



**19 September  
2024**

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 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.

#### **League of Women Voters candidate forum**

The League of Women Voters of Freeport is hosting a public candidate forum next Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. at the Freeport Public Library. All candidates on the ballot for local office in November have been invited to the event to share their positions on a variety of topics of local interest or concern. The forum will be moderated by Jim Winker.

The League encourages all community members to attend and increase their understanding of candidates' thoughts and plans if elected.

#### **City news**

At the September 16<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, the Council approved an agreement between the Stephenson County Highway Department and the Freeport Fire Department to place an antenna, receiver equipment, and an amplifier at the County Highway Building on Lamm Road.

The Emergency Telephone System Board has agreed to fully fund the replacement of the Fire Department's VHF radio network at a cost of \$108,000. This equipment will greatly enhance radio communications to the southern part of Stephenson County.

The Council also approved upgrades for the City's fuel station in 2025. The underground fuel system at 1001 North Island Avenue will soon receive necessary replacements for some of its major 33-year-old components that have outlived their 30-year-old life expectancy. This fuel system serves Public Works and street crews, the police and fire departments, the water and sewer department, Pretzel City Transit, community development, animal control, and the Housing Authority.

Also, with leaf season quickly upon us the Public Works department reminds residents that only leaves are picked up during this time. The wood lot located on Walnut Avenue and the drop off located at the City Yards are still closed for materials other than branches 2 inches wide or larger.

### **Update on Pretzel City Skills Enhancement Program**

In additional City news, Freeport moved forward this summer with a pilot version of the Pretzel City Skills Enhancement Program, which is a collaborative effort of the Freeport Township and City working towards a goal of training individuals who would be good job candidates for the Public Works field.

Following the pilot, the City has provided an update on the program relative to recent contract talks. Due to the nature of the pilot, there were details related to the structure of the ongoing program that needed to be addressed. Because of the interest in seeing the program continue yet this year, City staff put together a contract that reflected these necessary changes in the form of a revised contract.

Details of the revised contract were discussed by Public Works representatives, City attorneys, Council members, and Management and presented to the Freeport Township and Midwest Construction. As a result of the changes required, however, Midwest abstained from moving forward with the contract and the City is instead moving ahead with an alternative plan estimated to be ready to go in Spring 2025.

The end goal, to foster a program that supports temporary infrastructure repairs while enhancing the skills of our community's under-served youth, remains the same. Through the revised program, the City is reiterating its commitment to the effort for the Spring of 2025 and the future.

### **Northwest Illinois Airshow**

Look UP this Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup> when the Northwest Illinois Airshow takes to the skies from Albertus Airport in Freeport!

Featuring many acts from Dacy Airshows, this event stars daring aerobatics, including a Russian MIG-17 performance; barnstorming; and warbirds, along with a food and vendor court, an area just for kids, souvenirs, and a main stage and VIP area for musical performances including a re-enactment of the Andrews Sisters singers from the 1940s. Many planes will be on display too. Admission tickets are \$15 when purchased in advance at [www.nwilairshow.com](http://www.nwilairshow.com), \$20 at the gate, and kids age 10 and under attend free.

FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel caught up with Mark Mannino, the lead organizer for the airshow for more info about the event. Let's listen in on their conversation... *(interview clip)*

Thanks for all that info, Alan and Mark! This certainly sounds like a fun family event for this Saturday-- just follow the signage and enter the parking area on Lamm Road south of Freeport.

*Russian MIG-17*

### **Friends of the Pecatonica River host fundraiser**

After the airshow, you can support The Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation as they host their 13<sup>th</sup> annual Fall fundraising event at Big O's on the Hollow Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. The proceeds of the fundraiser will support their work to preserve, protect, and foster the vitality of the Pecatonica River within its watershed in Stephenson County.



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Join them for lunch or dinner and a silent auction anytime from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. No advance tickets are needed – just bring your friends and family for good food and fun and come on in! Big O's is located at 1931 Illinois Route 75 in Freeport.

### **Passenger rail service from Rockford to Chicago**

According to the Rockford Register Star, passenger rail service from Rockford to Chicago is coming! Illinois officials are reaffirming the plan in a series of four public meetings designed to update folks on the \$275 million restoration of this long-anticipated passenger rail service which is on track for service to begin in 2027.

At the first meeting, IDOT Passenger Rail Communications Manager Scott Speegle explained that most of the work over the last year has been more behind the scenes, including preliminary engineering, agreements with the railroads and the communities involved, and diagnostics to determine what is needed to improve the tracks and the grade crossings.

Construction is planned to begin by the end of 2025 for the 90-mile Metra intercity service from Rockford to Chicago with stops in Huntley, Elgin and Belvidere. It's possible that the first phase of construction will be to connect Metra-owned tracks to Union Pacific- owned tracks at Big Timber. State Sen. Steve Stadelman of Loves Park said that construction funding for the project has already been allocated as part of Governor JB Pritzker's \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan.

The location of Rockford's station has not been announced but will be along the Union Pacific tracks just west of Main Street, and once operational there will be two round trips offered daily with travel times of an estimated two hours at maximum speeds of 79 miles per hour. Ticketing processes, pricing, and details have not yet been determined.

### **Small Town Heroes**

The United Way of Northwest Illinois' annual Small Town Heroes campaign recently honored nine individuals who have given their time and talents to make a difference in their local communities. The United Way of Northwest Illinois 2024 Small Town Hero recipients are: Aleisha Leeper, Danielle Jackson, Delbert Bunker, Peter Flynn, Tom Glendenning, and Zandra Bright of Freeport; Angie Esling of Lena; DJ Scott of Pearl City; and Nancy Bandemer of Mt. Carroll. Their achievements ranged from dedicated

work on community programs and efforts to support of individuals in need of a helping hand. For more details on the outstanding achievements of each of these Heroes, visit the Facebook page for The United Way of Northwest Illinois.

This is the ninth year honoring Small Town Heroes in Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Carroll counties. United Way's goal through this campaign is to not only recognize these individuals, but to share their stories and inspire others to get involved in making our communities the best they can be.

If you know someone who is going above and beyond for your community, please submit a Nomination for next year's awards any time until June 6, 2025 at <https://uwni.org/small-town-heroes>.

### **Medicare open enrollment starting soon**

Medicare's Fall open enrollment is coming up October 15<sup>th</sup> and will run through December 7<sup>th</sup>, and there are a number of resources available in Freeport for those who have questions before making decisions for their healthcare needs.

The Senior Resource Center in Freeport will be helping Medicare beneficiaries review their Medicare drug plans and help them enroll in new plans as necessary, and will begin booking appointments for this assistance on September 23. For more information, contact Anna Bell at 815 235-9777, ext. 228. That's 815 235-9777, ext. 228.

Next Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, Josh Smith from Medicare 411 is presenting an informative program into the differences between Medicare Supplement and Medicare Advantage plans at the Freeport Public Library from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Many Freeport-area insurance firms also have Medicare expertise, and FREEPOD will also be providing a detailed story on the changes this year for both Medicare and Medicaid in an October newscast.

### **Free public concert at Highland Community College**

A free public concert featuring Carrie Newcomer is open to the public next Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the Highland Community College Student/Conference Center in Freeport. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, with additional support from an anonymous donor, is sponsoring the event

Newcomer is a songwriter, recording artist, performer and educator. She has been described as a "soaring songstress" by Billboard and a "prairie mystic" by the Boston Globe. The Austin Statesman described her as having "a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate" and Rolling Stone once said, she "asks all the right questions." She is appearing at this event with pianist Gary Walters, and you can read more about her at [www.carrienewcomer.com](http://www.carrienewcomer.com)

### **Pretzel City Brewfest**

Pretzel City Brewfest returns with even more great activities for craft beer enthusiasts next Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. The event will feature over 150 craft beers from local and national breweries for tasting on Chicago Avenue in downtown Freeport. In addition to the tastings, planned activities include growler contests and large-scale beer pong for prizes. Designed for adults 21 years and older, the event is open from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. with special early entry to VIP guests at noon.

Tickets can be purchased online through noon Friday, September 22 at [greaterfreeport.com/brewfest](https://greaterfreeport.com/brewfest) or at the gate on the day of the event. Pre-event general admission tickets are \$40 and include 20 tasting tickets, entry to the event and a souvenir tasting glass. People who do not plan to drink and serve as designated drivers can purchase a ticket for \$10.

VIP tickets are \$75 and VIP ticket holders receive 30 tasting tickets, a one-hour early event entry at noon, access to special release beers, a Brewfest t-shirt, a special VIP cooler, swag bag, and access to the VIP lounge with complimentary food and additional seating. These tickets always sell out early and are not available for same-day purchase.

All of this year's Brewfest information can be found at the [greaterfreeport.com/brewfest](https://greaterfreeport.com/brewfest) website or on Untappd craft beer mobile app, which is spelled U-N-T-A-P-P-D, like "untapped" without the "e." Check out the web site for a list of beer and breweries attending, special releases, local food truck vendors and other event details.

Pretzel City Brewfest won "Best Event in Illinois" at the Illinois Excellence in Tourism awards in 2022. Pretzel City Brewfest, along with many other community events, is hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership.



## The week ahead

The University of Illinois Extension is offering two programs in the coming week. Those attending "Getting the Scoop on Winter Squash" from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at the

Freeport Public Library will learn how to select and store various types of squash, understand their nutritional value, and receive some delicious recipes. Then on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup> a flower preservation workshop where attendees will make a pressed-flower bookmark and a sachet will be held at 6:00 p.m. at the Extension location in Building R at Highland Community College. Tuition is \$5 for the winter squash event and \$10 for the flower preservation session, and reservations can be made online at [go.illinois.edu/jsw](http://go.illinois.edu/jsw) or by calling 815-235-4125. That's 815-235-4125.

For a more comprehensive listing on many more fun events and activities throughout Stephenson County, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com) and click on "weekly events."

**In closing...**



In closing, well, last week we forgot to include a photo of FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewing one of the drivers of the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile, Stephen Harrison, so we're fixing that error with a photo in this week's print edition. That's quite the vehicle!



We're also pleased to share that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will be FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors talking with Juliet Moderow of the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society about our feathered friends in the area and their migratory patterns. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, September 24th.

And finally, here's a bit of trivia for the month: On September 23rd 1851, Stephenson County resident John Henry Manny obtained a patent on his horse-drawn reaper. He was sued for patent infringement, however, by Cyrus McCormick of McCormick reaper fame, who had been granted a patent for his reaper



in 1834. You may recognize McCormick's name, who was born in Virginia but is also well-known in Illinois history. But getting back to the patent infringement case from Stephenson County's Mr. Manny, he won the case. One of his lawyers was Abraham Lincoln.

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 related to 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!

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

Again, I'm (name) here with (name of other person) and we hope you'll check back next week for more news you've been missing. Thank you for listening!

(music/sound effects down and up)

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