



Freeport News

A newsletter from the City of Freeport

MARCH 2010

Message from the Mayor

Dear Fellow Citizens!

Welcome Spring!

With the change of the seasons, we are experiencing some changes ourselves. Due to the State budget crisis, our local government aid (LGA) is proposed to be cut by \$36,096 this year and \$38,106 for 2011. The sky is not falling, but with this much of a likely chop, we can't afford to stand still either. We are still going to do our best to provide great service, but there will be some short-term and long-term changes as a result.

We also want to again thank all of you that participated in the public hearings of the last couple months. There is still much work that needs to be done and more meetings to come, but these were among the most important ones. Thank you.

As always, please feel free to contact us with any concerns or ideas that can enhance our city, and let us work toward making it a great year.

Sincerely,

Matthew H. Worms

Mayor of Freeport

City information:

City Hall – 125 E. Main Street

MARCH 2010: Open Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.

PLEASE NOTE NEW CITY HALL OFFICE HOURS

(starting Monday, April 5th)

APRIL – OCTOBER: Monday - Friday, 6 A.M. to 2 P.M.

NOVEMBER – MARCH: Monday - Friday, 10 A.M. to 2 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 7:00 P.M. (PLEASE NOTE NEW TIME) in City Hall

City Council:

Mayor Matthew Worms, Acting Mayor Joe Hennen

Council Member Dave Humbert

Council Member Ken Goebel

Council Member Ron Ritter

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

- Wayne Revering, First Assistant Chief

- Dean Jungles, Second Assistant Chief

- Loren Goebel, Secretary

- Firefighters

CHANGES

Local government aid (LGA) received in 2002 was \$97,474. LGA in 2010 will likely be \$48,851 and be \$46,841 in 2011 which is less than half of what it was less than a decade ago. The City's general fund has remained relatively constant with tax increases due to road project debt payments. The City's tax capacity rate (formerly called the "mill rate") has dropped two years in a row and we are "holding the line" on taxes aiming to lower them further. The proposed USDA Rural Development projects do not have a tax impact at all because they are paid by grants, assessments, increased user fees, and the interest collected. Council, our auditor, and I believe we have enough in reserve to handle most "rainy day" challenges that may occur. However, the monies needed for general operations do not justify reserve spending. Thus the solution is a variety of cuts, exploring revenue sources other than taxes, and being even more creative in delivering services.

2010 Budget Changes

As I explained to Council, my first chop was to myself. I requested that my cost of living adjustment and my travel reimbursement be taken away saving \$2,812.09. I am now earning what I did in 2008 because I took a voluntary wage freeze last year too. The other cuts made were to legal services, civil defense training, weed control, and for the second year in a row – money for future road projects and maintenance. I will also be working hard to present to City Council a 2011 budget that does not include LGA income at all. One, this can bring greater stability to our finances by not relying at all on the State's fiscal instability and two, if we receive any LGA monies, they can be used to replenish our sorely depleted reserves for future road projects and repairs.

City Hall Office Hour Change

Starting Monday, April 5th office hours will change from 9 hours per day year-round to 8 hours during the summer months and 4 hours during the winter months to reduce energy costs, yet be available for most people. The summer hours will be April through October 6:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. This will allow most citizens to come in before work and contractors to get permits right away in the morning, as well as reducing cooling costs during the hottest times of the day. Winter hours will be 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. November through March (to match the Winter Parking Rules months). This will continue to accommodate most residents during the day for those months and greatly reduce energy costs by heating the building outside of the coldest times of the day.

Quarterly Billing

By switching from billing 12 times per year to 4 times per year, we save over \$5000. You may chose to still pay your bill once a month based on you previous billings, but a statement will only be produced 4 times a year. The bill will still be due 30 days after the bill is sent and late fees will still apply on a 30-60-90 day cycle with any bill not fully paid after 90 days resulting in water turn off. The next bill will be sent out at the end of June and due at the end of July. We know this will mean some personal sacrifice and budgeting, but the times call for savings.

Fees and Fines

Franchise fees, increased current fees, added fees, and adding fines will be a few of the added tools to keep taxes down, gain budget independence from the State, address more efficient law enforcement, and yet still serving supplemental needs on top of the core needs that taxes are meant to provide.

Newsletter written by Paul Hetland