



America's Boating Club® - Knoxville

For Boaters, By Boaters™



Now Hear This!

A Unit of District 17 of the United States Power Squadrons, Inc.®

Newsletter Vol 38 No 2

February 2026

Executive Committee 2026

Commander:
Cdr John Farmer, SN-IN
(865) 765-3407

Executive Officer:
Vacant

Administrative Officer:
Vacant

Education Officer:
Lt/C Jeff Schmitt, S
(410) 493-4395

Secretary:
Lt/C Walt Hanson, AP IN
(865) 803-5842

Treasurer:
Lt/C Barbara Schmitt
(410) 493-5072

Bridge Assistants 2026

Asst Education Officer:
1st/Lt Steve Brumit, AP-IN
(423) 737-9922

Commander-Elect's Report 1/3/2026



As the new commander for 2026, I am pushing very hard on new member recruitment and member retention! I need everyone to “like” and “follow” our Facebook page, where I post regularly. I share these posts with all the boating groups that I can find in the Knoxville area. We are seeing an increase in contacts, and other groups are approving my shared posts.

We have a new website at www.ABC-K.org. Please check it out, make comments and recommend it to all your boating friends. I would like to invite sailors and boat rental members to our outings to try to help us get the word out this year.

Please get ABC-K business cards [see page 3] and pass them out as often as possible. I print mine inexpensively with Avery 8871 Clean Edge Business Card Sheets and my laser printer. If you need help, just ask.

Please make suggestions for on-water and ashore events for 2026. This is your club, so let's make it something you and others can really enjoy. Please review our tentative calendar on Page 10 and share your suggestions. Some D17 clubs have stopped having dinner meetings, but we need something in the winter months. I can get our subdivision's clubhouse for \$75 anytime we want, and that is less than the restaurant's minimum. We could have dinner at Mimi's, Baker Peters, etc., if there is interest.

Please make your reservation for our Change of Watch. It is at Kirkwood Subdivision Clubhouse, 7860 Ellisville Lane, Knoxville, starting at 6:00 p.m. We will have McAlister's club sandwiches, etc., for only \$18.00 each. I am trying to hold prices down. There will be a short presentation after our District Commander swears in the new officers.



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Organization

GENERAL COMMITTEES – 2026

Audit

Chair: Lt/C Walt Hanson, AP-IN
 2-Year: Beth Fendley, S
 3-Year: **Vacant**

Nominating

Chair: Lt Ed Fendley, S
 2-Year: **Vacant**
 3-Year: **Vacant**

Rules

Chair: **Vacant**
 2-Year: **Vacant**
 3-Year: **Vacant**

APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND OFFICERS – 2026

Chaplain

Cdr John Farmer, SN-IN

Historian

Lt Jeanette Farmer, P

IT / Facebook Administrator

Cdr John Farmer, SN-IN

IT / Website Administrator

Cdr John Farmer, SN-IN

Law Officer

P/C Jim Barkley, SN

Legislative Liaison

Lt Joel Stern

Membership:

Lt Jeanette Farmer, P

Merit Mark

Vacant

Newsletter Editor

Cdr John Farmer, SN-IN

Port Captain - Fort Loudoun

Cdr John Farmer, SN

Port Captain – Lower Norris

Lt Bonnie Fried, P

Port Captain - Tellico

Dan Johnson, JN

Port Captain - Watts Bar

Ed Fendley, S

Public Relations Chair

Vacant

Roster & Calling Committee

Lt Robin Hanson, S

Vessel Safety Check Chair

Lt Joel Stern

Commander-Elect's Report (continued)

Jeanette and I will be attending the national meeting in Myrtle Beach from 10 to 15 February, and we expect better news regarding our USPS insurance.

Once again, the new “Inland Boating Course” is nearing completion and should be released this year. I would like to offer free public seminars to attract members. I have contacted HGB Yacht Sales, Knoxville Yacht Sales, and Travis Marine to see if they can accommodate us.

Jeanette says it is difficult for her to get on and off our sailboat. I am investigating purchasing a used 30–35-foot cruiser and checking insurance requirements and slip space right now. If you have ideas, please let me know.

We still have vacancies for Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Public Relations officer plus others. We need someone trained as a VSC inspector in the Knoxville/Tellico area to help Joel. Training material and an exam is at <https://www.usps.org/departments/12000/12900/12900-vessel-safety-check/12900-become-a-vessel-examiner>. To qualify, Joel checks you out on five boats.

John Farmer

Commander-Elect



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America's Boating Club Business Cards

America's Boating Club® provides members, instructors, and vessel examiners with options for branded business cards to promote our club and its mission. The below information comes from the USPS Marketing Guidebook V2.3 (3/2020).

- Cards feature the America's Boating Club® logo as the primary brand and allows for squadron branding. See the two examples at right.
- Your contact information does not need to include your home address, but should include an email address and phone number.

Cdr John Farmer's business card is shown below.



This is a general business card for a squadron officer:



And another layout:



The ABC logos and the Knoxville burgee can be obtained from either Cdr Farmer or Lt/Cdr Hanson

Looking for a Boat?



Joel Stern has a 2007 Monterey 29.5 Esprit Cruiser that he will be listing for sale in April. It has twin 350 Mercury Cruisers. He typically motors at about 8 knots though it can do about 32. The boat is in nearly mint condition. It has a "V" berth (when you drop the table) and it has a cabin in the aft area. The galley has a 2-burner cook top, microwave and under counter fridge. It has a wet head (the toilet, shower and sink are in the same compartment). The cockpit has a small sink and under counter fridge. "It's a great lake boat." The boat pictured at left is the same model and year, but isn't Joel's.



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Educational Department Report by Jeff Schmitt

Our SEO, Jeff Schmitt, plans to teach five public boating safety classes using the TWRA booklets. The courses will be promoted via the TWRA website. "Do you need a TWRA boating wallet card, or would you like to expand your boating knowledge further? Then America's Boating Club of Knoxville can certainly help. We have trained and experienced TWRA-certified instructors and testers, and we can offer a more comprehensive ABC3 course with a 250-page book, including its optional Chapter 5 on navigation."



The five TWRA classes each have two, in-person, 2-hour sessions. The classes are held at the Grace Lutheran Church, 131 W Gettysburg Ave, Oak Ridge, TN 37830, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM Fridays. The five classes are listed below.

Class	Session Dates
Class #1	3/13 and 3/20
Class #2	3/27 and 4/3
Class #3	4/10 and 4/17
Class #4	4/24 and 5/1
Class #5	5/8 and 5/15

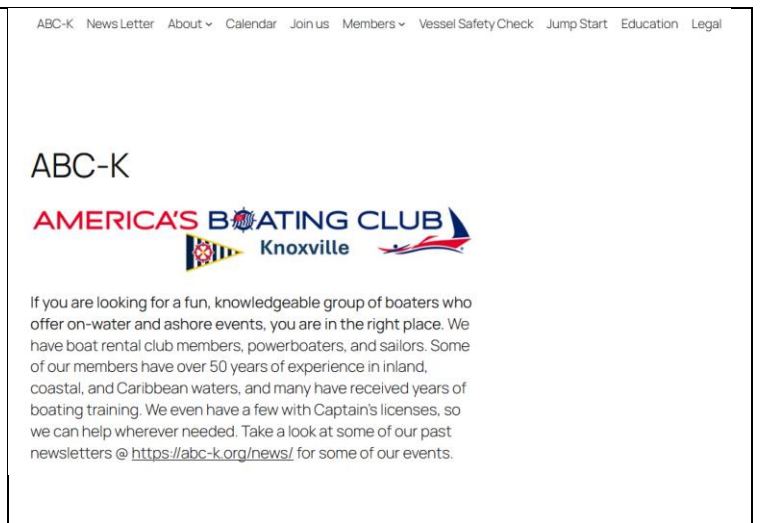
Please pre-register by contacting Jeff Schmitt at tiavare@gmail.com. If you are interested in a more thorough course, then try America's Boating Course (ABC3). It gives you more than the basics for boating safely and more knowledge to enjoy your time out on the water. To purchase a copy, talk to Jeff.

Either course qualifies you for the TWRA wallet card.

Students born after 1/1/1989 who require the TWRA boat operating permit must obtain a TWRA form 600 for \$10 at a retail store or online. They must present their form 600 at the in-person proctored exam.

Facebook Page and Club Website Renewed

Cdr Farmer has recently completed an overhaul of our Facebook page (below left) and our new website, www.abc-k.org (below right). The Facebook page has lots of pictures of our recent past events. The website includes 12 months of "Now Hear This" newsletters, proposed new events and education opportunities.



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Diesel Engine Stress Test

Cdr Farmer learned about the below diesel engine stress test when he took a class with noted expert Bob Smith several years ago. Smith developed the Lehman Ford diesel engines found in many trawlers and went on to found American Diesel.

To catch engine problems before they occur, write down the base numbers for temperature and oil pressure when things are running fine, so you'll know what is normal. Then run this 5-step test once a month during the boating season.

1. Allow your diesel engine to get up to normal operating temperature.
2. Run the engine up to maximum rpm for about 60 to 90 seconds, about 2,500 rpm for most engines.
3. Back the engine off about 200 rpm and run for about 5 minutes.
4. Watch for temperature and oil pressure changes. The three critical temperatures are:
 - engine coolant temperature 175° to 180°
 - exhaust gas temperature
 - oil temperature in the base of the engine
5. Don't continue to run the engine if black smoke occurs. This happens because the engine can't burn all the fuel.



Online Course for Cruising Under Power and Sail



Gain needed confidence and skills to head out on the water for a weekend—or weeks at a time. Start your next on-the-water plans with [Cruise With Confidence: The Complete Guide to Cruising Under Power and Sail](#), a comprehensive online course offered by America's Boating Club | United States Power Squadrons.

In this course, you'll learn how to

- Choose the right boat
- Master onboard essentials like electronics, navigation, and communications
- Handle emergencies and prepare for the unexpected
- Meal plan and provision
- Charter and cross borders
- Keep your crew comfortable and happy

**Discounted price
for members**



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1/17/2026 Virtual Election and Planning Meeting – Report by Secy Walt Hanson

10 members (a quorum) participated in these virtual meetings.

VIRTUAL ELECTION OF BRIDGE OFFICERS – Cdr Don Perrine presided. The names of nominees were read. The floor was opened for nominations from the floor.

Position	Previously nominated	Nomination made from the floor
Commander	John Farmer	None
Executive Officer	Not required by by-laws; not addressed	
Administrative Officer	Not required by by-laws; not addressed	
Education Officer	Jeff Schmitt	None
Secretary	Walt Hanson	None
Treasurer	Vacant; required by by-laws	Barbara Schmitt

In that all positions were not contested, **a motion was moved, seconded and passed to elect the officers by acclimation.** Congratulations to John Farmer, Jeff Schmitt, Walt Hanson, and Barbara Schmitt.

PLANNING MEETING FOR WATCH YEAR 2026 – Cdr-elect John Farmer presided.

General discussion of value proposition:

Don Perrine used an AI-generated search as a catalyst for discussing the value proposition of ABC Knoxville as it begins Watch Year 2026. Below, in italics, are the abbreviated points that came from the search.

The United States Power Squadrons (USPS)—now increasingly known as America’s Boating Club—faces a challenge common to many legacy fraternal and educational organizations: staying relevant in an age of instant digital information and changing social habits.

To "save" itself and recapture boater interest, the organization likely needs to move beyond its traditional identity as a classroom-first educational body and lean into its potential as a community-driven experience.

- 1. Pivot from "Classroom-Only" to "On-Water Hybrid" – Modern boaters, especially younger generations, prioritize hands-on experience over traditional lectures.*
- 2. De-Formalize the "Squadron" Culture - The military-style hierarchy (uniforms, ranks, and formal meetings) can be a barrier for new boaters looking for a relaxed weekend hobby.*
- 3. Leverage "Hyper-Local" Tech and Safety – In 2026, safety isn't just about knowing how to tie a knot; it's about navigating complex digital ecosystems.*
- 4. Partner with Boat-Sharing Economies - The rise of platforms like Boatsetter and GetMyBoat means many "boaters" don't actually own boats.*

Comparison: Traditional vs. Future-Focused Model

Feature	The Legacy Model	The 2026 Modernized Model
Primary Goal	Testing & Certification	Community & Confidence
Learning Style	Classroom Lectures	On-water Mentorship & VR
Structure	Rank & Uniforms	Social Groups & Expertise Tiers
Value Prop	"Learn to be a Pilot"	"Join a Boating Family"



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1/17/2026 Virtual Election and Planning Meeting (continued)

The "Experience" Gap – Ultimately, the Squadrons must bridge the gap between knowing and doing. A boater may not care about a certificate, but they do care about having a group of friends to raft up with at a sandbar or a mentor to help them dock in a heavy crosswind for the first time.

Recent data from 2024 to early 2026 – The membership trajectory of America's Boating Club is no longer a uniform decline. Instead, a "geographic and demographic pivot" is occurring. While legacy units in the Northeast and Midwest continue to struggle with aging populations, specific regions in the Sun Belt and Pacific Northwest are seeing a resurgence.

1. *Regional Growth Leaders (2024–2026) – The growth is primarily concentrated in areas where population migration overlaps with high "new boater" density.*
2. *Demographic Shifts: The "New Face" of the Club – The most significant change in the last two years isn't where the growth is, but who is joining.*

Demographic Category	2020–2023 Trend	2024–2026 Trend	Key Driver
Average Age	68+	54 (New Members)	Shift to family-oriented social events.
Female Participation	~20%	34%	Success of "Women at the Helm" programs.
Ownership Status	95% Boat Owners	78% Boat Owners	Rise of "Social Members" (renters/sharers).
Interest Area	Navigational Math	Hands-on Docking	Preference for practical skill over theory.

3. *Why These Regions Are Winning – The "Growing" districts have abandoned the 20th-century model in favor of three specific strategies:*
 - a. *The "Jump Start" Program.*
 - b. *Ditching the Uniform: Clubs that have made uniforms and formal meetings optional for social events have reported a significantly higher retention rate among members under age 50.*
 - c. *Digital-First Education: Regions that moved their "Boating 101" classes to a hybrid model (online theory + 1 Saturday on the water) have seen enrollment numbers triple compared to those sticking to 6-week evening classroom sessions.*

The "Family" Effect - In 2025, data showed that the "Member-for-Life" is no longer a solo captain, but a family unit. Growing clubs are those that have rebranded their "Squadron Meetings" into "Raft-ups" or "Dockside BBQs," treating children and spouses as equal participants in the boating lifestyle rather than just "passengers."

Attendees responded as follows:

- There was general agreement with the points made in the search.
- John (in general) and Joel (in particular to VEs) were very interested in how Marine Liability Insurance and any proposed changes might affect the club.



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1/17/2026 Virtual Election and Planning Meeting (continued)

- Joel advocated for more shoreside social events, using the Lenoir City Park (LCP) “Meet and Greet” that followed Lock-thru training as a model. Don noted that the LCP training w/ meet and greet did draw out the public, but it didn’t generate new members.
- Boat insurance discounts of up to 10% for being a USPS member was not known by everyone at the meeting. Joel recommended that this be more widely publicized.
- John reported that NASBLA is promoting insurance reductions for various skill certifications offered by USPS
- Don expressed concern that States don’t require a boat operator license that is tied to passing a skill test, much like an automobile – especially because boat operation is more complicated than driving an automobile. He was greatly in favor of a regulation-driven reason for boater skill training.
- John indicated that a past TWRA attempt to have more boat operator regulation was countered by State representatives who considered they would get pushback from their constituents.

General discussion of activity calendar and pre-meeting suggestions from members:

John Farmer presented the calendar and suggestion list and opened the floor for discussion.

Calendar Items unique to ABC Knoxville	Pre-meeting Member Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/26 @ 1800: COW at Kirkwood Clubhouse, catered, no alcohol • March: possible dinner meeting arranged by John Farmer • 4/18-4/19: Rossini Festival, dock at Volunteer Landing • 4/24-4/26: District 17 Conference • 5/16: Pot-luck picnic at Lenoir City Park • June: week-long cruise • July: 4th fireworks viewing at Volunteer Landing • August: TN National overnight • September: week-long cruise • October: Ish Creek overnight • November: nothing planned • December: nothing planned • January 2027: Virtual Planning Meeting presided by John Farmer • February 2027: COW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a rally of member boats • 3- or 4-day outing that visits various marinas or anchorages • Barbecue ashore • a shore-based group to meet the boaters who can organize/set-up entertainment for the evening • Charter a boat at: Hilton Head, Oriental, Chesapeake Bay • Poker run • Outing for children • Lake cleanup day • 4th of July fireworks • Lunch at Calhoun’s at Ft. Loudon Marina • Boat show with simulator • Partner with T-BART <p>Resource ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free event press release using Prolog • Video call with Marketing Committee

Attendees responded as follows:

- Boating Route and Gathering: Joel suggested an activity that requires boating operators to follow a pre-planned route to get to a gathering at the terminus. Persons interested in the gathering but who don’t have a boat could help prep the terminus. The gathering could be promoted by retailers or marinas.



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1/17/2026 Virtual Election and Planning Meeting (continued)

- VSCs with Free Lunch: Jeff suggested using free VSCs and a free lunch at boating foci on Ft Loudoun and Watts Bar Lakes. Attendees reviewed calendars; Joel agreed that the weekend of 5/16 and 5/17 would be possible.
 - *Ft Loudoun Lake* - Attendees mentioned LCP (it needs to be reserved well in advance), the Fort Loudoun State Historic Park dock (which is first come, first served), Travis Marine and Duncan Landing (John suggested that it might be possible to have a food truck at Duncan Landing to heighten interest)
 - *Watts Bar Lake* – Attendees mentioned TN National Marina.
- Dinner event with Speaker: Joel suggested tapping TWRA and/or USACE for speakers. Members suggested MiMi's and Baker Peter's as possible locations for a small group.
- Membership Incentive included with boat purchase: Joel suggested that ABC Knoxville approach boat dealers regarding the option of including in their incentives for buying a boat, a membership in the club and a VSC. John indicated that new boat dealers have been reluctant in the past to refer buyers to club training because the dealership believes it gives the buyer the impression that the dealership training could be less than adequate. Walt suggested that the club pursue this idea with used yacht dealers, in particular HGB Yacht Sales (next to the American Boat Center). Joel indicated that he will approach boat dealers to see if they might support this initiative.
- Outing for children: Attendees were not enthusiastic about this pre-meeting suggestion. Walt suggested an alternative, the VFW Post 12135 in Tellico Village hosts an annual "Boat Ride 4 Vets" event for veterans, military, and their families as a thank you for their service.
- Don asked how these initiatives / events will be affected? Are these the responsibility of the bridge?
 - *Poll Marketing* – Don suggested poll marketing, not push marketing. He highly desires that the club prime our members about these items, so that when they are asked, they might have a greater willingness to assist.
 - *Synthesize the Message* – Don suggested that these initiatives/events are polished before they are presented to members or others.

Event Calendar - 2025 Watch Year

Date	Time	Location	Event	Leader	Comments
December 10	5-9pm	Hanson's home (Loudon)	Social and potluck dinner	Walt & Robin Hanson	14 attended
January 17, 2026	10am-noon	2-hour Virtual Meeting	Election and Planning Meeting	Don Perrine & John Farmer	10 attended
February 26, 2026	Starts 6pm	Kirkwood HOA Clubhouse (catered)	Change of Watch (address is 7860 Ellisville Lane, Knoxville, TN 37909)	John Farmer	All are welcomed



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Tentative Event Calendar - 2026 Watch Year					
Date	Time	Location	Event	Leader	Comments
February 26, 2026	Starts 6pm	Kirkwood HOA Clubhouse (catered)	Change of Watch (address is 7860 Ellisville Lane, Knoxville, TN 37909)	John Farmer	All are welcomed
March	TBD		Dinner Meeting	John Farmer	
April 17-19	Overnight	Volunteer Landing	Rossini Festival Weekend	TBD	
May 16	AM	Lenoir City Park	Pot-luck Meet and Greet	TBD	
June	Overnight	TBD	Week-long cruise	TBD	
July	Overnight	Volunteer Landin	4 th of July Fireworks	TBD	
August	Overnight	TN National	TBD	TBD	
September	Overnight	TBD	Week-long cruise	TBD	
October	Overnight	Ish Creek	Raft-up (possibly joined by Concord Yacht Club)	John Farmer	
November			TBD		
December			TBD		
January '27	Starts 10am	Virtual	Planning Meeting	John Farmer	
February '27		TBD	Change of Watch		

Please make suggestions for on-water and ashore events for 2026. This is your club, so let's make it something you and others can really enjoy. Please review our tentative calendar and share your suggestions.



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