



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

Please continue to share about us on your social media and thank you for your enthusiasm – now here's local news you've been missing.

### **Sorensen delivers on clean drinking water infrastructure funding for Freeport**

Congressman Eric Sorensen was in Freeport on Monday to deliver a check for nearly \$960,000 that he secured as part of the 2024 Federal Interior Appropriations bill to replace wells in Freeport that were shut down due to contamination. This investment will help bring Freeport's water supply back to original levels and ensure local families have access to clean drinking water.

Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller noted that the City of Freeport is very grateful for Congressman Sorensen's efforts in securing this funding. Said Miller, "The nearly \$1 million in support that Freeport is receiving will definitely stretch our dollars in our \$14 million dollar project for the New Well and Well House Number 12 to continue to provide safe and clean drinking water to all of our residents. We look forward to continuing working closely with our congressman for more infrastructure projects."

Sorensen secured funding for these projects as part of the Community Project Funding process, which allows members of Congress to secure investments for critical initiatives in their communities. The legislation was signed into law by the President on Saturday.



*Congressman Eric Sorensen addresses guests outside Freeport City Hall before presenting a check to Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller for nearly \$980,000 that he helped to secure to replace wells in the City.*

## **Local candidate positions on 2024 election topics**

We mentioned last week that FREEPOD was working to get you the information you want about candidates for local offices in the upcoming November election. It was not logistically possible for FREEPOD to conduct in-person interviews with all of them, so we developed a 5 Questions in 5 Minutes questionnaire that we emailed to all candidates in contested races. All but one responded, enabling us to give you a literally side-by-side, apples-to-apples comparison on the same five questions. The questions are:

1. If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?
2. Why should this issue be important to voters?
3. Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?
4. What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?
5. What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?

A link to the summary will be on our social media, website, and at the website of our partner, WNIJ Northern Public Radio, tomorrow if it's not already there. We hope this easy-to-compare information will help local voters understand candidate positions on these important topics.

## **FREEPOD is on social media!**

FREEPOD is now on social media! We have a Facebook page that you can quickly find by searching for us in their search engine or going directly to our page at <https://www.facebook.com/freepod61032> and we're also on Instagram, also easy to find by search or heading to our page at [https://www.instagram.com/freepod\\_il/](https://www.instagram.com/freepod_il/). We'll have links to all our interviews on these sites, and look forward to sharing the news you've been missing as well as other FREEPOD info in these new ways.

## **Street work update**

Work continues on street and infrastructure projects to ensure that they're complete for the winter! There's been a lot of progress on Adams Avenue, where final paving from Float to Arcade is now done, while water infrastructure work continues from Exchange to Float and is expected to be complete by Thanksgiving. Final work on State Avenue, South Chicago Avenue, and West Iroquois Street was recently completed by the City Street crews.

## **Wine and Witches in downtown Freeport**

With Halloween just around the corner, spooky things are in the future for downtown Freeport as the Wine and Witches Boo-tique Walk again casts its spell throughout the business district. From 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. today, October 10th, shoppers are encouraged to dress up in costume and roam downtown to cash in on special sales and sample potions – also known as regional wines – at participating businesses.

The event is free but for extra fun and memories, for \$20 you can pick up a VIP bag at the Wagner House on Spring Street which includes a wine glass and special gifts.

### **Medicare changes for 2025**

The 2025 Medicare Open Enrollment Period begins next Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and continues through December 7<sup>th</sup>. Changes made during this time will take effect on January 1, 2025, and there a number of changes to Medicare coming in 2025 as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act. Here's a brief summary:

First, this new law gives Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices, which is predicted to save taxpayers \$160 billion over the next decade. This includes capping the cost of insulin for seniors at \$35 a month instead of as much as \$400 a month.

Next, President Biden's new prescription drug law takes effect in 2025 and caps annual out-of-pocket costs to Medicare enrollees at \$2000 under Medicare Part D, effectively eliminating the prescription drug "donut hole" which in 2024 may have required some Medicare recipients to spend as much as \$8000 annually for prescription drugs. This new law will be phased in like this:

- If your Medicare Advantage drug plan or standalone Part D plan requires a deductible, you'll pay 100% of your prescription drug costs until you spend \$590 and then a 25% coinsurance for covered drugs until you've paid a total of \$2,000.
- After that, you'll pay nothing else for 2025. Part D enrollees who reach this level should save about \$1,300 on drug costs in 2025 compared to 2024.
- A new Medicare Prescription Payment Plan will also allow you to spread your out-of-pocket drug costs across the whole year instead of paying all at once.

Also new in 2025, Medicare will cover expanded mental health services including outpatient services, marriage and family therapy, and mental health counseling, and healthcare providers may offer a free assessment of social needs for their patients as well as referral to appropriate social services.

Additional support next year will be available to caregivers for family members in hospice care and living with dementia, and United States postal employees, retirees, and families will receive Medicare benefits instead of coverage through the federal employee benefits program.

Lastly, rural telehealth coverage will be provided only when patients are onsite at medical facilities, except for mental or behavioral health counseling, which will continue to be available in-home no matter where you live.

Don't forget that you can find a print version of these changes on our website and the website of our partner WNIJ Northern Public Radio in DeKalb. Many insurance agents can also assist as well as the Senior Resource Center in Freeport. We'll provide info about upcoming Medicare information events between now and December.

### **Stroke presentation**

Speaking of healthcare, did you know that in the United States, a stroke occurs every 40 seconds and someone dies from a stroke every four minutes? This means that nearly 800,000 people have a stroke in the country every year, and almost 140,000 die.

Next Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the FHN Family Healthcare Center-Burchard Hills, join FHN experts for a free informative talk about how to recognize a stroke as well as available treatments and ways you can help prevent them. To register, visit [fhn.org/stroke](http://fhn.org/stroke) or call 1-877-600-0346, ext. 901. That's 1-877-600-0346, ext. 901.

### **Freeport Homecoming**

It's homecoming week for Freeport School District 145! Let's hear a little more about this from Jaci Ogden, Freeport High School Student Council Advisor, and Freeport High School Head Football Coach Anthony Dedmond and Assistant Football Coach Marty Sellers.

*(Homecoming interview clips)*

### **Adult Prom**

While Freeport high school students look forward to their homecoming dance this Saturday night, adults 21 and older can enjoy their own dance! Billed as a Red Carpet Event, the Adult Prom will be held this Saturday night, October 12<sup>th</sup>, at the Freeport Masonic Temple, 305 West Stephenson Street, from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. For \$25 per couple or \$15 for individuals, attendees will enjoy music, beverage service by Rafters, and complimentary hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are available at the door and a 50/50 raffle will also be held as part of this fundraiser for the Freeport Masonic Temple's projects.

### **The week ahead**

As we look to the week ahead, if you'd like to cross an important to-do item off your list before November 5<sup>th</sup> don't forget that early voting for the 2024 November elections has begun in the lower level of the Stewart Centre at 50 West Douglas Street in Freeport. Voting is open from 8:30 to 4:30 Monday thru Friday, and will also be available on Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Saturday before Election Day, from 9:00 to 12:00 a.m.

For young family members who like stories AND dogs, this Saturday, just like the second Saturday of every month, there'll be therapy dogs at the Freeport Public Library just waiting for stories to be read to them! PAWS FOR READING is the Library's program where certified therapy dogs listen to any and all kinds of books that young readers might like to share with them. They'll be there from 11:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, and we hope there will be plenty of readers to entertain the furry listeners who will be waiting for them!

For a comprehensive listing of many more fun events and activities throughout Stephenson County, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com) and click on "weekly events."

### **In closing...**

In closing, we 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 with FHN CEO Mark Gridley about the region's largest healthcare organization. Next week's in-depth interview will be

FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors speaking with Freeport High School Head Football Coach Anthony Dedmond and Assistant Football Coach Marty Sellers about this year's Freeport High football season. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, October 15th.

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 related to 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](http://www.freepod.org).

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