



FREEPOD | NORTHWEST ILLINOIS NEWS

OLD UNION SCHOOL GETS APPROVED FOR DEMOLITION



A piece of Freeport's educational history is coming down.

The Freeport City Council has approved a contract to demolish the former Union School building at the corner of Chicago Avenue and Frank Street.

Built in 1897, the nearly 130-year-old building originally served as an elementary school before being repurposed for administrative and other

educational uses during the twentieth century.

The building has stood vacant for years, and city officials say its deteriorating condition has become a public safety concern.

Council members approved a demolition contract with Northern Illinois Service Company during their October fifth meeting.

The decision marks the end of a building that served generations of Freeport students and was once part of the city's neighborhood school system.

Officials have not yet announced when demolition crews will begin work.

The city has also not announced any specific plans for redevelopment of the property once the building is removed.

EAST DUBUQUE MAN CHARGED FOLLOWING INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIALS

An East Dubuque man faces multiple felony charges following a nearly six-month investigation into child sexual abuse material.

Fifty-eight-year-old Shad Fiferlick was indicted October ninth on eight counts of possession of child sexual abuse material and one count of failing to register as a sex offender.



According to the Jo Daviess County Sheriff's Office, the investigation began in April after authorities received a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Four additional tips followed.

Investigators searched Fiferlick's home in August, seizing electronic devices for forensic examination.

Fiferlick, who was previously convicted of a sex offense, turned himself in Friday and was being held at the Jo Daviess County Jail pending a detention hearing.

He is presumed innocent of the new charges unless proven guilty.

JUDGE REJECTS DEFENSE REQUESTS IN JACKSON KRADLE CASE



A Carroll County judge has ruled against the defense in the Jackson Kradle homicide case.

Matthew Herpstreith, a former Carroll County sheriff's deputy from Savanna, faces felony charges of reckless homicide, reckless conduct, and obstruction of justice in connection with Kradle's death.

During a recent hearing, Herpstreith's attorneys sought dismissal of two felony charges and asked the court to exclude evidence of alleged intoxication.

The judge denied those requests.

The defense also challenged an audio recording of a telephone conversation involving a passenger and a county dispatcher.

Herpstreith is also named in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Kradle's family.

He is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

MOLLY'S ANNOUNCES CLOSURE

Two popular restaurants in Mount Carroll are preparing to close their doors.

The owners of Molly's and Market Street Pizza have announced that both restaurants will serve their final dinners on Saturday, October 24th.

Owners Ben and Molly say the decision comes after twelve-and-a-half years in business, during which their operation grew from three employees to thirty-five.

In a heartfelt announcement, they thanked customers, employees, and local farmers for their support over the years.

The owners say they're ready for a new chapter and invite customers to stop in and share memories before the restaurants close.



CURB LEAF PICK UP REMINDER



Freeport residents are being reminded not to rake leaves into the street just yet.

City officials say residential leaf collection won't begin until early November, and residents who place leaves along the curb before the collection period could receive warnings or citations.

The city says piles of leaves can block storm drains, increasing the risk of street flooding and property damage during heavy rainfall.

Until collection begins, residents are encouraged to mulch leaves into their lawns, compost them, or store them away from the curb.

Officials say keeping storm drains clear helps protect neighborhoods and prevents unnecessary flooding.

FPD ANNOUNCES PARENTS' NIGHT OUT AND PARENT & ME TEA

Freeport-area families have two special events to look forward to in November.

A Parents' Night Out is scheduled for Friday, November 13th, giving parents an evening to themselves while children enjoy crafts, games, dancing, a movie, and pizza.

The following day, Saturday, November 14th, a Parent and Me Tea will feature finger sandwiches, refreshments, treats, and an afternoon of family bonding.



Registration for both events closes October 30th.

Families can sign up online or call 815-235-6114 for more information.

AMITY'S ATTIC TURNS 30



A longtime Freeport-area organization is celebrating a milestone this year.

Amity's Attic is marking its 30th anniversary, recognizing three decades of service to the community.

The organization relies heavily on dedicated volunteers, whose contributions have helped sustain its work over the years.

To celebrate, Amity's Attic is hosting a special appreciation party for its volunteers on Monday, November second, from five until seven in the evening.

The celebration recognizes the people who have helped make the organization's thirty years of service possible.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REJECTS ILLINOIS DISASTER RELIEF

The Trump administration has denied Illinois' request for federal disaster assistance following severe storms and flooding in August.

Governor JB Pritzker requested FEMA assistance for eight counties, including Cook, Will, and several in central Illinois.

FEMA determined the damage did not warrant federal assistance.



FEMA

Pritzker criticized the decision, accusing the administration of playing politics with disaster relief.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Darren Bailey also expressed disappointment and called for FEMA to reconsider.

Illinois' entire congressional delegation, including its three Republicans, had supported the request.

The denial means affected communities will not receive the federal disaster assistance sought under the declaration.

None of the eight counties are in Northwest Illinois.

PRITZKER DECLARES DIESEL DISASTER IN ILLINOIS



Illinois Governor JB Pritzker has declared a statewide disaster as diesel fuel prices surge, creating additional costs for farmers and trucking companies.

According to AAA, average diesel prices in Illinois have climbed nearly 78 percent from a year ago, reaching six dollars and sixty-four cents per gallon.

Pritzker's executive order temporarily suspends state penalties for using tax-exempt, red-dyed diesel on highways through December 31st, following similar federal action by President Donald Trump.

The move could provide relief for Northwest Illinois farmers during harvest season.

However, fuel industry representatives warn that unresolved tax and regulatory questions could complicate implementation.

GOOGLE & CONSTELLATION ENERGY ANNOUNCE NUCLEAR POWER DEAL

The Byron Generating Station in Ogle County is among the nuclear power plants slated for upgrades under a multibillion-dollar agreement between Google and Constellation Energy.

The 20-year agreement calls for upgrades to eleven nuclear reactors across Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, adding 890 megawatts of electricity generation.

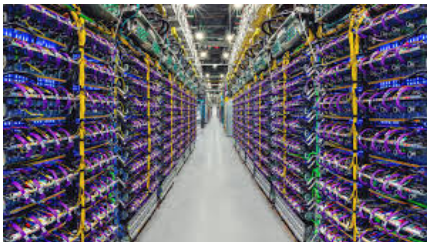


The deal represents more than four-point-three-billion dollars in investment and is expected to support thousands of jobs across the three states.

Upgrades at the Byron facility will increase electricity production as demand grows from artificial intelligence and data centers.

The first upgraded facility is expected to begin delivering additional power in 2028.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON DATA CENTERS



As Stephenson County considers how to regulate data centers, residents will have an opportunity to learn more about their potential impacts.

A free public forum called “Let's Talk Data Centers” is scheduled for Thursday, October 22nd, at six p.m. at the Freeport Public Library.

Environmental organizations and consumer advocates will discuss how data centers could affect local water supplies, electricity demand, utility

bills, and air quality.

Organizers will also discuss proposed state legislation called the POWER Act and answer questions from residents.

The event is sponsored by five organizations, including the Citizens Utility Board, Sierra Club, and Prairie Rivers Network.

Registration is available through the Sierra Club.

HCC HOSTING FACULTY ART EXHIBIT

Highland Community College in Freeport is showcasing the artistic talents of its own faculty members.

The annual Visual Arts Faculty Exhibition opens Wednesday, October 21st, at the Highland Gallery inside the Ferguson Fine Arts Center.

The exhibit features mixed-media drawings by Robert Apolloni, sculptures by Jocelyn Chase, and mixed-media illustrations by Arthur Santoro.



The exhibition gives visitors an opportunity to see the instructors' professional artwork beyond their roles in the classroom.

An opening reception will be held October 21st from four-thirty until six in the evening, with refreshments and opportunities to meet the artists.

The exhibit is free and open to the public through December fourth.

SRC HOSTING ANNUAL SENIOR EXPO



The Senior Resource Center is inviting older adults and caregivers to its annual Senior Expo in Freeport.

The free event takes place Thursday, October 22nd, from nine until noon at a new location: Highland Community College's Sports Center and YMCA, in Building S.

More than fifty businesses and organizations will offer information about healthcare, Medicare, senior housing, transportation, and other services.

Free health screenings will include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, hearing, and vision checks. Flu shots will also be available.

Organizers say the new location provides additional space and improved parking.

Admission is free, and everyone is welcome.

HAUNTED HOLLOW TRAIL IN LENA

The Lena Lions Club is inviting thrill-seekers to its Haunted Hollow Trail this Halloween season.

The spooky attraction will be open October 23rd, 24th, 30th, and 31st, with hayrides departing from Lions Park in Lena.

Ticket sales run from six until nine-thirty each evening, with admission priced at fifteen or twenty dollars.

The attraction is recommended for middle school-aged children and older.



The Lions Club is partnering with Stateline Solar to provide lighting, communications, and solar equipment for the trail.

More information is available on the Lena Lions Club Facebook page.

LWV PROGRAM ON GERRYMANDERING



The League of Women Voters will host a discussion in Freeport later this month about political and racial gerrymandering.

Bonnie Cox, a former president of the League of Women Voters of Illinois, will speak Tuesday, October 27th, at six-thirty p.m. at the Freeport Public Library.

Her presentation, titled "Where the League of Women Voters Stands on Political and Racial Gerrymandering and Why," will examine the organization's position on how electoral districts are drawn.

Gerrymandering involves manipulating district boundaries to favor particular political parties or groups, potentially affecting representation and election outcomes.

Cox helped establish the League's Jo Daviess County chapter more than forty years ago and later helped found a regional League organization focused on the Upper Mississippi River.

A retired teacher and mental health therapist, Cox lives in Galena.

The discussion comes just one week before the November third general election.

FREEPORT COMMUNITY CONCERT ASSOCIATION WRAPS UP 95TH SEASON WITH ARCOSTRUM

The Freeport Community Concert Association will wrap up its 95th season Sunday, October 18th, with a free performance by the award-winning musical duo ArcoStrum.

The concert begins at 3 p.m. at the Masonic Temple in Freeport.

ArcoStrum features violinist Strauss Shi and guitarist T-Y Zhang, who met while attending the Juilliard School.



The duo combines classical music with Chinese traditional melodies and progressive rock, performing on violin, classical and electric guitars, the Chinese two-string fiddle known as the erhu, and traditional Chinese bamboo flutes.

ArcoStrum made history in 2023 as the first violin-guitar duo to win the Concert Artists Guild's Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Sunday's concert is free and open to the public.

IN CLOSING

And that brings us to the end of this week's Freepod. Remember, if you prefer reading the news, every story from today's newscast is available in written form at freepod.org. You can catch up on the latest headlines, revisit a story, or share it with someone who might have missed it.

And Freepod is always available on your schedule! New episodes are released every Thursday at noon, but you can listen anytime, wherever you get your podcasts. Whether you're commuting, working around the house, or just taking a break, we're here to help you stay connected to northwest Illinois.

And our interviews are also available any time. Like this past week's special episode. Freepod hosts Alan Wenzel and Tim & Becky Connors reminisced about their friend and Freeport icon Dr. Ed Finch. They also turned the microphone over to contributor Leslie Eiler Thompson who shared a snippet from an interview she did with Dr. Finch about Freeport history.

We'd also like to thank our community liaisons and reporters for helping us bring you the stories that matter, our partners at WNII in DeKalb for helping us reach a wider audience, and the Media Studies Department at Highland Community College for producing this program.

And if you believe in the importance of local journalism, there are several ways you can support Freepod. Follow us on Facebook, subscribe to the podcast, and share our stories with your friends and neighbors.

You can also help keep local news accessible to everyone by making a tax-deductible contribution at freepod.org. Every contribution helps us continue covering the people, places, and issues that shape our communities.

We'll be back next week with more news from across northwest Illinois.

This has been Freepod. Thanks for listening!