FREEPOD | NOVEMBER 5, 2026

Northwest Illinois voters have made their choices. We'll have results from Tuesday's midterm elections, including some closely contested local races.

Plus, Freeport High School students walk out in protest over a teacher's return to the classroom, and the Greater Freeport Partnership makes its case to City Council as questions about its future continue.

And concerns grow over who will pay for the electrical infrastructure needed to support expanding data centers.

Those stories and more, coming up on Freepod—

The news you've been missing.

ELECTION RESULTS



Voters across northwest Illinois decided several closely watched races Tuesday, with results shaping representation in Washington, Springfield, and local government.

In the 17th Congressional District, incumbent Eric Sorensen defeated challenger Dillan Vancil to win another term. In the 16th District, Congressman Darin LaHood defeated Paul Nolley.

In the Illinois Senate's 45th District, Andrew Chesney defeated Joe Berning. The district includes Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Stephenson counties, along with portions of Ogle County.

In Stephenson County, Jazmin Wingert defeated Suzanne Cook for county clerk and recorder, receiving approximately 63 percent of the vote.

Several contested County Board races also produced results.

Joseph Cardoso Junior and Casey Heneghan won their respective District C contests. Adam Moderow won in District E, while Cynthia Lawfer prevailed in District I.

In one of the closest races, Troy Barr defeated Roxane Rice in District D by just 62 votes.

Voters also weighed in on ballot questions.

In the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, voters supported retaining judges John Roe, Douglas Lee, and Jerry Kane, with each receiving approximately 85 percent support in the reported circuit-wide results.

Elsewhere in the region, voters considered questions involving local taxation and government policy, although complete results for referendums in the four-county Freepod coverage area could not be independently verified.

Election results remain unofficial until certification.

FHS STUDENTS STAGE WALK OUT

Dozens of Freeport High School students walked out of class last Tuesday, protesting the school district's decision to allow a teacher to return following an investigation into allegations of inappropriate conduct involving a student.

The October 27 demonstration brought students carrying signs to the intersection of Empire Street and South West Avenue.

According to social media posts, students and parents learned over the weekend that the teacher would be returning after the district's investigation. The school board reportedly cleared the employee.

Student organizer Rachel Guzman said she was shocked by the decision. Other students expressed concerns about their safety and called for the investigation to be reopened.

Superintendent Doctor Anna Alvarado acknowledged the protest, saying the district respects students' right to express their concerns but is legally obligated to protect the confidentiality of employee matters.

The district says students who participated peacefully will not face disciplinary action, although normal attendance policies apply and missed assignments must be completed.

School officials emphasized that student and staff safety remains their highest priority, and counseling services are available.

The allegations against the teacher have not been publicly substantiated, and the district has not released details of its investigation.

GFP MAKES PUSH FOR NEW CONTRACT AT CITY COUNCIL

The future of the Greater Freeport Partnership's relationship with the City of Freeport remains uncertain, as disagreements over funding and economic development services continue.

The dispute drew several public comments at Monday night's City Council meeting.

Partnership representative Nicole Haas defended the organization's eight-year record, saying city funding dropped from $650,000 for predecessor organizations in 2017 to $450,000 when the Partnership was established.

Local business owner Nicole Sdao called for greater transparency about why funding is being reduced and whether the Partnership was given clear performance expectations.

Alderwoman Cecilia Stacy also demanded answers, promising to investigate the breakdown.

Alderman Tom Klemm acknowledged concerns about past economic development spending but warned that both sides may be making a mistake.

Klemm urged city officials and Partnership leadership to find a compromise.

The disagreement raises questions about how Freeport will coordinate business recruitment, downtown development, and economic growth moving forward.

NEXT RE-FRESH FREEPORT ANNOUNCED



More than 550 mattresses have been collected and properly disposed of in Freeport so far this year, thanks to a city program aimed at reducing illegal dumping.

City officials say the Re-Fresh Freeport initiative has collected 556 mattresses since January.

The program, a partnership between the city and Gill's Freeport Disposal, allows city residents to dispose of trash and bulky items at no additional charge on the first Saturday of each month.

The next collection is Saturday, November 7, from 8–11 a.m. at the Freeport Transfer Station, 2133 S. Walnut Road.

Residents must bring identification proving city residency and cover their loads with tarps.

Yard waste, tires, hazardous materials and electronics will not be accepted.

More information is available on the city's website.

FREEPORT LIBRARY HOSTING FOOD DRIVE

November is National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Month, and the Freeport Public Library is asking residents to help their neighbors in need.

Throughout November, the library is collecting nonperishable food donations for the Freeport Area Church Cooperative Food Pantry.

According to the library, approximately one in eight Illinois residents struggles with food insecurity, including an estimated one in six children.

To help stock the pantry's shelves, the library is highlighting different items each week.

Peanut butter and jelly are the focus for the first week of November, followed by pasta during the second week, pasta sauces during the third week, and canned soups during the final week.

All unopened, shelf-stable food donations are welcome throughout the month, regardless of the weekly theme.

The Freeport Area Church Cooperative provides food, emergency shelter and other assistance to local residents experiencing hardship.

Donations can be dropped off at the Freeport Public Library, 100 E. Douglas Street, during regular library hours.

For more information, call 815-233-3000 or visit freeportpubliclibrary.org.

VOICES BOOK NOOK HALF-PRICE SALE BEGINS

Book lovers can find some bargains while supporting an important community organization during the VOICES Book Nook Fall Half-Price Sale in Freeport.

The sale runs November 5 through the fourteenth, featuring thousands of gently used books, along with puzzles, music and other items.
A silent auction is already underway, featuring twelve collectible packages with themes ranging from Shakespeare to Dolly Parton.

Proceeds benefit VOICES of Stephenson County, which provides counseling, advocacy and other services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The Book Nook is located inside Lincoln Mall on West Galena Avenue in Freeport.

Hours are 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, with extended hours until 7 p.m. on Thursdays.

For more information, visit voicesbooknook.org or call 815-821-2665.

CLIMBING ROCK NOW OPEN AT KRAPE PARK

Visitors to Freeport's Krape Park have a new way to enjoy the outdoors.

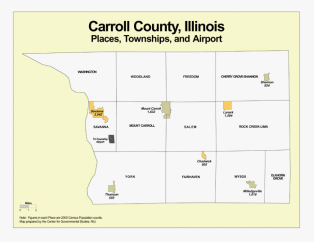
The Freeport Park District has announced the opening of a new climbing rock, offering children and families an opportunity to test their climbing skills and explore different routes.

The addition is part of a larger improvement project supported by a $582,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The funding comes through the state's Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development program.
Other planned improvements include an accessible fishing pier, new playground equipment, upgraded sports court lighting and additional parking.

The climbing rock is now open to visitors at Krape Park, located on South Park Boulevard in Freeport.

CARROLL COUNTY BOARD RECEIVES OPERATIONAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT



Carroll County officials are reviewing progress on dozens of goals established earlier this year.

The County Board has received its 2026 Operational Plan Interim Report, tracking 43 objectives involving economic development, public safety, infrastructure and government services.

Among the accomplishments, the county launched Text-to-911 service in April, completed a five-year highway infrastructure plan and reinstated its jail work-release program.

The report also identifies unfinished business.

The county has generated $50,000 toward a $200,000 new revenue goal, while efforts to modernize land-use planning and expand economic development continue.

County officials say the report will help identify priorities and guide spending decisions heading into 2027.

Residents can review the full report on the Carroll County government website.

JO DAVIESS COUNTY CONSIDERS UPGRADING 911 SYSTEM



Jo Daviess County is moving forward with plans to upgrade its emergency 911 communications system.

The county's Emergency Telephone System Board has recommended purchasing a new software package from RapidSOS, designed to improve how dispatchers handle emergency calls.

The system would provide enhanced call transcription, language translation, quality assurance tools and better integration with existing dispatch technology.

The County Board's Law Enforcement and Courts Committee approved the recommendation in October.

The proposal includes $14,500 in initial setup costs, with annual subscription fees bringing the three-year total to approximately $42,000.

The upgrade would build on previous improvements, including text-to-911 capabilities and the county's transition to Next Generation 911 technology.

The proposal still requires any remaining county approvals before implementation.

COMED DATA CENTER EXPANSION RAISES ELECTRICITY COST QUESTIONS

The rapid expansion of data centers in Illinois is raising concerns about who will pay for billions of dollars in electrical infrastructure upgrades.

According to Capitol News Illinois, Commonwealth Edison expects to spend approximately $3.1 billion connecting thirty large-scale projects to its power grid.

But developers have paid only about $721 million in advance deposits.

Consumer advocates warn that the difference could ultimately be passed along to residential and small-business customers through higher electric bills.

ComEd disputes that assessment, saying additional financial guarantees and long-term agreements protect customers from those costs.

The controversy comes as northwest Illinois communities, including Rochelle and Jo Daviess County, consider new data center developments and regulations.

Consumer groups are urging state lawmakers to require developers to cover the full cost of infrastructure needed to serve their facilities.

SPEECH & HEARING EVENT AT SENIOR RESOURCE CENTER

Freeport residents will have an opportunity to learn more about hearing, communication and brain health during a free community event this Friday.

The University of Illinois Department of Speech and Hearing Science is hosting an open house November 6, from 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m., at the Senior Resource Center in Freeport.

The event will feature five interactive booths covering hearing loss prevention, cognitive wellness, voice care and available clinical services.

Visitors can speak directly with university faculty and students, learn about upcoming educational programs and sign up for hearing and cognitive health screenings or consultations with specialists.

The university is also seeking community input to help shape future programs.

The event takes place at 206 E. Stephenson Street.

For more information, call University of Illinois Extension at 815-235-4125.

FREEPORT PARK DISTRICT HOSTING BUS TRIPS

The Freeport Park District is offering residents a chance to enjoy the holiday season without the hassle of driving.

Two upcoming trips will take participants to popular holiday destinations.

On November 14, the Christmas Carol Express will travel to the Paramount Theatre in Aurora for a performance of the holiday classic A Christmas Carol. The trip runs from 11 a.m.–6 p.m..

Then, on December 5, the Park District will offer its annual Magnificent Mile Bus Trip to downtown Chicago.
Participants can enjoy holiday shopping, dining and seasonal displays, with transportation provided from Read Park in Freeport.

The Chicago trip runs from 9 a.m.–9 p.m..

Space is limited. Registration information is available at freeportparkdistrict.org or by calling 815-235-6114.

LITTLE CUBS FIELD SET TO UNVEIL NEW MURAL



A familiar Freeport baseball landmark is celebrating a colorful new addition this weekend.

Little Cubs Field will unveil its completed center field mural during a community open house Saturday, November 7, from 11 a.m.–1 p.m..

The new artwork, designed by Steven Winter, features people connected to the ballpark who contributed to a fundraising campaign supporting the mural and field operations.

It replaces the original mural, which had faded after nearly eighteen years of exposure to the elements.

Visitors can meet the artist, take pictures with the mural, explore the gift shop and participate in baseball activities.

Little Cubs Field opened in 2008 as a miniature replica of Chicago's Wrigley Field.

The free open house takes place at 1160 W. Empire Street in Freeport.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB HOSTING PANCAKE BREAKFAST

A pancake breakfast in Freeport this weekend will help support programs for children and teenagers throughout Stephenson County.

The Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County is hosting its annual Pancake Breakfast fundraiser Saturday, November 7, from 7:30–11 a.m. at Big O's on the Hollow in Freeport.

For $12, guests will receive a breakfast featuring pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit and their choice of coffee or milk.
Mimosas and Bloody Marys will also be available for purchase.

Proceeds will support the Boys and Girls Club's mission of providing local young people with opportunities for academic success, character development and healthy lifestyles.

The organization offers a variety of programs designed to help children build confidence, develop skills and prepare for the future.

Organizers encourage families and community members to attend, with every ticket helping support local youth.

Tickets can be purchased online at B-G-C-Freeport-dot-org-slash-pancakes.

IN CLOSING

And that brings us to the end of this week's Freepod. Remember, if you prefer reading the news, every story from today's newscast is available in written form at freepod.org. You can catch up on the latest headlines, revisit a story, or share it with someone who might have missed it.

And Freepod is always available on your schedule! New episodes are released every Thursday at noon, but you can listen anytime, wherever you get your podcasts. Whether you're commuting, working around the house, or just taking a break, we're here to help you stay connected to northwest Illinois.

We'd also like to thank our community liaisons and reporters for helping us bring you the stories that matter, our partners at WNIJ in DeKalb for helping us reach a wider audience, and the Media Studies Department at Highland Community College for producing this program.

And if you believe in the importance of local journalism, there are several ways you can support Freepod. Follow us on Facebook, subscribe to the podcast, and share our stories with your friends and neighbors.

You can also help keep local news accessible to everyone by making a tax-deductible contribution at freepod.org. Every contribution helps us continue covering the people, places, and issues that shape our communities.

We'll be back next week with more news from across northwest Illinois.

This has been Freepod. Thanks for listening!