



**13 November
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.

City tax levies determined for 2025

The 2025 Equalized Assessed Value or EAV for the City of Freeport has been received from the County. The EAV for Freeport's tax district has decreased by \$105,004 over the past year. This results in a Corporate Tax Levy for the City, also known as the General Fund, of just under \$3 million and represents a slight decrease in the Corporate Tax Levy, which will be paid in 2026. As an example of the impact on residents, someone with a house valued at \$100,000 will see no change in the City portion of their property tax bill as long as the assessed value of their home does not increase. During the past nine years, the City Council has kept the tax rate for the Corporate Levy the same or slightly lower each year.

The Freeport Public Library has a separate tax levy and the amount to be raised from that has increased slightly to help fund necessary expenses that have increased in price. The Library tax levy for someone with a \$100,000 house is estimated at \$6 for the year. Property taxes are the source of 84% of the Library's income.

Leaf collection, winter parking

In other City news, the City's annual leaf collection is in full swing and we have a few reminders for you.

1. First, remember that leaves are collected in repeating cycles from west to east in the city. Specific requests for leaf pile pickups are not available. If you missed a given cycle of leaf collection, your leaves will be collected on the next cycle.
2. Second, leaves must be placed in a continuous row at the curb line, only leaves are accepted and please be sure that storm sewer grates are not covered with leaves. No grass clippings, yard waste, sticks, brush, or trash, all of which can clog the collection equipment, are permitted.

3. And finally, even if you're not raking leaves yourself, please do not park vehicles on or immediately next to any leaf piles to ensure they can be easily picked up.

A collection map is available on the City website at www.cityoffreeport.org – just search on “leaf collection” or click the link provided in the print version of this episode (<https://cityoffreeport.org/galleries/leaf-collection-map/>)

Also remember that City residents can take woody waste to the Timber Industries location on Walnut across from the County Fairgrounds on Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to noon. This service is free to Freeport residents so please bring proof of residency.

And even though it will melt quickly, Mother Nature has reminded us that winter is on the way! That means that odd/even parking throughout the City has begun and will continue through the end of March whenever there is more than half an inch of snow. For example, if two inches of snow fell tonight, November 13th, that would mean that since 13 is an odd number the ODD-numbered side of the street needs to be free for snowplows to do their job tomorrow by 8:00 a.m. and you need to park your vehicle on the EVEN-numbered side of the street before then. Many streets in Freeport are narrow and can often create road blocks for large plows, and vehicles parked incorrectly are subject to towing at the owner's cost.

New energy legislation for Illinois

A closely-watched and long-debated piece of energy legislation is set to become law after passing through both legislative chambers in Springfield with the governor's endorsement. Once law, it would fund energy storage systems through a new charge to Illinois electric customers that will take effect in 2030, lift a longtime ban on new nuclear power developments, and give new authority to state utility regulators.

Proponents say the bill, which is known as the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act or CRGA, will lower costs for utility customer, but critics worry that a lack of cost-control measures could have the opposite effect.

Versions of the bill date back to negotiations in 2024. Areas of focus include battery storage capacity, energy efficiency, nuclear power capability, labor protections, air regulation for data center power facilities, geothermal and thermal energy networks, and new authority for regulators that would include the ability to set long-term plans to control both supply-side issues, like plans for electric generation, as well as managing demand.

For more details, visit www.capitolnewsillinois.com and search on “energy reform package” or click the link in the print version of this episode (<https://capitolnewsillinois.com/news/lawmakers-ok-sweeping-energy-reform-package-that-governor-pledges-to-sign/>)

Township supports local food pantries

To better serve residents and address growing concerns about recent cuts to SNAP benefits, Freeport Township has allocated \$18,000 to support local food pantries in purchasing food from the Northern

Illinois Food Bank. Local Freeport food pantries that are members of the Northern Illinois Food Bank Network will receive a portion of these allocated Township funds directly to their individual Food Bank accounts. Township Supervisor Patrick Sellers said that as elected officials, the Township has a responsibility to ensure the well-being of the community.

***This is It* closes**

After eight and a half years, the owners of *This Is It Eatery* on the lower level of the Hampton Inn in downtown Freeport are closing the restaurant. The *Eatery's* last day of service will be Saturday, November 8th. The owners say the decision was not made lightly and thanked their staff and customers for their support over the years. *This Is It Eatery* was recognized by America's Best Restaurants in 2023.

Frozen at Freeport High School

The Freeport High School theatre department presents *Frozen* next Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, November 20th, 21st, and 22nd at the Jeannette Lloyd Theater. Based on the popular Disney movie, *Frozen* is a timeless tale of sisters Elsa and Anna pulled apart by a mysterious secret. As one young woman struggles to find her voice and harness her powers within, the other embarks on an epic adventure to bring her family together and makes friends with a chatty snowman named Olaf and a helpful reindeer named Sven along the way. FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors directs this lively musical, featuring the hit songs like "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" and "Let It Go." Performances are at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday and 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the door or on the school's website at www.fsd145.org by searching on "tickets."

Family Engagement Conference



The Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County will host a free community family engagement Conference from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. next Monday, November 17th. Discussion at the Conference will focus on the report card for Freeport School District 145 from the Illinois State Board of Education and its meaning for local families. Parents also can learn how to prepare for parent teacher conferences. A light meal and child care will be provided. The event is sponsored by Freeport School District 145, the Boys and Girls Club, Hope WINS, and Freeport's NAACP chapter.

New York Times food columnist Kenji Lopez-Alt in televised presentation at Library

Illinois Libraries present *A Journey through Food and Science* with Kenji Lopez-Alt next Tuesday, November 18th from 7:00 to 7:45 p.m. at the Freeport Public Library – or in your own home! Kenji is an award-winning cookbook author, *New York Times* food columnist, former chef, and *Serious Eats* director and will lead an evening of cooking insights, techniques, and foodie exploration.



As the Culinary Director for *Serious Eats*, the foremost site of food science and culture since 2006, Kenji (pictured at left) is known for his thoroughly tested and explained recipes and food features. He is the author of a James Beard Award-winning cookbook, *The Food Lab*, and the cookbook *The Wok* as well as *Every Night is Pizza Night*, a best-selling children's book. He also hosts a cooking show on YouTube and co-hosts a podcast with Deb Perelman of *Smitten Kitchen* fame.

You can come to the Library to watch this free presentation or register online by searching on *A Journey through Food and Science* under “events” at the Library’s website, www.freeportpubliclibrary.org. This event is made possible by Illinois Libraries Present (ILP), a statewide collaboration among public libraries offering premier events.

Apple pruning workshop

The University of Illinois Extension is hosting three sessions of a comprehensive apple pruning workshop over the next few weeks. The class will be led by Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Grant McCarty, who will teach the science and artistry behind proper pruning to maximize apple production while maintaining healthy, beautiful trees for years. The skills will prepare attendees to prune their apple trees in the dormant season of mid-December to late February, when pruning should be done. For more content details, search on “Fruit Tree Pruning Fundamentals” on the University’s Extension website at www.extension.illinois.edu/jsw

Three free in-person sessions are offered on from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Extension offices on November 15th in Jo Daviess County, November 22nd in Stephenson County, and December 6th in Winnebago County. Online registration can be done at <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/fruit-tree-pruning-fundamentals>. There will also be one virtual event on Wednesday, December 17, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Cost for the virtual session is \$5 and click here for registration: <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/fruit-tree-pruning-fundamentals-virtual-workshop>

Another successful season for the Cub Foods brat stand

Cub Foods has wrapped up the season for the brat stand for another year and the brat wagon is now hibernating for the winter. From March until November, a different community group worked the brat stand every weekend to raise money for their cause. The total raised for this season was over \$88,000, which those groups will use to fund their programs and services. Thank you to Cub Foods and especially manager Kurt Steffen for providing another season of opportunities to make our community a better place for all.

Community Holiday Tree Lighting

The year-end holidays are coming up soon and as the season begins, kick it off in style at the FHN community holiday tree lighting this Sunday, November 16th at 5:00 p.m. The Highland Youth Choir will perform when FHN “flips the switch” to light up Freeport’s holiday tree in front of FHN Memorial Hospital. The tree lighting will be followed by a short candlelight walk to the Healing Garden at the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center for a special light display, cookies, and cocoa.

Celebrate the Holidays at Cannova’s

Then next week, another beloved community tradition continues at Cannova’s Italian restaurant this year with their very popular Christmas dinner theatre. FREEPOD and TimBeck2 hosts Tim Connors and Becky Connors tell us all about it.

(audio clip)

Thanks, Tim and Becky – this sounds like another wonderful holiday performance!

Holiday performances: *The Nutcracker* and *The Messiah*

It’s time to get your tickets too for two traditional holiday theatrical events coming up in December!



Tickets go on sale Monday, November 17th, for a performance of *The Messiah* at Highland Community College at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 14th at the Ferguson Fine Arts Center. They can be purchased at the Highland box office in the Center or online at www.highland.edu/boxoffice. A number of wonderful guest singers will participate in this event and we’ll have more to report closer to the date.

The Nutcracker is also coming to town! Students and member of Studio 121 Dance in Freeport will be performing *The Nutcracker* on December 19th and 20th at 7:30 p.m. at Freeport’s Masonic Temple. Tickets are available now at 815-275-0643 or online at <https://www.etix.com/ticket/o/17565/studio121dance> That’s 815-275-0643.

The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, don’t forget that the Fall Half Price Sale ends tomorrow at the VOICES Book Nook in Lincoln Mall. Don’t miss your chance to get a good deal and help a good cause as all proceeds benefit services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault offered through VOICES of Stephenson County. The shop is open until 7:00 p.m. tonight and 4:00 p.m. tomorrow.

This Sunday we're looking forward to Peter Bloom and John Funkhauser, a renowned flute and piano duo, who will perform this Sunday, November 16th at the Freeport Masonic Temple as part of the current season of the Freeport Community Concert Association. The concert begins at 3:00 p.m. and is free for all attendees.

The coming week is also Sauces Week in the Freeport Public Library food drive with a special focus on items like spaghetti sauce although of course all non-perishable donations are welcome. Contributions to the Library's collection can be dropped off at the Library's circulation desk and will go to the Freeport Area Church Cooperative. The Freeport Public Library is just one of many local organizations hosting food collection drives during the holiday season that we hope you will consider supporting.

As dedicated as we are to our rural community, we got a little nostalgic this week when we learned that the 2026 edition of the Maine-based Farmers Almanac will be its last. Farmers, gardeners, and weather fans have relied on information from the publication for 208 years since its first edition in 1818 when, believe it or not, Napoleon was still alive. Circulation in 2017 was 2.1 million in North America, when its editor said it was gaining new readers interested in where their food came from and growing their own produce. The publishers cited financial challenges of producing and distributing the book as their reasons. For those still eager for similar information, however, we're happy to report that the Old Farmer's Almanac, a different and even older publication, is still in production. Its first edition was in 1792 and it is the oldest continuously published periodical in North America. Could make a good stocking stuffer for sure!



And finally, don't forget that the Salvation Army needs more Red Kettle Ringers! Please call Sue at 815-541-1949 if you or your company or service club can help this holiday season.

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 visiting with local restaurant owner Sam Cimino about the restaurant's history -- including its expansion into Las Vegas Nevada and Laguna Beach, California -- and Sam's life in Freeport. The interview, which aired first the day before yesterday on Tuesday, is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visits with Freeport's Noah Eisenhower about professional car racing and the NDE Racing team owned by his dad Gary Eisenhower Jr. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, November 18th 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

What's Going on in Stephenson County?

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our weekly
event guide!**



To find 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 with this QR code if you prefer.

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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