

Freedom Food Pantry, Inc  
Future of Freedom Food Pantry Informational Meeting Minutes  
May 18, 2026  
5pm Freedom Town Hall

**Purpose:** Informational meeting regarding the future facility needs, town spacing concerns, and details about the components that would make up a pantry relocation/project committee.

### 1. Welcome & Operational Overview

- **Pantry Mission:** The Freedom Food Pantry continues its commitment to serving the greater Freedom area (including Appleton, Kaukauna, Wrightstown, Oneida, Seymour, Black Creek and De Pere), providing nutritious food, diapers, and personal hygiene items with respect and privacy, alongside connecting clients to broader community resources.
- **Current Distribution:** The pantry serves an average of 60 families per open pantry day, frequently reaching up to 90 families.
- **Most Recent Adjustment:** Due to parking conflicts with Town Hall visitors and employees during the previous Thursday schedule, the town proposed moving open pantry days to Fridays. The pantry accepted and utilized this change to expand service, opening an hour earlier. New hours are **2:30 PM to 5:30 PM on the designated Fridays**, which improved the parking situation since the town hall is not currently open on Fridays. This change went into effect in May.
- **Current Footprint:** The pantry currently occupies the old fire station space (approximately 3,000 square feet), which houses dry goods storage, refrigeration/freezer units, and board meeting space, as well as client choice/distribution space. Parking space also provided.

### 2. The Current Challenge: Space needs for the town & Relocation Possibility

- **Town Growth Constraints:** The Town of Freedom is growing rapidly. Town facilities are old, and departments like the Department of Public Works (DPW) are experiencing severe space constraints, resulting in expensive equipment currently sitting outdoors.
- **Potential Realignment:** The town is evaluating whether it makes more fiscal sense to build a new \$300,000 to \$500,000 municipal facility or to reabsorb the 3,000-square-foot fire station space currently used by the pantry.
- **Lease Status:** The pantry's lease was recently renewed for one year. While there is no immediate directive to vacate, a long-term plan must be established before the next renewal cycle in March 2027.

### 3. Town Administrator Address (Adam)

The Town Administrator attended to offer full disclosure and emphasize that the town's goal is a mutually successful partnership, not an abrupt eviction.

- **Facility Study:** The town intends to request a third-party facility and space needs study to evaluate all town-owned buildings, land, and unoccupied spaces. Funding for this study will be proposed for the **2027 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget**. Quotes will be gathered this Fall (September–November) for presentation to the Town Board.

- **Preliminary Site Scouting:** The town has already placed initial "feelers" out to local property owners to gauge interest in selling potential site locations.
- **Town Support:** The town administration is fully prepared to write high-level letters of support and advocate to the Town Board to assist the pantry in securing grants for building infrastructure or operational costs.

#### 4. Forming the Joint Future Committee

The town has requested that the Freedom Food Pantry assemble a dedicated planning committee to work directly with Town Board representatives and the third-party developer/study group.

- **Timeline:** The pantry aims to establish its representatives over the next 1–2 months (targeting June/July) to allow joint meetings to commence beginning around September 2026. Administrator should be notified of core committee members by end of July if possible.
- **Committee Size & Structure:** A **core group** of 6 to 8 pantry/community representatives is recommended to interface directly with up to 2 assigned Town Board members, ensuring productive dialogue without overwhelming the board.
  - An internal pool of a dozen or more volunteers can *support* the core committee, utilizing **subcommittees** dedicated to specialized tasks like grant writing, fundraising, seeking additional resources or construction planning—depending on the outcome of this project.
- **Desired Skills & Backgrounds:** The pantry is looking for diverse community representation, including business owners, landowners, building developers, and individuals with construction or project management experience. All community members are encouraged to participate.
- **Project Methodology:** Project management principles—specifically the **DMAIC framework** (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control)—could be utilized to help map workflows and project planning through all stages.
- **Suggested Committee Structure:**
  - Executive Champion / Sponsor (to secure resources like available space, funding, and personnel).
  - Facilitator / Secretary (to guide meetings and document progress).
  - Gatekeeper (to channel operational updates back to the main Pantry Board/Town Board).
  - Project Team Members
  - & SMEs (Subject Matter Experts to bounce technical questions off of)

#### 5. Future Facility Needs & Ideal Specifications

Should relocation or a new build become necessary, the committee will advocate for a space that accommodates modern distribution operations of a pantry to include:

- **Square Footage:** Transitioning from the current 3,000 sq. ft. to an ideal footprint of **5,000 to 6,000 square feet** to allow adequate workflow.
- **Layout Requirements:** Dedicated space for dry goods, refrigerated and frozen storage, client distribution zones, bathrooms, and parking.

- **Infrastructure:** Adequate electrical grid capacity to support expanded commercial refrigeration and freezer units.
- **Site Logistics:** Ground level garage door or raised loading dock for incoming goods from supplier. Adequate/dedicated parking capabilities for approximately 40 vehicles.

## 6. Funding & Grant Strategy

- **Grant Openings:** Municipal leadership noted that certain federal, state, and county development grants are more readily accessible to registered 501(c)(3) non-profits than to municipal town boards. This committee can leverage the Freedom Food Pantry's non-profit status to pursue these infrastructure funds.
- **Community Pledges:** Future operational deficits (ex: rent/mortgage, utility costs like heat and electricity, and maintenance costs at a new standalone building) may be insulated by community-wide fundraising, establishing multi-year business pledge campaigns or community donors.

## 7. Next Steps & Action Items

1. **Committee Enrollment:** Anyone interested in joining the committee or wishing to recommend a community member with project/development experience, should email [volunteer@freedomfoodpantry.org](mailto:volunteer@freedomfoodpantry.org) or [info@freedomfoodpantry.org](mailto:info@freedomfoodpantry.org) within the next few weeks.
2. **Public Relations/Media:** The Media Specialist will draft a controlled, positive announcement for the Facebook page to invite community involvement. Reaching out to social media pages for surrounding communities we serve as well. The goal is to make this a smooth transaction for everyone involved.
3. **Regional Outreach:** Once the committee is formalized, committee members can draft letters addressed to neighboring municipal boards (whose residents utilize our footprint) to petition them for localized regional support and volunteer representation.
4. **Short-Term Parking Requests:** The pantry will communicate with the town regarding upcoming pavement repairs to see if temporary parking lines can be marked out front to optimize client parking during the current lease term.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40pm.

Meeting minutes submitted via email to all Freedom Food Pantry Board Members and volunteer distribution list on 5/19/2026 by Pantry Secretary Abby Newling.