



**29 August  
2024**

Welcome to FREEDPOD, 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.

### **Freeport receives Safer Streets grant**

At their meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup>, the Freeport City Council accepted a \$400,000 grant to help make Freeport streets safer at accident-prone intersections.

This grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation is called Safe Streets and Roads for All and will allow the City of Freeport to hire consultants to create a plan to increase transportation safety throughout the City while also prioritizing underserved areas. Specific intersections that will be reviewed include Stephenson Street and Park Boulevard, Stephenson Street and Greenfield Drive, Walnut Street to Float Street on South Street, Walnut Street and Empire Avenue, all 12 City school crossing lights, and hotspots on West Avenue, Clark Street, and Douglas Avenue. A map of accident hotspots in Freeport is available on the City's website at [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org).

In order to receive the \$400,000 grant, the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration requires the City to utilize \$100,000 in local funds.

It was also noted that Mayor Jodi Miller will run for Mayor for the City of Freeport in 2025.

### **Rebuilding Together**

Rebuilding Together Stephenson County is one of over 100 affiliates of the national Rebuilding Together organization. Their goal is to repair area homes that have fallen into disrepair for homeowners who can't afford to fix them, with particular attention paid to providing safe and healthy housing. Their mission states that they are committed to "Repairing homes, revitalizing communities, rebuilding lives."

Thanks to the generosity of local churches, banks, grants, charitable foundations, 100 Women Who Care, many individuals, Lowe's, USAA Financial Services, and others, they have been able to provide

services to homeowners at no cost to the homeowners with some work being done on a volunteer basis while also hiring contractors when necessary.

Since their inception in Freeport in 2021, they have completed ten projects including painting of home exteriors, replacing windows, rebuilding unsafe porches, landscaping, building ramps for disabled homeowners and in one case for a special-needs child, repairing a storm-damaged roof along with needed interior repairs, and replacing a large portion of a collapsed ceiling at the Freeport Area Church Cooperative's women's dorm. Photos during and at the completion of a recent project appear in the print version of this newscast online at FREEPOD.org.

Rebuilding Together are proud to say that they are making a difference in our community, one family, one home, one neighborhood at a time!



### **When your pet is lost**

Most of us have been in the unfortunate situation of a pet getting lost. So, what do you do when it happens? That's when the animal control departments for both Freeport and Stephenson County get involved.

Officials at each say if a pet goes missing the first thing to do is call the departments. For Freeport the number is 815-235-8210 and the County's number is 815-235-8276. After office hours, they ask that people call the non-emergency numbers for Freeport Police at 815-235-8222 and Stephenson County Sheriff at 815-235-8252.

These numbers may also be used by anyone who sees stray animals on the loose. Animal Control officers also will pick up stray animals they see, investigate complaints, and issue citations for violations of any ordinances.

### **City to require permits for all driveway projects**

In response to recent issues related to driveway projects negatively affecting the City Right of Way, the Freeport City Council has approved an amendment to Chapter 1262 of the Codified Ordinances. This will allow the City more jurisdiction over the quality of driveways within the community.

The amendment will require residents to acquire a permit when working on driveways, no matter the project cost. The cost of these permits will be 1% of the entire project cost.

### **Above and beyond...**

Freeport Police Chief Chris Shenberger recently made a special presentation to Officers Joshua Leverton and Justin Holden for going above and beyond the requirements of their normal day for the good of the community.

They were credited with finding a suspicious vehicle and suspects in that vehicle who were in possession of loaded guns, and thwarted a potential shooting incident that could have occurred. Both officers were given the Merit Award at a Committee of the Whole meeting.

### **School district news**

In news from Freeport School District 145, it was announced that there will be five e-learning days that may be used for emergency weather closings. These are days that do not have to be made up at the end of the year. Enrollment for the school district is 3,720, with almost 400 multilingual students. And good news for all comes in the news that the District is fully staffed!

### **Park District news**

At the most recent board meeting for the Freeport Park District, the annual audit was reviewed and pronounced to be a clean audit. Additional news included the information that following the departure of Park District Executive Director Ron Schneider in June, the board has paid the Illinois Association of Park Districts \$7,600.00 to help search for a new Director. In the interim, Bruce Cubberley continues to serve as Interim Executive Director, as appointed by the Park Board of Commissioners. Prior to this temporary assignment, Cubberley served as the Superintendent of Parks and Natural Resources for the Freeport Park District for the last five years.

The board also confirmed that there are two Shot Spotter towners at Read Park, and they have two police body cams for three Park police officers.

In addition, the board noted that they are applying for a \$1.2 million Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grant for 2025. The Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Program is a state-financed grant program that provides funding assistance to local government agencies for acquisition and/or development of land for public parks and open space. Projects vary from small neighborhood

parks or tot lots to large community and county parks and nature areas. The state program is financed by a percentage of the state's Real Estate Transfer Tax.

### **Greater Freeport Partnership awarded Matthew Marvin Community Impact Award**

The Greater Freeport Partnership was honored as a co-recipient of the Matthew Marvin Community Impact Award at the Foundation for Northwest Illinois Gala on August 17. The Partnership's achievements in promoting collaborative economic development initiatives in Stephenson County were noted as deserving of the honor. The Partnership's award was accepted by Executive Director Andrea Schultz Winter.

The Foundation also honored Northwest Illinois Economic Development as the other co-recipient of the Matthew Marvin Award. This organization promotes economic development by fostering business growth and assisting expanding and relocating businesses in determining their needs for growth with cooperation of government and business partners and assisting with access to the resources necessary to do so. It was formed in 2008 by the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors to spearhead economic development structures, funding and progress in Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Whiteside counties.

The Lena Business & Professional Association (LBPA) was also awarded the Craig Wilson Rural Vitality Award for their work in promoting shopping with local businesses.

The Foundation hosted the Celebration Gala in honor of their 50th anniversary and to showcase their strategic work in economic development with nearly 130 guests in attendance.



“The Foundation believes that as a collective of communities, northwest Illinois is ‘Stronger, Together.’” stated Michelle DeHaven Quast, CEO at The Foundation for Northwest Illinois. She continued, “The work of the Greater Freeport Partnership and other award recipients embody the collaboration that is needed for the region to continue on the path toward economic vitality, where there is both equity and opportunity for all to thrive.”

*From left: John Bosco, Partnership development services manager; Michelle DeHaven Quast, CEO Foundation of Northwest Illinois, Andrea Schultz Winter, Partnership executive director, and Nicole Haas, Partnership brand director.*

### **News from Winneshiek Theatre**

If you lived through the 80's -- or WISH you had – mark your calendars for Winneshiek Players upcoming performances of “Back to the 80's,” a comedic parody based on movies from that decade (think *Back to the Future*, *Risky Business*, and *Goonies*). Board member Jaime Elliott, who has been watching rehearsals, says the show is funny --- REALLY funny. “It's just hilarious,” she says, “The script is very well-

written and the cast is doing a great job. It even includes an interactive feature, which gives the audience a voice on what happens next. We think it will be a big crowd pleaser.”

Evening performances are September 20th, 21st, 27th, and 28th at 7:00 p.m., with a matinee also offered on Saturday, September 21st. at 2:00 p.m. Individual tickets are \$10, with a group rate of five tickets for \$45 and six tickets for \$50. Jaime shared that change is in the air at Winneshiek, and the website is currently being updated.

In the meantime, the best way to secure tickets is to email the box office with your request at [winnieboxoffice@gmail.com](mailto:winnieboxoffice@gmail.com). Please include the date of the performance you wish to see, names of members, and number of non-members, along with your seating preference if you have one. A phone number where you can be reached is also appreciated. You will get an email back confirming your request and providing more details. Season tickets are also available.

### **And more Winneshiek Theatre news**

In more Winneshiek Theatre news, two productions are being planned for October's Halloween season, including an *Edgar Allen Poe Radio Hour* and a shadowcast of the cult classic, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

In case you don't know what a shadowcast is, let us explain. The movie is played and actors on stage in front of the screen act in tandem with and lip-sync with the movie's actors. The first known Shadowcast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* happened in Los Angeles in 1976 after the movie came out in 1975. Sounds a little crazy, but people who've attended one of these say it's a LOT of fun!

Later in the year, a holiday production of two half-hour shows separated by a festive reception is in the works for Christmastime.

The Winneshiek Theater is believed to be the nation's oldest continuously performing all-volunteer amateur theatre. Winnie, as it is affectionately nicknamed, has been operating in Freeport since 1926. It has been at its current location, 228 West Clark Street, since 1936.

### **What's up with the crabapple trees?**

This story didn't make it into last week's newscast so we wanted to be sure to include it this week in response to people asking why do so many of our crabapple trees look like they're dying right now? According to a regional forestry expert, crabapple trees and some other tree species this year are experiencing a higher rate of fungal disorders due to the wet weather we've had throughout our Spring and Summer.

Fungal disorders can leave trees with discolored leaves, spots, premature leaf drops, and just an overall unhealthy appearance. For crabapple trees, this disorder is called "Apple Scab."

Apple Scab doesn't kill the trees and it's not something to worry about. Treatment for the tree also isn't necessary at this point in the season as the fungal disorder has already run its course. One thing you can

do to help prevent trees from developing fungal disorders is to clean up leaf litter in your yard and then disposing it at a brush site. Everything should be back to normal next spring!

### **Antique Engine Club open on Labor Day**

If you're looking for something fun to do on Labor Day next Monday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, try a ride on the Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad of Freeport, which will be open all day. The train operated by the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club is the type of train used during the golden age of railroading when numerous branch-line trains tied the small towns of what was once a more rural America to each other and the outside world.

You can experience branch-line railroading in this 1912 steam locomotive that takes riders on a three-and-a-half-mile round trip excursion into history. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$2 for kids under 12, and you can even get a \$20 ticket to ride in the engine's cab. Rides depart at 11:00 a.m., noon, and on the hour between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. at 2954 S. Walnut Road in Freeport.

The Silver Creek Museum and Cooper Corliss Engine are also open from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Labor Day and if you ride the train, your ticket to the Museum is just \$5 and children under age 12 are free.

There is no admission to see the Cooper Corliss engine, which served a company in Lasalle, Illinois from 1914 to 1965. One of six large engines, it powered a rolling mill and a line shaft that powered other equipment. The engine is the largest flywheel steam engine within 500 miles of Freeport, weighing 60 tons and capable of a quarter million foot pounds of torque. Engines fitted with Corliss valve gear offered the best thermal efficiency of any type of stationary steam engine until the refinement of the uniflow steam engine and steam turbine in the 20th century.

### **The week ahead...**

As we look ahead to a short week due to the Labor Day holiday, we want to remind everyone that the public is invited to provide input for the 2025 budget for the City of Freeport next Tuesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This conversation is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers at City Hall, 314 W. Stephenson Street in Freeport. City Manager Rob Boyer and Finance Department staff will provide general information on the budget process and then meeting attendees can share their thoughts on what they would like to see funded in their neighborhoods and the community at large. The public will have another opportunity to offer input during a similar meeting on Monday, October 28th.

Next up, with a Presidential election right around the corner, attendees at the Lindo Theatre's Select Pix Classic film series will enjoy *All the President's Men* next Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. This 1976 political thriller is an inside look at the famous Watergate Scandal. Robert Redford, Dustin Hoffman, and Jason Robards star. *All the Presidents' Men* screens Wednesday at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. at regular ticket prices. 2024 is the 14th year for this popular film series hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel at the Lindo Theatre in Freeport.

In a bit of history trivia for the week and related to our story about the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club, our historians tell us that the first rail service to Freeport began 171 years ago this week, when on August 31, 1853 a Chicago and North Western Railway train arrived in town.

### **Until next week**

In closing, we're pleased to share that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will be FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors talking with Lou Ann Hayes of Birth to Five Illinois in Freeport. The goal of this statewide organization is to provide a statewide infrastructure that will utilize community input in the development of policies and funding priorities in order to build and sustain equitable access to inclusive, high-quality Early Childhood services for all children and families in Illinois. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, September 3rd.

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

As we say each week, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many local supporters. We're especially appreciative for the Mass Communications Department at Highland Community College for producing this podcast as well as our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you. Thank you, Highland and Team FREEPOD!

As we say each week, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many local supporters. We're especially appreciative for the Mass Communications Department at Highland Community College for producing this podcast as well as our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you. Thank you, Highland and Team FREEPOD!

If you have story suggestions or would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support FREEPOD (now tax-deductible), visit our website at [www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org).

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