage on left

Take first Rt. on Sheldon at A-framed church, park in rear lot.

Enter gray metal door under fire escape.