



**14 November
2024**

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 objective, unbiased news that's specific to our community.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website, so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Thanks for your support, and now here's local news you've been missing.

City street work update

Crews will be installing a large water main on Adams Avenue over the next four to six weeks, which will cause considerable traffic delays from Float Avenue to Exchange Street on the City's east side. At times, the Adams Avenue intersections at Main Street and Stephenson Street will be fully closed although detours will be available and clearly marked. Additional considerable delays are expected while crews pave Ridge Drive and Westwood Avenue in the west part of the City. That project is expected to be complete by Thanksgiving. Drivers are asked to avoid both areas to ease traffic congestion.

Residents are required to park on side streets, and any vehicles that don't follow the guidelines will be towed at the owner's expense. At the end of the day, construction areas will be reopened. Ignoring detours and driving around barricades could result in tickets or fines, injuries, project delays and more. The City asks that you pay attention to street work signs and obey them with the utmost caution and thanks residents and drivers for their patience and support for these important improvements.

In related street work news, the City has approved a road plan for 2025. This year, the Public Works Department paved 7 and a half miles of streets, setting a new record for Freeport! For 2025, the City Council approved nearly three miles of streets including segments of South Hance Drive, West Cleveland Avenue, North Greenfield Drive, West Stephenson Street, West Dewey Street, South Carroll Avenue, South Blackhawk Avenue, South Harvey Avenue, and North Willow Street.

Five of these streets will be milled and repaved while the other four will see water main replacement and reconstruction. In total, these projects are estimated cost about \$5 million.

Freeport applies for Federal funding for actions in the Pecatonica River floodway

In conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency also known as FEMA, Freeport has applied for Hazard Mitigation Assistance, also known as HMA, for FEMA funding their Hazard Mitigation

Grant Program that began in 2021. The objective of HMA programs is to fund mitigation measures that reduce the risk of loss of life and property from future hazard events or disasters.

The proposed project in Freeport would allow the City to buy and demolish properties within the Pecatonica floodway, which is located east of the Pecatonica River and includes both residential and commercial properties. Flooding threatens much of the target area, with flooding affecting low-lying areas.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the public must have the opportunity to comment on any federal actions that may affect floodplains or wetlands. Under the National Historic Preservation Act, public notice is also required for some projects which have the potential to affect historic properties.

As such, public participation is encouraged and those interested are invited to comment within 30 days by email to two addresses, both associated with FEMA, within 30 days. Both an email address and physical location mail addresses are included in the print version of this newscast on the FREEPOD website or in this story on the website of WNIJ Northern Public Radio, our NPR partner in DeKalb.

- fema-r5-environmental@fema.dhs.gov
- Duane Castaldi, Regional Environmental Officer FEMA Region 5
536 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605

Donations open at City Hall for aiding 333rd MPC

In other City news, donations to help the 333rd Military Police Company, can be made at City Hall. The 333rd includes 62 soldiers from the area who were deployed Thursday, September 19th to Alaska for National security purposes. Mayor Jodi Miller and other officials offer their support for the individuals who make up this group and look forward to the day they will be welcomed back home to Freeport.

Donations can be made through the end of November, and requested items include toiletries, hand warmers, wool socks, snacks, and batteries. Please bring all donations to the City Hall lobby at 314 West Stephenson Street during business hours and speak to the representative at the front desk.

Farmers Market continues through the winter

For those who dread the end of Farmers Market season, fear not! This year, the Stephenson County Farmers Market – the one that operated in the Exchange Street parking lot in downtown Freeport during the summer – will host an indoor market during the winter. Diverse items will be featured, including seasonal herbs and produce, jams and fruit butters, pickled items, squash, sourdough bread and scones, meat, eggs, soaps, oatmeal, flour, jewelry, and much more!

Every second and fourth Saturday from November through February, you will find the Winter Farmers Market at the Farm Bureau Building, 210 West Spring Street in Freeport. A dozen vendors will participate. This includes many of the familiar vendors from downtown, as well as vendors from other local markets such as Mount Carroll, Lena, or Lanark on a rotational basis. The market will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

According to coordinator Amera Striegel (also known as “The Bread Lady”), “We are grateful to the Farm Bureau for allowing us to use their space. We have great offerings from our vendors and are also making room for a community table, where people can grab a free coffee to keep them warm and space to sit and visit with their neighbors.”

In a survey the group completed last summer, community was frequently mentioned as a reason people enjoyed visiting the market. Amera says they had a great crowd on the first Saturday, with lots of regular market goers and new faces. In fact, they are already planning to expand for next year.

Use the Farm Bureau’s side entrance to visit the Market on November 23rd; December 14th and 28th; January 11th and 25th; and February 8th and 22nd. You can follow the Stephenson County Farmers Market on Facebook, or reach out via email at stephensoncountymarket@gmail.com.

YMCA Turkey Trot

While the Y itself will be closed on Thanksgiving Day so that our staff can enjoy the day with their families, but just because we’re closed doesn’t mean you can’t kick off your day with a healthy dose of fun. They are once again hosting the annual Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot 5K or one-mile fun run.

The event begins at 8:00 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day in the lobby of the YMCA and the event fee for either the 5K or one-mile fun run is two non-perishable food items or \$5. All donations go to the Freeport Area Church Cooperative’s food bank.

This fun run is designed for participants of all ages and fitness levels. No registration is required, so just show up with your friends and family for a healthy start for your Turkey Day celebrations. For more information, check out the Y’s Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/share/cBP9YgVJhyzWAE1w/> Regular operations at the Y will resume on Friday, November 29th.

YMCA grade school basketball league

In other news from the Y, registration for the 3rd and 4th-grade basketball league is OPEN at www.freeportymca.org.

This is not just any league; it's an opportunity for young athletes to learn the fundamentals of basketball while building lasting friendships. A focus on sportsmanship and camaraderie aligns with the YMCA commitment to youth development and ensuring that every child feels valued and included. Secure your child’s spot today before spaces fill up!

Freeport Author Fest

If you like books – or the people who write them! – the second annual Author Fest is just for you. The event is scheduled at the Lincoln Mall on Saturday, November 23rd from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm, giving you a great opportunity for holiday shopping or finding a treat for yourself.

You can meet 21 local authors representing multiple genres, including historical fiction, humor, mystery, picture books, poetry, and more. Enjoy author talks throughout the day, a marketing panel from 10:15

to 10:45 a.m., and a free kids' activity table for the younger readers in your group. Signature drinks will be available from Our Journeys Cafe and Boba Shop. This event is sponsored by Everything Home Estate, Consignment, and Gift Store.

Salvation Army Kettle Fundraiser begins

The sights and sounds of Christmas soon will be all over, signaling the start of the Salvation Army's red kettle campaign on November 22nd at four locations in Freeport. The kettle fundraiser is the largest source of income for the Freeport Salvation Army and it will continue until Christmas Eve. With the money raised through kettle donations, Salvation Army officials are able to operate the majority of programs such as providing food and clothing to area residents in need. Volunteers are needed for bell ringing shifts and sign up can be done at www.registertoring.com

Thank you to generous local donors for supporting HCC and the Girl Scouts

The Industrial Manufacturing program at Highland Community College has received a \$15,000 grant from the Gene Haas Foundation grant to support students enrolled in Computer Numeric Controlled classes, which are also known in manufacturing as CNC equipment. Scholarships will be available for \$500 to \$2,000 depending on the course students sign up to study.

The Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois also received recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Carl H. Hendrickson Family Foundation which will assist with translation of materials in Spanish and allow for bilingual instructors in training sessions. FREEPOD appreciates these contributions to two community-wide organizations!

FREEPOD welcomes new editorial support member

FREEPOD is delighted to welcome Ramon Viveros, Empire School's bilingual Principal to our editorial support team. Ramon offered to help earlier this year to help us reach our Spanish-speaking community members after learning that our partners at WNIJ Northern Public Radio in DeKalb had recently begun translating our podcasts and including print versions of them on their website.

Ramon volunteered to record the translated podcast every week and as a result, since late September our Spanish-speaking community can either read or listen in Spanish to our podcasts on the WNIJ website. To do so, just go to www.northernpublicradio.org and click on FREEPOD on the drop-down menu for "News." Thank you, Ramon, for helping us expand our coverage to more listeners!

Freeport City Council approves Enterprise Zone expansion

Last week we reported that at its November 4th meeting, the Freeport City Council approved a request to expand the Joint Northwest Illinois Enterprise Zone by about eight and a half acres to accommodate the development of a fueling station and convenience store by Pearl City Elevator at 9432 West Wagner Road, just off route 20.

We wanted to take a moment to explain a bit more about Enterprise Zones, which are legislatively approved, size-restricted areas that offer certain tax advantages for qualified development in economically depressed areas. The Freeport City Council, Stephenson County, Jo Daviess County, the City of East Dubuque, and the Village of Hanover all had to approve expansion to this geographically defined Zone.

Enterprise Zones are established to provide developers financial incentives and exemptions to bring a project to life. If the development qualifies for Zone expansion, inclusion in the Enterprise Zone may provide benefits related to tax exemptions designed to help defray the cost of developing the project.

As with all such requests, the request for this recent expansion must now receive approval from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Castor Home Nursing opens in Freeport

The Greater Freeport Partnership Ambassadors will also be cutting the ribbon to officially open Castor Home Nursing at 30 East Stephenson Street next Wednesday, November 20th.

Castor is the fastest-growing family-owned Healthcare provider in the northern Illinois area. With five departments under one roof, Castor is a one-stop solution for at-home and after-rehab care. Services include Medicare Home Health and Therapies, Pediatric Nursing, Adult Private Duty Nursing, Personal Care and Companionship, and Veterans Care. A wide variety of health and medical supplies are also available for sale at their location, as well as a full line of scrubs for healthcare workers.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with their staff, call Castor Home Nursing at 815-564-0977. That's 815-564-0977

Wishful Acres Debuts Holiday Ale

The holidays are a great time to enjoy something a little special, and Nate and Penny Ewing Peterson of Wishful Acres have just the thing. They are introducing a special holiday ale to celebrate the season, and FREEPOD and TimBec2 host Tim Connors found out all about it.

(audio clip)

For more about Wishful Acres including how they got started and how they have grown their business to the success that it is today, be sure to listen to next week's in-depth Tuesday interview which will post on Tuesday, November 19th, at noon.

Freeport Middle School opens Fitness Court

Freeport School District 145, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, and the National Fitness Campaign have joined forces to open a new Fitness Court at Freeport Middle School at 701 East Empire Street. The Freeport school district is the first school district in Illinois to join the campaign.

The outdoor court includes a number of stations where people can perform a variety of strength and cardio-type exercises. Use of the Fitness Court is not restricted to the school district and it is open to

everyone in the community. The Greater Freeport Partnership Ambassadors will conduct a ribbon cutting to officially open the new Court tomorrow.

You Are the Help Until Help Arrives

The Stephenson County Health Department, RSVP, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, also known as FEMA, are partnering to provide a free seminar called *You Are the Help Until Help Arrives* to train attendees on how to take actions that can help save lives in emergency situations.

The one-hour seminar will teach basic skills that can help keep injured individuals safe and alive until professional help arrives. It will be held on Tuesday, November 19th from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in Room 201 of the Student Conference Center at Highland Community College. No registration is required.

The week ahead

As always, there are plenty of things to do in the Freeport area in the coming week, beginning with the Highland Community College Big Band Concert tomorrow, Friday November 15th at 7:00 p.m. in the Ferguson Fine Arts Center on campus. No tickets are needed for this concert.

On Saturday, November 16th there is another session of the Beginning Birder Club, taught by the area Audubon Society's Education Chair Juliet Moderow, at 10:30 a.m. at the Freeport Public Library. Designed for youths ages 6 through 10, the free class begins indoors and moves outdoors to look for birds so please dress appropriately for the weather. All kids attending must have an adult with them. While the sessions are all free, please register online at the Library's website, www.freeportpubliclibrary.org, or by contacting Moderow at nwilaudubon@gmail.com. For more information, visit www.nwilaudubon.org.

Also through Saturday, the annual VOICES Book Nook Fall Half Price Sale continues at the Voices Book Nook in Lincoln Mall, with proceeds benefiting services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. The sale features gently used hardcover and paperback books, DVDs, records, puzzles and books on CDs in addition to some rare and collectible books. There is also a silent auction including books, quilts, and music albums. The VOICES Book Nook is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the final days of the sale.

On Sunday, November 17th at 5:00 p.m. the community is invited to help "flip the switch" to light up the Holiday Tree in front of FHN Memorial Hospital. There'll be refreshments, holiday caroling, and of course, Santa Claus. Afterwards, attendees can walk up the block to the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center to enjoy the lighted healing garden. This event is free to all.

And finally, as a reminder, the League of Women Voters of Freeport are hosting a presentation called "A Woman's Place is in the Voting Booth: the Story of our Past, Present, and Future" by Highland Community College sociology instructor Dr. Julie Linck next Tuesday, November 19th. The presentation begins at 6:30 p.m. on the 19th at the Freeport Public Library, and refreshments will be served.

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 subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too.

In closing...

In closing, we're giving you a heads-up that we're beginning a year-end fundraising drive to help offset some of FREEPOD's expenses. We've been bringing you newscasts and interviews for almost a whole year and most of the generous start-up funding support we received has been spent to get us up and running. While our staff is all volunteer, we do have other ongoing expenses including insurance and marketing to help more people learn about us, and it's time to reinvigorate our bank account. We'll talk about that in more detail next week but wanted you to know that we're going to be including an invitation to support us in the next several programs.

We also want to remind you that last week's in-depth interview, which is available on our website and through our new Facebook page, was FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel speaking Jim Yeager, Director of the Mass Communications Department at Highland, about disinformation and misinformation and how that has been affecting our social, cultural, and political interactions. As mentioned earlier in this podcast, next week's in-depth interview will feature FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visiting with Nate and Penny Ewing Peterson of Wishful Acres Farm and Brewery. They'll talk about how they got started with their business and have grown it into a successful enterprise. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, November 19th.

With that, time's up for this week but tune in again next week for more about Freeport businesses, City plans and progress, area rewards and recognition, local impacts of state and national news, and more.

As we say each week, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many others. We're especially appreciative for the assistance of the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College for producing this podcast. We're also grateful to WNIJ and Northern Public Radio in DeKalb, a member station of NPR National Public Radio, for partnering with us in reaching even more listeners with news of events and activities in northwest Illinois. And of course, here's a big shout-out to our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you. Thank you, Team FREEPOD!

If you have story suggestions or would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support FREEPOD, visit our website at www.freepod.org or contact us through our Facebook page.

Listen next week for more news you've been missing!