



Freeport News

A newsletter from the City of Freeport
SUMMER 2009

Message from the Mayor

Dear Fellow Citizens,

If you're new to the City, welcome to Freeport! If you're a long-time resident, please introduce yourself to our new neighbors and be a good will ambassador.

We hope you like the concept of providing a seasonal newsletter to help bring better communication among us all on City happenings, rules, and projects.

Our community works hard to meet the needs of its people and your local government is a strong friend in that work. I'm honored to be the mayor of this blessed city and I look forward to our future. After all, we have a big smile on our water tower for a reason.

As always, please feel free to contact us with any concerns or ideas that can enhance our city, and thank you for choosing Freeport.

Sincerely,

Matthew H. Worms

Mayor of Freeport

City information:

City Hall

125 E. Main Street

Open Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Phone: 320-836-2112

FAX: 320-836-2116

E-mail: cityfrpt@albanytel.com

Web site: www.freeportmn.org

City Council Meetings are the last Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 P.M. in City Hall

City Council:

Mayor Matthew Worms

Council Member Charles Balderston

Council Member Dave Humbert

Council Member Ken Goebel

Council Member Joe Hennen

City Staff:

Paul Hetland, City Clerk/Treasurer

- Abby Cunningham, Administrative Assistant

Jon Stueve, Director, Public Works Department

- Jeremy Tomsche, Maintenance Worker

Noah Van Beck, Fire Chief, Fire and Rescue Department

- Firefighters

Only You

"Can I have a campfire?" and "Can I burn some brush?" are two questions I have received a lot in the last few weeks. The City does not regulate campfires, but the State through the DNR does. The State regulation allows campfires if they are no bigger than 3 feet wide by 3 feet high and clear of combustible material 5 feet around the fire. The DNR's website updates the fire status regularly and so far this year, even through all the dry periods, the DNR has NOT prohibited campfires. The DNR has restricted brush or larger fires normally requiring a permit, but not campfires. However, the City of Freeport only allows brush fires in city limits from October through November. During that time, one can also burn grass and twigs. Burning permits outside of city limits and in our fire service area, can be obtained from the Freeport Fire Chief or a respective DNR Fire Warden. One can never burn trash in Freeport. When in doubt about starting a fire, please feel free to contact the DNR or their web site at www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/questions.html, the Fire Chief, or City Hall. Enjoy some s'mores this summer and as Smokey says "Only you can prevent wildfires."

Sump Pump Notice

State law requires that storm water, or the water that does not come from the water tower, must NOT go into the sanitary sewer lines. The practical sense of this law for Freeport is the potential for our waste water ponds to overflow causing environmental and health concerns and fines or the need to build more space which is an extremely costly project. As published and noticed in the last few months, **all sump pumps in Freeport can not discharge to the sanitary sewer system as of July 1, 2009.** Inspections will begin in July and a monthly waste water surcharge of \$75 will be added to each property not in compliance. Often times, it is a simple fix to run sump pump water outside of a building or to the street, to the storm water system. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact City Hall at 836-2112 to speak with Paul Hetland or Jon Stueve.

USDA Project Update

As noted in newspaper articles and City Council Meeting Minutes in the last few months, the City is working on some big projects. We are reviewing and planning for three projects: a new water tower, adding a 10" water line across I-94 by the Senior Center to increase water pressure City-wide, and designing the County Road 11 project from I-94 to the north end of town.

We have been working through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program for the funding which is backed-up this year by the federal stimulus money. It is largely a low-interest (2.75% over 40 years) loan program with some grant money, greatly reducing the costs which would otherwise be paid entirely by us. We are expected to receive the maximum grant amount and a low fixed loan amount based on our population from the last census and our current project debt load. The advantage to act now is that in 2010 the census results showing more people would reduce our grant amount and increase our loan amount. Also, the first payment due in 2013 will begin a three-year period of dropping three bonds (or loans) from our current tax levy. So, we will be able to build needed infrastructure, for less cost, help the economy, and pay less in 2013 and beyond than what we are paying now. It is for these reasons that the process has occurred and will continue to move swiftly.

The old water tower would be taken off-line because the height of the new one would cause water to flow from the top of the old one. Besides, one of the two major reasons for a new tower is due to health and safety concerns of the old one. The other issue is the State's fire flow requirements will soon not be met with the current water tower. No plans have been made for the old water tower (other than cutting off water to it) and no plans have been made on the design of the new one. City Council and Staff are well-aware of the symbolism and notoriety our smiley-faced water tower has to us and those that know us.

As for the timelines, work on the water tower project may begin as early as this fall and a new tower may be operational as of Fall 2010. The water pressure looping and County Road 11 projects would likely begin in 2011 and be similar to the Main Street Project in scope and effect.

Council Meeting Minutes are on-line at www.freeportmn.org or free information is available in City Hall regarding the details of the project. These are certainly historic times. Effected property owners will be noticed per Minnesota Chapter 429 and in other sources. Please stay abreast of meetings and project information, and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact City Council or Staff.



“Does Felix or Snoopy need a license?”

All cats and dogs over the age of six months within Freeport city limits need a license. At this point, the requirements are fairly simple and common-sense for a pet owner. An owner needs to: pay a one-time license fee of \$5 per pet (up to four pets total), complete the license form (obtained at City Hall or by request), provide a collar for the pet with contact information, read the City's pet regulations, and have the pet vaccinated for rabies and distemper. Pet licenses are not transferable between owners or individual pets. Also, neither dogs *nor* cats can run at-large off of one's property in the City. Currently, there are well over 60 registered pets in Freeport and with the establishment of pet licenses and rules in 2005, it has greatly reduced City costs and neighborhood frustrations on pet-related concerns. If you have any questions, please contact City Hall.

Dandelions aren't so Dandy

Section 605.03 of Freeport City Code states “Weeds or growing grass upon any lot or parcel of land in the city in excess of eight inches in height, or which have gone or are about to go to seed, are hereby declared to be a nuisance and dangerous to the health, safety, and good order of the city.” A ten day notice is required for the offense. The penalty can be the City cutting the area at the owner's expense and or a misdemeanor offense per day the violation occurs. Each year, we do our best to apply the spirit of the law to keep grass and weeds below eight inches and to avoid taking costly legal action. These reasonable standards, even when applied to just a few properties, can take a considerable amount of time, resources, and money to bring into compliance. We are a beautiful city and thank you for doing your part to make it so!

“When do I need a permit?”

There are generally two types of permits: building and zoning permits. Freeport has had the Minnesota State Building Code in effect since 2002 which regulates when one needs to obtain a “building permit.” A city does not have the ability to pick and chose which regulations to follow or not. With that and since 2002, we have contracted a state building inspector named Dan Marthaler who is in to work on building permits typically every Tuesday and Thursday. The obvious times to obtain a building permit are constructing buildings and new additions, but perhaps the less obvious ones are for decks, residing, adding or altering interior walls, and new shingles. Generally, a building permit is also needed if one is replacing a door or window that is larger than the previous one or installing a new one. Replacing a window or door of the same size does not need a permit. A “zoning permit” is one that a city itself establishes which is above and beyond what the State regulates through a building permit. Examples of things in Freeport that require a zoning permit are fences, signs, and sheds on permanent foundations. Permanent sign additions or replacement need a permit. The third, and seldom used, type of permit is called a “conditional use permit.” As the name implies, it is used in specific situations and certain conditions can be established to allow the use. For example, establishing a day care or health care facility in residentially zoned areas requires a conditional use permit in Freeport. The best rule of thumb is that if you aren't sure if you need a permit or not, please feel free to call City Hall at 836-2112 or stop on in. Regulations guiding zoning and conditional use permits, can be found in Freeport City Code on our web site at www.freeportmn.org.

Please support our Firefighters!

48th Annual Fire Department
Ham Bar-B-Que & Hog/Beef Raffle
Sunday, June 21, 2009
Freeport Community Center
Serving 4:30 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.
\$7.50 in advance
\$8.00 at the door
\$3.50 for children 12 and under

Newsletter written by Paul Hetland