



**30 October
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 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.

Federal courts in Northern Illinois impacted in government shutdown

Employees in Federal courts in Northern Illinois are not being paid and the Courts have reduced operations due to the government shutdown. The chief judge for the Northern District of Illinois made this announcement, which affects the Stanley J. Roszkowski U.S. Courthouse in Rockford, as the reduction in operations began on or around October 18th.

Freeport does have a Federal courthouse on the second floor of the Post Office building, but it is rarely used and generally for functions of a more symbolic nature, such as historic or milestone events. It opened as a Federal court in 1903.

Interim Freeport Police Chief sworn in



Following the departure of Freeport Police Chief Chris Shenberger after 27 years of service, Mayor Jodi Miller has sworn Interim Police Chief Travis Davis into office (both shown at left). The search for a permanent Chief is underway. Thank you and good luck Interim Chief Davis!

In other Freeport Police Department news, the City Council approved two security cameras to be placed on city-owned poles in the Downtown area. Both will be paid for by the nearby business and support continuing efforts to create a safer community for all.

Freeport implementing Housing Rehabilitation Grant

Two more homes are set to be rehabbed thanks to the Community Development Block Grant that awarded the City of Freeport \$550,000. Of that amount, \$64,000 is allocated to grant administration and \$486,000 goes to the rehabilitation of homes.

The two properties, both on East Wyandotte Street, will utilize the grant funding to improve windows, trim, heating and cooling, gutters, downspouts, roofs, and complete radon abatement.

This grant supports the City's Strategic Plan of maintaining a safe and inclusive community and effective land use. The funding has been used to complete other rehab projects over the last two years. The grant funding is no longer open for new applications.

Streets approved for improvements in 2026

The list of streets approved by the Freeport City Council to be improved in 2026 includes nearly three miles of roadway as well as renovations to the Douglas Municipal parking lot. The price tag for the work is estimated at \$6.1 million and the City plans to use a combination of funding, including the Illinois Department of Transportation Motor Fuel Tax; Local Street, Water, Storm, and Sewer funds; and Sorenson water main funds. Here are the streets that will be worked on in 2026:

- Carroll Avenue, from Empire to South.
- Demeter Drive, from Empire to West Demeter.
- Dewey Street, from Walnut to Locust.
- Benton Avenue, from Winslow to Wyandotte.
- Pershing Street, from High to Carroll.
- Stewart Avenue, from Winter to Stephenson.
- Concord Drive, from Laurel to Middlebury.
- Gladewood Drive, segments of the entry into subdivision.
- Seminole Drive, from Greenfield to Navajo.
- Downtown Municipal Lot



As today's episode airs the day before Halloween, we've included this photo of one of the City's utility trucks decked out like a vampire. The trucks do sport this look year-round, of course, but it amused our editor and she thought others might also appreciate her spooky spidey sense.

FREEPOD appreciates all the work that's been done on our City streets this year, and looks forward to more improvements in 2026!

Jury cards are in the mail

The Stephenson County Circuit Clerk's office is sending out 3,000 jury duty postcards to potential jurors and Circuit Clerk Shanelle Bardell wants to remind recipients that they need to complete the jury questionnaire within 5 days of receiving the postcard. This can be done online or the Clerk's office can send a paper copy to your address. This is not a summons for jury duty and will be used only to determine who will be included in the pool of prospective jurors in the future. If you have questions, you can call the Circuit Clerk's office at 815-345-8266, extension #4.

HCC news

In news from Highland Community College, the Board unanimously "accepted with regret" the retirement of President Chris Kuberski at the end of June 2026. The Board also unanimously approved a contract with a search firm for \$66,000 to find a new president. In another unanimous approval, the Board granted permission for the administration to proceed with architectural plans and other preparations for the construction of an Athletic/Events Complex at an estimated cost of \$38 million.

Foundation Director Dan Dick indicated that a feasibility study to determine how the Foundation can construction of the Athletic/Events Complex is moving forward and also announced the change of date for the Leadership Institute golf outing from September to around Memorial Day.

President Kuberski reported that the joint Highland/YMCA Task Force that is working to coordinate the two entities' separation and cooperation will meet again in December. FREEPOD will continue to report on the outcomes of these discussions as they occur.

New Assistant Coach for the Cougars



In other Highland news, the college welcomes Chris Daleo as the new Assistant Men's Basketball Coach. Daleo, a Rockford native with over 30 years of international, collegiate and professional coaching experience, joins Head Coach Erik Walton in leading the Cougars into the upcoming National Junior College Athletic Association Division I season which has just begun.

Daleo has coached championship teams from the Rockford Lightning to professional clubs in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. He served as the only coach in Thailand's history to win Olympic silver medals with both the Men's and Women's National Teams. Daleo has mentored many players who went on to compete at the highest levels of basketball.

The timing couldn't be better for Cougar fans. With six returning sophomores, Walton says that the team has a solid foundation on which to build. Cougar Basketball tips off at home next Monday, November 3rd at 7:00 p.m. against Clarke University JV. Fans are encouraged to pack the stands and show their Cougar pride!

FHN Holiday Gala

Break out your best in black and white and join FHN for their annual Festival of Trees Gala! The event takes place in two weeks on Friday, November 14th at the Masonic Temple Ballroom in Freeport. Funds from this year's Gala will support the FHN Foundation fundraising campaign to replace the defibrillators throughout FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport. Ticket sales end next Friday, November 7th at 12:00 p.m. and there will be no tickets sold at the door.

This year's entertainment is headlined by the dueling pianos of *Felix and Fingers* as well as delicious food, great conversation, and an auction of wonderful gift items. The winners of the FHN Physician of the Year Award and FHN Advanced Practice Professional of the Year Award will also be announced.

Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and once again tickets will **not** be available at the door. You can get yours online from FHN's home page at www.fhn.org or by calling the FHN Foundation office at 815-599-6900 until next Friday.

The Foundation for Northwest Illinois provides warning

The Foundation for Northwest Illinois is warning area residents that GoFundMe Pro recently created more than 1.4 million donation pages for organizations registered as nonprofits across the United States without those organizations' direct consent or knowledge. This action affected nonprofit organizations throughout Northwest Illinois, including The Foundation for Northwest Illinois. This information was originally provided by the United Way of Northwest Illinois.

If you represent a nonprofit organization that has had one of these pages created automatically by GoFundMe and wish to have it removed, the Foundation has issued instructions on how to accomplish this. For details, visit the links in the print version of this episode (<https://mailchi.mp/fornwil/fnwil-october-10366474>) or call them at 815-801-3035.

Filing period for 2026 primary election

This week is the filing period for candidates that want to enter the 2026 primary election on March 17. Petitions need to be in to the County Clerk's office in the Stewart Centre in Freeport by 4:30pm on Monday, November 3rd. National, State and County races will be on the primary ballot with the winners moving on to the general election in November 2026.

As a reminder, residents who need to register to vote can do so by contacting the County Clerk's office at 815-235-8289 for options to register or stop at the driver's license office north of Freeport.

Farm Bureau Fall open house announced, local vendors invited

The Stephenson County Farm Bureau has announced their Fall open house will be next Friday, November 7th from 9:00a.m.-5:00p.m. and Saturday, November 8 from 9:00a.m. to noon. The event will feature a truck sale of McNess products, Farm Bureau updates and trip highlights, and new this year there will also be a local vendor fair.

If you are a Farm Bureau Member and would like to be a vendor, please contact the Bureau's office or visit their website at www.stephensoncfb.org to fill out the vendor application. Vendors will be

accepted tomorrow, October 31st or until space is filled. Please call 815-232-3186 with questions. That's 815-232-3186.

Halloween inflatables display

With Halloween coming up tomorrow, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors took a few moments to get the scoop on one of the biggest displays of Halloween inflatables in Freeport. Holiday Inflatable Expert Derek Simons tells us about his passion.

(audio clip)

Thanks, Derek and Tim!

The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, we're reminded that tomorrow, Friday October 31st, is the last day to purchase tickets for the Quiet Souls second annual Native American Harvest Dinner at the Freeport Eagles Club to be held on Monday, November 10th. The event will begin with a wine tasting from Native Vines Winery at 5:30, followed by a four-course Native American Traditional Foods Dinner and a Friendship Dance led by traditional dancers. Tickets are available at Riteway Furniture or by calling 815-297-2293.

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by the Knights of Columbus St. Thomas. They'll be there both Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to serve up brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches.



This Saturday, November 1st, is also the first Saturday of the month, so remember that The Re-Fresh Freeport program, a joint effort between the City of Freeport and Gill's Freeport Disposal, provides monthly free bulk trash disposal for Freeport residents on the first Saturday of each month.

Bring your loads to the Freeport Transfer Station at 2133 S. Walnut Road from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. To participate, bring a valid ID for proof of residency and cover your load with a tarp to prevent litter. The program does not accept yard waste, tires, hazardous waste like paint or oil, electronics, or appliances.

On Wednesday, November 5th, Ed Finch and FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel host the next movie in the Lindo Theatre's Select Pix Classic Film Series. They'll be screening the powerful political drama, *A Face in the Crowd* from 1957 starring Andy Griffith and Patricia Neal in the story of a country singer who becomes a corrupt political personality. Showtimes are 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at regular ticket prices, and attendees are invited to stay after the show for a discussion about the film and a question and answer session. 2025 is the 15th year for the popular film series hosted by Finch and Wenzel.

Also next Wednesday, November 5th, the Senior Resource Center and the University of Illinois host another of their Healthy Aging Series presentations. From 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Center, you can learn

more about the importance of understanding inflammation and the power of social connection as well as how diet, physical activity, stress management, and meaningful relationships can impact inflammation in your body. Cost of the event is \$5 and all are welcome. To register, call the U of I Extension at 815-235-4125 or go online at go.illinois.edu/jsw. That's 815-235-4125.

Finally, don't forget to set your clocks back one hour this Sunday, November 2nd. This year, the clock re-set occurs on the earliest possible date for the end of daylight-saving time. The clocks will "fall back" from 2:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. over Saturday night so you will gain an extra hour of sleep, and the sun will rise and set about one hour earlier on Sunday than it did on Saturday.

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.

We also wanted to remind everyone that we're really enjoying the great in-depth interviews you can hear every week on FREEPOD, and are sure you will too if you're not already! This week's interview featured FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors chatting with well-known Freeport native and attorney Tim Mahoney about Freeport over the years and what makes it special. Mahoney just published a book too, titled *Lump of Coal to a D.I.A.M.O.N.D.* about how to survive and thrive through any crisis. The content is drawn from decades of guiding clients through their darkest hours as well as handling his own financial and personal crisis. The book is online for Kindle readers at Amazon.com. The interview, which first aired this past Tuesday, is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel visits with FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley about FHN's upcoming affiliation with Mercyhealth. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, November 4th 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.

In closing...

In closing, as we've mentioned before, we need your help! When you're listening on your favorite podcast platform, please "like" or "follow" us – this helps us to move up in the rankings of podcasts and enables us to better promote ourselves throughout the region. On Facebook, also please click on "like" as the algorithms there also depend on user input to help us increase our presence.

And speaking of increasing our presence remember that FREEPOD is now on YouTube! The program is currently audio only but having it on YouTube gives you another super-easy way to listen. You can find both English and Spanish versions – just head to YouTube.com and search for FREEPOD or click the link in the print version at <https://www.youtube.com/@FREEPOD61032/podcasts>. Please tell all your friends and family members about our YouTube channel too – everything you do can help get local news out to our community!

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, WNIJ 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 – or any time after that on our website or your favorite podcast platform – and thank you for listening!

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

LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS BELOW



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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 with the QR at the right.

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