



Freeport News

A newsletter from the City of Freeport
FALL 2009

Message from the Mayor

Dear Fellow Citizens,

"Where did the summer go?" That is probably the most frequently asked question in town these days. Fall is in the air and the next season is... somewhere out there.

We've had a good and gentle summer with little weather damage and with successful and nice events in the City. We belong to a beautiful and productive community thanks to you.

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

- Ryan Holescher, Maintenance Worker

Noah Van Beck, Fire Chief, Fire and Rescue Department

- John Gilk, First Assistant Chief
- Wayne Revering, Second Assistant Chief
- Steve Notch, Secretary
- Firefighters

Newsletter written by Paul Hetland

A Burning Question

"Can I have a campfire?" and "Can I burn some brush or leaves?" are two questions I hear a lot each Summer and Fall. 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 to my knowledge, the DNR has NOT prohibited campfires yet in 2009. The DNR has restricted brush or larger fires normally requiring a permit, but not campfires. However, in Section 905 of Freeport City Code, "open burning" is only allowed in city limits from October 1 through November 30. During that time, one can burn dried leaves, grass clippings, dried vegetation, and twigs from sunrise until 8:00 P.M. without a permit. Please be sensible when you burn and mindful of your neighbors of where the smoke is going. 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. But as Smokey says: "Only you can prevent wildfires."

Leaf Pick Up

Danny's Disposal will be picking up your bagged leaves and yard waste on Saturday, October 31. Please have it by the street by 8:00 A.M. Please do not blow or rake grass clippings or leaves into the street. There are many good and practical reasons not to do this practice. One, it's unsightly. Two, it can be a public safety hazard as vehicles try and dodge the material. Three, it ends up in the storm sewers sometimes clogging them and adding to flood concerns. And finally, the added plant material in the storm water system adds more nutrients to the waterway, ultimately adding more phosphorus into Getchell's Creek and the Sauk River, two State impaired waterways.

THANK YOU

for all those that supported
the Freeport Fire Relief Association's
annual fund raising event!

Capital Improvement Planning

City Council approved a plan to patch and repave a few street sections of the City in disrepair and it was recently completed. These fixes are meant to be short-term ones and Council and Staff have been working on long-term planning for public improvement projects in the City – that is, addressing the questions what needs to be done, when, and how to pay for them? A rough draft plan was approved on September 29 by City Council as to the priorities of various areas in the City based on their current condition, but there is still much work to be done on the timelines and therein paying for the projects. Yet, it is an important first step in keeping our City beautiful, user-friendly, and in maintaining our investments. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to stop by City Hall.

Utility Billing Changes

Have you been frustrated by trying to understand your water/sewer bill? Have you ever had the postcard bill get lost in a stack of mail or you never received it? Have you ever been confused on what period your bill covers and when it's supposed to be due? Well, we are working on a major solution – a new billing system. As a part of the USDA Rural Development Projects, we requested funds for a new utility billing software program to solve these problems and make an easier system to manage and understand. The new bill will be sent in an envelope, will be based and due on a calendar monthly basis, and have easier to understand information on it including a graph to track usage. The program will be paid with Recovery Act monies above and beyond those used for the rest of the projects. In the meanwhile, please pay your monthly bills in exact amounts until we get the new utility billing system. The new system will allow for much better customer service like paying in advance. Thank you for your patience.

“The Season After Fall” Parking Rules

Considering the time of the year I write this newsletter and our “Forgotten Summer,” I really dislike mentioning the phrase “winter parking rules” so please forgive me. They are as follows:

1310.11. Winter parking rules.

Subd.1. It is unlawful to park a motor vehicle or any vehicle on a public street, alley, or way, or in a municipal parking lot from and including November 1, to and including March 31, after the hours of 2:30 a.m. and before 7:00 a.m.

Subd.2. Exemptions. All vehicles shall be exempt from the winter parking rule from 12:00 A.M. to 11:59 P.M. on the following days.

- a) Thanksgiving Day.
- b) Christmas Day.
- c) New Year's Day.

In another law enforcement area, thanks to David Brooks of Freeport, we have free handgun child safety locks available at City Hall.

For all law enforcement concerns, please call the Stearns County Sheriff's Office dispatch at (320) 251-4240. If you prefer, you do NOT have to identify yourself. Certainly, for all emergencies, please call 9-1-1.

A Roaring Thank You

For those of you new to Freeport, you are fortunate to live in a city that takes great pride and responsibility in keeping us a strong and successful community. From Freeport State Bank's many contributions to the Freeport Chamber of Commerce's events and networking opportunities to Freeport Floral and Gift's beautification of the flower pots downtown to the commerce brought in by the Freeport Softball and Recreation Club to our growing school and all the people that make it possible to the community-building activities of our places of worship to the countless acts of selflessness and service by so many people to make this city so wonderful – thank you to all of you. One group stands out in a service class all its own – the Freeport Lions Club. The Lions have given so much to our city throughout the years and deserves a hearty thank you from all of us. In 2009 alone, the Lions contributed to over \$25,000 of improvements to the Freeport Senior Center, provided a flag pole for the Fire Hall, supplied all of the flags downtown, created the first and historic Veterans Memorial, and gave its annual street light payment to the City for \$10,000 and to Black Sox Park. Along with supporting a local softball team and many other charitable efforts and gifts, the Freeport Lions make an enormous impact on our wonderful quality of life in Freeport. The Lions' motto is “We Serve” and they do. Thank you for all that you do! Your City and its People greatly appreciate your time, energies, and contributions.

USDA Project Update

As noted in newspaper articles, City Council Meeting Minutes in the last few months, and the last newsletter, 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 supported by the federal stimulus money. The timing considering a number of factors couldn't be more perfect for us. We are working hard to take advantage of this opportunity, yet also not create a financial impact outweighing the benefit. The largest obstacle we have faced is the incredibly slow review process with the USDA. Fortunately, due to some assistance from Congresswoman Michele Bachmann's office, the USDA has changed its review policy to a 30-day turn around. We are expected to receive our review by the end of October and then begin moving officially forward. In the meanwhile, City Council has authorized as much activity as possible to continue moving the projects forward. Our City Engineer, Scott Lange of Short, Elliot, and Hendrickson (S.E.H.) has been graciously accommodating not to bill any of the engineering charges until after the money is awarded.

For more information, feel free to check out the Council Meeting Minutes on-line at www.freeportmn.org or free information is available in City Hall regarding the details of the project. Elected 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.

