



**7 November
2024**

Welcome to FREEROD, 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.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website, so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Thanks for your support, and now here's local news you've been missing.

Thanks for voting!

As we begin, we'd like to thank everyone who voted in this week's elections. While details will still be coming in on various contests, all elections are an opportunity for your voice to be heard. We thank you for remembering that your vote is your power!

City news

There's a lot of City news this week. We start with letting you know that the City of Freeport has entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with Stephenson County to establish, support, and maintain an *electronic ticketing system*. Benefits of going digital include improved efficiency of traffic stops, streamlining the process for clerical staff, and enabling the City to decrease costs by eliminating paper copies. The Stephenson County Circuit Clerk will cover the implementation cost of \$40,000 and the Freeport Police Department will contribute about \$9,500 toward other necessary equipment.

The City Council also has approved the expansion of the Joint Northwest Illinois Enterprise Zone to include a property at 9432 W. Wagner Road that will be transformed into a *new fueling station and convenience store* by Pearl City Elevator. The property is just off U.S. Route 20 and will create 8 full-time jobs, 7 part-time jobs, 15 temporary construction jobs, and support tourism and businesses in the area.

Annual Fall fire hydrant and water main flushing will continue through tomorrow, November 8th. Water is safe as hydrants are flushed, but residents are reminded to run water prior to washing laundry to avoid potential staining of clothes. If water discoloration persists for more than 24 hours, City crews will re-flush the water mains in the area. To report this situation, call the Public Works Department at 815-235-8210. That's 815-235-8210. [\(photo link at end of this document\)](#)

With street paving nearly complete for the year, City street crews are working hard to *repair the many potholes* that have been reported throughout the community. Until the first significant snowfall, they'll be moving West to East to work on reported list of potholes. To report a pothole be added to the list, visit the

City's website, search on "potholes," and select iWorQ Citizen Engagement from the two options you'll find. That's "iWorQ" spelled with a "Q", so i-w-o-r-q or click on bit.ly/CoFPotholeReporting. Thank you to these crews for improving our travels on City streets!

Next, you may recall that Freeport recently implemented a *1% sales tax to be used specifically for roadway repairs and reconstruction* including expenditures for paving materials, curbs, gutters, related utility work, and ADA ramps. The 1% increase in sales taxes is expected to generate \$3 to 3.5 million per year. These funds, combined with the City's annual allotments from the Illinois Department of Transportation Motor Fuel Taxes will bring the budget for the City's street program up to approximately \$4 million per year.

The taxes collected began to be distributed to the City in October and will continue to be utilized each month going forward. With 2025 planning underway, residents will see these dollars put to use in a variety of street improvement projects. The City will also continue to aggressively seek out grants for these projects. The final 2025 budget will be presented for final approval in December.

In news about the City's fire protection plans, the Freeport Fire Department's current Engine One will be due for downgrading to reserve status in four years so due to a delivery time of 46 to 50 months for a *new fire engine*, the City Council approved the purchase of a Pierce Enforcer Pumper to be funded through the Fire Improvement Fund. This new engine will continue to improve upon the Fire Department's response time and ensure vehicles remain out of maintenance. In addition, a purchase at this time helps save the City over \$90,000 in future price increases.

And finally, the City Council has approved the honorary naming of Armstrong Avenue, between South Street and Adams Avenue, to be "*Bishop James Arthur Wade Way*." The Honorary Street Name Program allows residents to honor leaders like Bishop Way for their significant contributions to the community.

League of Women Voters to host presentation on women and voting

As we all reflect on this year's elections, the League of Women Voters of Freeport will host a presentation on the topic by Highland Community College sociology instructor Dr. Julie Linck on Tuesday, November 19th. Linck's presentation is titled "A Woman's Place Is in the Voting Booth: the Story of our Past, Present, and Future." The presentation begins at 6:30 p.m. on the 19th at the Freeport Public Library, and refreshments will be served.

Stephenson County Board news

At a mid-October Stephenson County board meeting, an intergovernmental agreement with German Valley that FREEPOD reported on earlier was rejected. Previously, the agreement involved contributing \$500,000 in federal American Rescue Plan or ARPA funds for water and sewer updates in German Valley. German Valley recently sent back an amended agreement stating that the funds would be used for a different purpose because of other funding they had received, with the Village President of German Valley explaining that there were three parts to the project.

The polishing reactor, the original intended purpose of the funds from Stephenson County budget, was seen as an emergency, improvements to the lift station as a second priority, and dealing with the lagoons as the final part of the project. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency forgave a loan to German Valley that allowed the polishing reactor part of the project to be completed, so the village wants to use the ARPA funds for the lift

station. This was seen by some board members as a slight change and as a deal breaker by others. The amended agreement was rejected by the board 7-9 with no further agreement at this time.

Meeting attendees had a presentation from the Greater Freeport Partnership that highlighted the Partnership's activities in the previous quarter, including area visits to 14 larger employers to discuss challenges and opportunities. Hurdles identified by these employers include the ability to attract qualified employees and lack of both child care and affordable housing. The Partnership also reported that hotel occupancy during the work week is down compared to 2023.

In other business, the Board learned that repairs to the HVAC system at the Walnut Acres facility are nearly finished and that the administration there expects 2024 to be a break-even year financially for the facility, which is currently home to 46 residents.

Finally, the Board approved a health insurance quote for County employees that represents a 19.4% price increase over the previous coverage, and in good news for property owners, also approved a 0% increase in tax levies for 2025.

Beef-a-Roo opens and Cannova's readies for the holidays

Freeport's new drive-through Beef-a-Roo restaurant at the Meadows Mall is officially opening tomorrow, Friday, November 8th. FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors will catch us up on all the details next week and in the meantime, he has info on the much-anticipated annual holiday dinner event at Cannova's in Freeport – get your tickets quickly as they always sell out! (*audio clip*)

VOICES Book Nook Fall half-price sale

Get a good deal and help a good cause by finding great holiday gifts at the annual VOICES Book Nook Fall Half Price Sale. The sale will run from November 7th through the 16th with proceeds benefiting services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and abuse offered by VOICES of Stephenson County.

The sale features gently used hardcover and paperback books, DVDs, records, puzzles and books on CDs in addition to some rare and collectible books. A silent auction of collectible packages including books, quilts, and albums will close at the end of the sale. Auction highlights include Green Bay Packers, Elvis Presley, and Eric Clapton packages along with a charging station for an Apple iPhone and Watch.

The VOICES Book Nook is located in Lincoln Mall in Freeport, with business hours of 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday except for Thursdays when the store is open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The store is closed on Sundays.

As a reminder, no donations of books or materials are accepted during the sale, but monetary gifts are certainly always welcome.

Highland Community College planning for 2025

After five straight semesters of credit-hour enrollment gains and renovation and facility expansion throughout the campus, excitement continues to build at Highland Community College.

The College serves an increasingly diverse population, and Highland is focused on offering the rich experience every student expects through ongoing growth of program offerings.

Since 1980, the Highland Sports Center has housed the YMCA. Under a co-location agreement, the YMCA became part of the Highland campus and Highland got a much-needed joint-use sports facility. The agreement allowed for shared agreed-upon expenses while both institutions continue to operate independently.

The need for more space for both Highland and the YMCA instigated facility expansion and renovation discussions leading to joint review of renovation proposals for the Sports Center building.

The renovations being discussed can provide for more athletic, recreation, and event space, along with opportunities for academic programs related to physical education and wellness for Highland students and the residents of Northwest Illinois. FREEPOD will continue to report on developments as plans progress.

University of Illinois Extension to host Youth Leadership Conference

On Saturday, November 23rd, all area youth 12 to 18 years old are invited to the Freeport Public Library to be a part of Youth in Action, a Youth Leadership Conference hosted by the University of Illinois Extension.

“Youth will learn about other youth’s leadership successes, and hopefully it will inspire them to step out into leadership”, said Kelly Lafferty, a 4-H Youth Development Educator for the University of Illinois Extension. Attendees will hear how one young person started his own popcorn business, another who started her own company to help reduce the amount of plastic in the oceans and save sea turtles, and another who started his own bee keeping business. They’ll talk about what they are doing now, how they got started, and any challenges they faced.

The event will run from 10:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. and lunch will be served. Participants are asked to bring an old t-shirt that can be cut up for a group community service project that will make items to be donated to a local animal shelter.

Cost is \$10 per person and the registration deadline is Monday, November 18th. Registration can be done online at www.go.illinois.edu/YLC. For more information, call the University of Illinois Extension at Highland Community College at 815-235-4125. That’s 815-235-4125.

Your November gardens

As the season for outdoor gardening draws to a close and leaves continue to fall, remove them from your lawn to prevent them from smothering the grass. Alternatively, you can shred them and spread a light layer over the lawn as organic matter. You can also use shredded leaves as mulch in flowerbeds or incorporate them into the soil of a vegetable garden.

Another garden task to finish soon is digging tender flower bulbs – like dahlias, cannas, and gladiolus – for storage. Keep them in a warm-ish room for a few days to allow them to cool slowly and then store at 55 degrees F. Now is also the time to plant spring flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils and crocus.

Perennial gardens may still have some viable plants at this point. Once they die back, cut back the plants to just above ground level and compost the dead plant material. If your perennials were free of disease and insect issues during warm weather, consider letting them stand over the winter and cutting them back in the spring. Perennial plant stems can add winter interest to the landscape but they also provide winter shelter for

beneficial. As plants in annual flower beds and vegetable gardens are killed by frost, clean them off and if needed, add soil amendments to these gardens.

Now is also the best time of year to plant many kinds of trees so that they have the winter to get used to their new locations while they are dormant. Review the planting details for whatever types of trees or shrubs you are considering for your garden so they'll be ready to come to life again in the Spring.

The week ahead

There are two events this weekend that we're looking forward to. First, there's the Fever River model railroad open house both Saturday and Sunday, November 9th and 10th hosted by the Stephenson Society of Model Trainmen. The Fever River Railroad model railroad club is a non-profit organization with a 120-foot, permanent scale model railroad layout in their clubhouse, which was a boarding house for the Illinois Central Railroad Iowa Division. You can visit them from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday at 610 Fever Lane in Freeport. Find out more on their Facebook page or at www.feverriver.org.

We're also looking forward this weekend to the Northwest Illinois Rock Club's 2024 Jewelry, Gem, Fossil, and Mineral Show. This popular annual event will be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday at the Freeport Eagles Club at 1200 West Galena Avenue with demonstrations, displays, special activities for kids, and plenty of holiday shopping ideas from a wide variety of vendors.

If you're in the mood for some great jazz to support a great cause, you have one more day to get your tickets for *All That Jazz*, this year's FHN Festival of Trees Gala. The event opens its doors to ticket-holders next Friday, November 15th at the Freeport Masonic Temple.

Delicious taste treats and custom cocktails, along with live music for dancing and both silent and live auctions, are an entertaining way to help provide support for a new linear accelerator, a sophisticated piece of radiation equipment, for the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital. For more info and to buy advance tickets online go to www.fhn.org or contact the FHN Foundation office through the end of the day tomorrow Friday, November 8th as no tickets will be sold at the door.

This Saturday is also the second Saturday of the month, so it's time again for PAWS for Reading at the Freeport Public Library where certified therapy dogs listen to any and all kinds of books that young readers might like to share with them. The furry listeners will be there from 11:00 a.m. to noon, and are looking forward to plenty of readers to entertain them!

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 subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too.

We'd also like to congratulate the Freeport High School Pretzel football team in their first appearance in the IHSA playoffs since 2008. Although they lost their first game, we're very proud of the Pretzels!

And finally, Monday is Veterans Day, and FREEPOD sincerely thanks the many veterans in our communities for their service and sacrifice. If you know a veteran, please take a moment to personally share your appreciation with him or her on Monday.

In closing...

In closing, we also 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 the folks at Kent Land Farm in a discussion about the Fall harvest, the impact of the dry weather on the harvest schedule and on crop yields, and how the latest technologies are changing agricultural equipment and farming practices.

Alan returns again in next week's in-depth interview, talking with Jim Yeager, Director of the Mass Communications Department at Highland Community College about disinformation and how it is affecting our societal, cultural, and political interactions. Jim clarifies the difference between misinformation and disinformation, notes how to spot the red flags of disinformation, and suggests ways we can combat the dissemination and spread of false information. This should be good information to have in the follow-on to the November 2024 elections. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, November 12th.

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 of 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 or contact us through our Facebook page.

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