

Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for March 5, 2009

Carl Bulger presided.

The BSCC Website Committee reported. Chaired by Vic Kiviat, the committee includes Eric Hein, Ted Tuck, Barry Hammond, Bob Rapczynski and Richard Henthorn. Eric Hein, who has been doing the "heavy lifting", gave the presentation. Pages proposed for the website are **Home**

Page: Club's name, what we do, where we meet including a map and a link to driving directions. **Meetings** page: Descriptions of upcoming meetings and minutes of past meetings.

Training page: Schedules of on-going classes and future classes. List of proposed classes.

Contact page: List of Officers and committees and email addresses for up to 16 officers and committees.

Links: Links to members' webpages. These sites don't have to be computer related and may include blogs.

Freeware: Listing and brief descriptions free downloadable programs with links. Any suggestions will welcomed and considered.

You can see the website at <http://home.comcast.net/~bscclub/>

The committee wants the website running no later than June when the website provided by our present web hosting service, Gate.com, expires.

Dan Lee demonstrated Skype, a free program, downloadable from Skype.com for making calls over the internet using Voice Over the

Internet Protocol (VOIP). Calls from computer to computer are free. If you call a landline or cellphone number, there are charges that you must pay for from an account that you have previously set up by buying Skype credits.

Or you can subscribe to a calling plan for unlimited calling within the U.S. and Canada (\$2.95/mo.); to 34 countries including the U.S. and Canada and parts of Mexico (\$5.95/mo.) or to the above plus all of Mexico at discount rates (\$9.95/mo.). Per minute charges for international calls are as low as 2.1 cents/minute.

Calls you receive are free. You can either receive them on your landline or cellphone or you can get an online number from Skype for calls to your computer.

Incoming calls can be saved in Voicemail if you're offline or forwarded to you on a landline or cellphone.

Conference calls with up to 25 locations are free. You set them up yourself.

You can send text messages via the Short Message Service (SMS).

You can use File Transfer Protocol to send pictures or files.

Skype does not provide 911 emergency calling service. Don't get rid of your regular telephone.

You can use a telephone connected to your computer wired or wirelessly. For hands free communication you will need a hands free telephone, a headset with an attached microphone, a microphone and speaker on your computer or desk, or a webcam with a microphone included and a speaker or headset.

A webcam will broadcast your image, or whatever it is pointed toward, as well as your voice. If there are more than one of you on your end of the conversation, it is usually more convenient to use the webcam's microphone and the computer's speakers. You could also buy a desktop internet phone that connects directly to the internet to make Skype calls. Skype has certified 190 devices and accessories for quality. Learn more at skype.com/gear.

Dan demonstrated Skype by communicating with Dr. Norm Bohrer who was sitting on the far side of the room. Both had portable computers with wireless connection to the internet. Unfortunately, the wireless signal was weak and intermittent because the wireless router was in a room at the other end of the hall. Someone had inadvertently disconnected the wired connection to the internet so we couldn't use that.

These problems distracted from the Skype demonstration but allowed Sam Duff to again briefly describe his experiences using Magic Jack, which connects to a

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USB port on a computer and allows you to call people at other computers or to call landline or cellphones. Magic Jack costs \$40 including one year's service.

After the first year the cost is \$20 per year. Calls within the U.S. and Canada are free. There is a small charge for foreign calls. Because the device is small and portable, you can use it to make calls from public access computers. Callers who do not have Magic Jack will be charged for their phone calls to you.

You connect the Magic Jack to the USB port on the computer and connect any telephone or headset into the back of Magic Jack. You are supplied with a local telephone number. Make sure that it is local to where you live because Magic Jack does provide 911 service. However, when you call from outside your county, you may be unable to dial the 911 Emergency Center in that location.

Magic Jack has many satisfied customers but it also has many dissatisfied customers. When a problem occurs, they say that it is almost impossible to communicate with a live person.

Computer Problems:

Dick Henthorn solicited advice on how he could get into a network in Facebook with his fellow alumni and college friends. There are not a lot of Facebook users among us. Do any of you have grandchildren that would know?

Nora Darc's hard drive died. She bought a new one. She wants to know if she can get a free replacement for the XP operating system that was on the old hard drive. Apparently she does not have an XP system disk from either the computer manufacturer or Microsoft. Manufacturers like Dell and HP are putting the contents of what would be on the system disk on a partition of the master hard drive. This is unfortunate because when the hard drive fails the backup copy is lost along with the operating system. I have an HP computer. My "recovery partition" is labeled "Drive D:". It consumes 5 GB of my 160 GB master (and only) hard drive. If my hard drive fails, I'll have to use a recovery DVD that they allowed me to make when my computer was new. They allowed one copy only. Hopefully, it contains the information (Serial Number, computer hardware configuration, etc.) required for Microsoft to verify that this indeed is the same copy of XP that has always been on this computer. If she has her serial number copied somewhere she may be able to persuade MS to allow her to download a replacement copy. If not, she has a few months to buy a copy of XP. She can purchase an OEM version of XP from the online mail order merchant Newegg at about half price if she pretends she is building her own computer. You have to buy some piece of hardware at the same time. The major difference between an OEM version and a standard Microsoft version is the price. The reason the

price is less is because Microsoft offloads the responsibility for customer support to the manufacturer. When you build your own computer and install an OEM version you assume responsibility for your own support. That can be a problem!

Bob Davis was wondering if he can install Photo Elements 6 on two computers. I still have Photo Elements 2 and it only allows installation on one computer at a time, but I have moved it from one to another by uninstalling from one and reinstalling on the other..

. Microsoft organizes icons on my desktop poorly. I've organized them according to function. But whenever I have to boot into Safe Mode, those arrangements are permanently destroyed. I downloaded a free utility called "Fences" from www.stardock.com/products/fences/download-s.asp. It allows a user to group icons into functional groups, then construct a box around each group and apply a title to the box. Stardock says they intend to keep this version free. Next Fall they intend to come out with a Pro version with advanced features. This simpler version is fine.