



**22 May
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.

Route 20 news

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced that work on U.S. Route 20 in Stephenson County has begun. The work zone will be from Rees Road near Lena to Flansburg Road near Freeport. Work to be done includes milling and resurfacing the road. There will be daytime lane closures controlled by flaggers during the \$1.6 million project, which is expected to be completed by July.

City public meetings

The Freeport City Council is hosting two public meetings over the next week. The first will be about their draft transition plan to address the Americans with Disabilities Act for equal access to public services, activities and programs in facilities owned by public entities. The document the City has created specifically covers accessibility within the public right-of-way and does not include information on the City of Freeport's programs, practices, or building facilities not related to public rights of way. The City's draft ADA Transition Plan is available at www.cityoffreeport.org for those who may wish to review it before the meeting, which is scheduled for next Wednesday, May 28th, at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall.

Then next Friday, May 30th at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall the City welcomes public input regarding the proposed Well No. 12 and Phase 4 Lead Service Line Replacement Projects. More information on both projects can be found on the City website at www.cityoffreeport.org

Utility rate increase

Beginning Sunday June 1st, Illinois residents will have a utility rate increase. Last week, FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel caught up with Jim Chilsen, the Communications Director for the Citizens Utility Board

about the rate increase and he talked about what's happening and why and how we can respond to the rate hike. Here are those comments.

(audio clip)

Four cousins lead repeat to repeat NIC-10 boys tennis title

Four of the eight players who dominated the recent NIC-10 tennis are cousins, making the Freeport High School NIC-10 boys tennis champions really feel like a family. Diego Robles-Sanchez paired with Cadan DeJong to outlast Auburn's Number 1 seeds and three of his cousins followed suit: the Number 1 singles runner-up Alex Cuatlatl and Number 3 doubles champs Cristian Ruiz-Paliero and Jonathan Escamilla.

While last year's title was a bit of a surprise win for the Pretzels, this year seemed more of a foregone formality. Freeport was so dominant it clinched the title on the first day of the tourney. Guilford freshman Ryan Hunter lost to Freeport's Colin Helm in the finals and Freeport's JC Herrera and Carlo Delavin won Number 2 doubles, while Ruiz-Paliero and Escamilla won Number 3 doubles. With Alex Cuatlatl as the Number 1 singles runner-up, the team boasted a three-peat win of doubles and a repeat as a team overall.

With a sweep of the other four titles and a second at Number 1 singles, the Freeport team's total score was 57.4 points, far ahead of runner-up Auburn with 46.2 and third-place Hononegah with 45.8. Congrats, Pretzels tennis team!

Cop on a Rooftop

Freeport police officers and Stephenson County sheriff's deputies got a different view of the city last week as part of the fundraiser "Cop On a Rooftop" to collect money for the Special Olympics. For many years now, officers and deputies have perched themselves on the Dunkin Donuts roof while others were on the ground to collect donations. Proceeds then are given to support local Special Olympics programs and activities in the area. If you weren't able to stop by that day, donations are always welcome at the Freeport Police Department office at 320 W Exchange Street in Freeport.



Freeport police officers and Stephenson County sheriff's deputies again held the "Cop On a Rooftop" fundraiser at Dunkin Donuts to raise money for local Special Olympics programs. Helping out for the sheriff's department were (left to right) Elizabeth Maize, Heather Becker, and Dylan Hoyer.

Two Freeporters named among the region's 25 Most Interesting People

Northwest Quarterly recently released its profiles of its 25 Most Interesting People of Northwest Illinois and two Freeporters, Michelle DeHaven Quast and Jim Yeager, were on the list.



DeHaven Quast became the inaugural CEO of the Foundation for Northern Illinois when the Foundation expanded into a full-time organization in 2022. The growth has continued, most recently with the Jane Addams Legacy Fund, which supports nonprofits that empower women with an emphasis on economic mobility, leadership, health and equity. The magazine notes that DeHaven Quast not only invests funds that support nonprofits today but also help prepare the region for future generations. She was appointed last year to the Governor's Commission on Poverty and Economic Stability and has also joined the executive leadership institute for CFLeads, a network of community foundations.

Yeager, director of Mass Communication and an instructor at Highland Community College, created the school's first mass communications program, which is the umbrella for the journalism, marketing and media production curriculum. He built the campus TV station and encourages students who want to become videographers in addition to those interested in print and other types of journalism careers. Yeager is also the technical production guru behind FREEPOD's weekly podcasts and we're very fortunate to have his expertise and support on a continuing basis.



Congratulations, Michelle and Jim, and thanks for being such great ambassadors for Freeport!

How old is the old oak?

Freeport is home to many wonderful, huge old trees and the majestic oak tree that stands in Debate Square downtown adjacent to Union Dairy has long been the subject of discussion regarding its age. That issue will be resolved this Friday, May 23rd at 10:00 a.m. when a retired National Park Service tree specialist will take a core sample from the tree to determine its age. The event is open to the public and is sponsored by the Lincoln-Douglas Society. We'll report on the age of the oak when it's official!

The week ahead...

As we look to the week ahead, a highlight will certainly be the annual Memorial Day parade in Freeport that begins at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 26th. As they have for many years, Gary and Sue Eisenhower are organizing the parade which starts at Main Street and Walnut Avenue in downtown Freeport. About 100 entries will participate in the event which heads down Main Street to State Avenue, then turns onto Stephenson Street and ends at the courthouse. Spectators can grab a spot anywhere along the route to view it and grab some candy as well.

We are also reminded that the Senior Resource Center is a great source of events and activities for our region and suggest that seniors ensure that they are on the mailing list for the organization. For

example, they are currently taking reservations for a group trip to Timberlake Playhouse to see Saturday Night Fever for \$48, which includes both the theatre ticket and transportation to and from the play. Due to popular demand, they are also offering a new session of their Better Balance & Strength class on Tuesdays. To be sure you're on their distribution list, contact the Center at 815-235-9777 – that's 815-235-9777.

Don't forget the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend as the United Sportsmen's Youth Foundation is ready to serve brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches you can grab on the go from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both tomorrow and Saturday as you support their organization's efforts.

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 chats with Mike Schindler of Classic Cinemas about the movie industry in general and the Lindo Theatre in Freeport. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors speaks with Kim Sigafus about the Celebration of Native Americans that's planned for Saturday, June 7th at the Oakdale Nature Preserve south of Freeport. It is free to the public and includes music, dance, crafts, and fry bread for all. This interview will post at noon on Tuesday May 27th 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 for more about what's happening in Freeport and thank you for listening!

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

LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS

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their free weekly newsletter there too, and we have a link to a QR code in the print version of this newscast if you'd like to sign up that way.



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 by using their QR code that appears below.

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