

Freeport New Co

NEWS RELEASE

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FREEPORT AND STEPHENSON COUNTY BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AGENCIES TO COMBINE AS ONE ORGANIZATION, ONE VOICE TO PROMOTE GROWTH IN AREA

Freeport, Illinois, March 12, 2018—The boards of directors of Northwest Illinois Development Alliance (NIDA), Freeport/Stephenson County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Freeport Downtown Development Foundation (FDDF) and Freeport Area Chamber of Commerce voted to form a new organization designed to promote economic development, tourism and business services to grow Freeport and Stephenson County.

The new organization, dubbed NewCo until it is officially named, brings together four organizations and four boards of directors into one organization with one mission, one board and one voice. NewCo is expected to begin operating in June 2018.

For those wanting to visit or start and grow a business, NewCo will provide "one stop shopping" and provides one main entry point to investing in, and growing roots in, Freeport and Stephenson County. NewCo will market the area with one clear, consistent voice and a clear call to action.

"This is the next phase in Freeport's growth," says Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller.

"Following the success of the Freeport All In campaign, this moves us toward building on that vision of creating a vibrant and robust community that is attractive to businesses, to our residents, our families and to visitors."

Collaborate Freeport, which was formed in 2015, and the All In Freeport brand will be part of the new organization.

"I'm pleased to see such a positive development come out of our efforts to reinvigorate the area over the past couple of years," says Stephenson County Board Chair William Hadley. "Our community--the county, the city, the business sector and individual citizens--has shown that we can create tremendous opportunity when we work together."

Business services and programs provided by the Chamber will remain intact and provide greater value with all the organizations under one roof focused on growth. All current Chamber members will continue to be members of NewCo.

"When we started Lena Brewing, we looked for assistance in getting the business going. Instead of having one point of contact to coordinate the start-up of our business, we had to find our way," says Ross Vehmeier, founder of Lena Brewing. "With NewCo, someone in business or visiting the area can go to one web site, make one call and talk with one person who can help navigate the area. That makes it easier, more efficient and far more effective."

The 17-person NewCo initial board will include three representatives from each of the four organizations, plus the Freeport City Manager, County Board Chair, a representative from Highland Community College and Freeport School District and a representative from either another taxing jurisdiction or not-for-profit that will be designated by the Board.

Funding will come from the City of Freeport, NIDA investors, Chamber and FDDF members, and, if approved, from Stephenson County. Revenue will also be generated through co-op advertising programs, grants and revenue from events.

The consolidated organization would enter into three- to five-year Service Agreements with the City of Freeport and Stephenson County to deliver services and attain agreed upon performance metrics. In return, the City and County will compensate the new organization for the agreed upon services. The County Board's and City Council's approval of their respective agreements with NewCo will represent their endorsement of the consolidation.

A national search for an executive director is underway. NewCo staff will also include a planning and development director, a member service director, a tourism and marketing director, visitors center manager and administrative staff.

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