



**17 July
2025**

Welcome to FREEPOD, a local news source for everyone in the Freeport area. This weekly podcast is brought to you by a large volunteer group dedicated to providing to objective, unbiased updates on what's happening in our community.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website (www.freepod.org) and the website of our NPR partner WNJI Northern Public Radio (www.northernpublicradio.org), so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Now let's see what's happening.

City news

The Freeport City Council has approved bids and engineering contracts to continue the Westward Water Main Expansion to provide City water to existing buildings on West Stephenson Street that are within City limits but do not yet have the capability to connect to City water. This includes 11 residential units, one commercial unit, an Agriculture Hydroponic school at Highland Community College, and two farm fields, one of which is owned by the Freeport School District. All are within City limits. The City is responsible for supplying water and wastewater services to residents and businesses, no matter the location, within City limits as the City's infrastructure is the responsibility of the City.

At this time, the closest water main to the furthest West organization is approximately 2,100 feet away. This creates a dangerous situation for fire suppression. This project would help to install seven total fire hydrants and provide sufficient volume and flow for occupied structures. It would also fix a 25-year gap of fire suppression in this corridor.

The City also confirmed that Freeport has received a clean, unmodified audit opinion, which is the highest opinion that can be used. The services of Lauterbach and Amen were contracted for the audit, which is required by Illinois Statutes and follows Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Street closures update

The City also is reminding residents that road work continues on Carroll Avenue, Cleveland Street, and Blackhawk Avenue and has begun near the intersection of Stephenson Street and Park Boulevard. More work is scheduled and will be reported in Freeport as those projects begin.

In addition, Phase 4 – which is the last phase of the Lead Service Line Replacement Program is about to get under way with approximately 400 homes on the list for completion. This project will also create road detours.

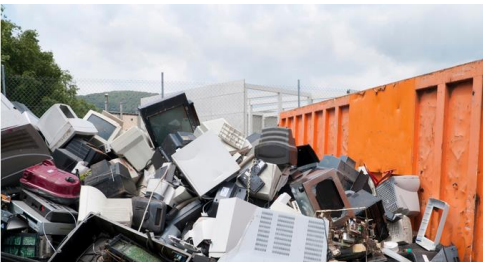
As a reminder, construction areas are reopened at the end of each day so that residents in these areas are able to pull in and out of driveways during construction. Delays may occur and it may sometimes take longer to maneuver in the area. Signage gives crews the proper space and safety to work, and ignoring them could result in injury, project problems, and more. Please pay attention to and obey signs for everyone's safety.

Electronic Recycling Event this Saturday

In other City news, remember that the City of Freeport is hosting an electronic recycling event this Saturday, July 19th at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Freeport residents can bring up to three items with monitors. This includes TV's, laptops, computer screens, and smartphones. Other accepted items without any limit include keyboards, computer towers, speakers, printers, and fax/copy machines. Appliances will not be accepted.

This recycling event is only for Freeport residents and attendees will be required to present a Freeport ID before dropping off their items. This collection is another step toward ensuring the community is free of illegal dumping and the City appreciates all who participate in accomplishing that objective.



This recycling event is only for Freeport residents and attendees will be required to present a Freeport ID before dropping off their items. This collection is another step toward ensuring the community is free of illegal dumping and the City appreciates all who participate in accomplishing that objective.

Shawn Boldt elected Vice President of Illinois Trustees Association



Highland Community College has announced that Trustee Shawn Boldt has been elected Vice President of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, a statewide organization representing all 48 community college districts and more than 400,000 students across Illinois. His election took place during the ICCTA's annual convention, held in early June in Bloomington, Illinois.

Boldt's election to this prominent role continues a strong legacy of leadership and advocacy on behalf of community colleges at both the state and national levels. In his new role, Boldt will support and

collaborate with trustees from every Illinois community college. As Vice President, he is now in line to serve as the association's President in 2026.

In addition to his new role at the Illinois Association, Boldt also serves as Central Region Director for the National Association of Community College Trustees representing institutions in 10 states and parts of Canada. Congratulations, Shawn!

New towing law

Vehicle owners arrested for driving offenses in Stephenson County outside city limits now can have their cars towed immediately from the scene by Sheriff's deputies.

A new law took effect in early July which is costly for those arrested for DUI, driving with a suspended license, and drug and weapons charges among others. If towed, it would cost owners \$350 to get their vehicles back, plus the tow fee and any storage fees the company charges. Offenders can request a hearing to determine if the tow was legally done.

Stephenson County Sheriff Steve Stovall said the tow law is long overdue and hopes that it may help deter vehicle owners from driving if they know an arrest could take their vehicle away. Tow costs were previously paid by the Sheriff's department.

Black bear sightings in Jo Daviess and Carroll counties

There have been multiple sightings of a black bear in Jo Daviess and Carroll counties and residents are reminded that these are wild animals and can be dangerous. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the bear has been seen over several weeks in the area of Mississippi Palisades State Park and more recently in private land south and east of Galena.

People should avoid direct encounters with the bear and check their property for food sources like bird feeders, grills, garbage cans and dog food since once a bear finds a food source it often returns so prevention is key. Bears should never be proactively fed or approached and if encountered, folks should give the animal space and back away slowly and quietly.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has more information on their website about how to live responsibly with bears, and bear sightings in Illinois can be reported online.

Pool-A-Palooza at Read Park this Saturday

The Freeport Park District is hosting their annual Pool-A-Palooza this Saturday, July 19th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Read Park Family Aquatic Center. There will be music, games and prizes to celebrate summer for everyone in the family! Admission fees and rules apply and participants 12 years and younger must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.



Annual Butterfly Festival

The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society invites the public to join them in a fun, free family friendly afternoon to enjoy the many butterflies found at the Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve next Saturday, July 26th from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. with tours on the hour from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Attendees can join guided butterfly tours or look on their own for the many winged beauties with colorful names such as Buckeye, Great Fritillary, Coral Hairstreak, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Peck's Skipper, Red-spotted Purple, and American Snout. To date 38 species of butterflies and skippers have been seen at the preserve.

Illinois Butterflies and Moths pocket guides will be distributed at no charge while supplies last. A shady rest area with chairs, restroom, cold beverages, snacks and information about pollinators will be available. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Roads with the parking area off West Grove Road.

If weather is questionable, call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 before 10 a.m. on the 26th for updates.

Current exhibit at the Freeport Art Museum closing after Saturday

The 21st Regional Juried Exhibition at the Freeport Art Museum that opened in May will be closing after this Saturday, July 19th. The annual exhibit features 40 works selected from over 230 Midwest submissions from both emerging and established artists working in a variety of contemporary styles and media. The museum is open until 5:00 today, 10:00 to 5:00 tomorrow, and noon to 5:00 on Saturday and is located at 121 North Harlem Avenue in Freeport.

German Valley Days

German Valley hosts its 50th anniversary of German Valley Days beginning tomorrow, Friday July 18th and continuing through Sunday. Activities and events include 5K and 10K runs, a wiffle ball tournament, and performance by Braedon and Bailee Fyock Saturday night, as well as fireworks at Lake Baalto.

To get around the community, the popular German Valley Historic Trolley Tour is back for a third year with a real trolley to tour you through German Valley! Tour times this Saturday morning, July 19th are 9:30, 10:30, and 11:30 and tickets are \$5 per person for this journey through time with fascinating stories and updated local history.

The German Valley Museum also proudly presents artwork by talented children and adults from German Valley and the surrounding area tomorrow, July 18th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, July 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the German Valley Museum Complex. Admission is free although donations are appreciated.

For more information, head to

<https://www.germanvalleydays.com/>



Nice to see y'all!

Representatives for FREEPOD were happy to visit with the many people who visited our table last Saturday at the Stephenson County Farmer's Market last Saturday. Our visitors were eager to learn more about FREEPOD as a good source for what's happening in the area, what's available for their kids, and how to become an engaged member of the community. Lots of new listeners learned how to sign on while current listeners talked with us about what they like.

Most weeks, we ask if you'll consider a donation to FREEPOD, but one of the best things you can do for FREEPOD is to spread the word about us. Too many people still don't know that we exist. And when you tell them about FREEPOD, please get out your phone and show them how to find us on our website, the website of our NPR partner WNIJ in DeKalb, or a podcast platform they like. We find it helps lots of folks to have someone walk them through the process of finding our podcasts and scripts.

We love hearing from our listeners so send us your thoughts about how we can grow our podcasts. Thank you all, both current and new listeners!

The week ahead...

In the week ahead, we're looking forward to the Highland Community College Big Band conducted by Bill Peterson performing tonight at 6:30 as part of the Music on Debate Square concert series. The music starts at 6:30pm in Debate Square, located between the Freeport Library and Union Dairy. The shows are free and last about an hour, but donations are accepted and appreciated. Bring a lawn chair and arrive early to get a good spot.

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by the Freeport Phantoms Football and Cheer squad. They'll be there both Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to serve brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches. If you're hungry AND feeling peachy keen on Saturday, grab a 25-pound box of freestone peaches for just \$55 at the Indian River Direct Super Sweets Peach Truckload sale at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. Boxes typically contain 40 to 60 peaches depending on size.

You can also still get in on FHN's Healthy Heart Hustle 5K on Saturday for some healthy heart fun that will help raise funds to support the FHN Cardiopulmonary Department. Registration for the timed race and a 1-mile Victory Lap for alumni, kids, and families starts at 7:00 a.m. at the FHN Family Healthcare Center-Burchard Hills. For more information, visit the FHN website at www.fhn.org

On Sunday, July 20th don't miss the Music Under the Stars Concert by the Freeport Concert Band at 7:00 p.m. at the Koenig Amphitheater in Krape Park. This week's performance will be conducted by Scott Stich. Michelle Stubbe is the week's vocalist and Terry Flanagan will be featured on trumpet.

Then on Monday, July 21st, come to the Freeport Public Library at 6:30 p.m. for a free armchair tour through the heyday of Illinois' small towns when the culture of Main Street was the culture of America. Presenter John Lynn has visited and photographed all 2,400 of the small towns and villages on the Illinois state road map. Listen to some great stories, see pictures of far-flung Illinois, and enjoy a cool evening at the Library on a hot July evening!

If you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at www.greaterfreeport.com and click on "weekly events" for a comprehensive listing of many more entertainment and dining events and activities throughout Stephenson County. You can also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, www.cityoffreeport.org. We have links to both in the print version of FREEPOD episodes.

In closing...

In closing, if you haven't already done so be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview where FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewed Kate Boyer, Executive Manager for the Stephenson County Fair. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday Alan interviews Highland Community College President Chris Kuberski and YMCA Chief Executive Officer Rich Haight about plans for the 2025-2026 school year. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday July 22nd and be available to listen to then or at any time after that – just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform to select the programs of your choice.

As always, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! You can always find us on our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNII in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org. For more info, including how to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work, visit our website at www.freepod.org.

With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon – or any time after that on our website or your favorite podcast platform – for more about what's happening in Freeport, thank you for listening!

Listen next week for more about what's happening in the Freeport area!

LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS



What's Going on in Stephenson County?

Subscribe to our weekly event guide!



To find something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at www.greaterfreeport.com and click on “weekly events” for a comprehensive listing of many more entertainment and dining events and activities throughout Stephenson County. You can subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too with this QR code if you prefer.

While you're signing up for more of what's going on in our community, you can also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, www.cityoffreeport.org, or with the QR at the right.

Subscribe to City of Freeport News



Join our list of subscribers and get City of Freeport's monthly e-newsletters and other important and timely updates sent directly to your e-mail using this QR code.