

### **Meeting Opening**

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, March 2, 2026.

Present: Alderman Retha Elston, Alderman Joe Strabala-Bright, Alderman Josh Johnson, Alderman Aida Baker, Alderman Allen Przysucha, Alderman Jim Wise.

Absent: None.

City Manager Scott Shumard, City Attorney Tim Zollinger, Police Chief E. Pat Bartel, Fire Chief David Northcutt, Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt (Zoom), Finance Director Cindy Von Holten, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Communication from Visitors**

Judy Wheeler, 1409 West 23rd Street, requested that the City Council and City staff explore the possibility of installing a streetlight in the area of her residence on 23rd Street. Wheeler stated the area is extremely dark and is dangerous.

### **Consent Agenda**

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve the following items on the consent agenda;

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Bills and Payroll
- C. State of Illinois Central Management Rock Salt Joint Participation Agreement
- D. Petition from St. Mary's Catholic Church to hold a live "Procession of the Christ" on April 3, 2026
- E. Request from Sauk Valley Diversity Alliance to host a Juneteenth Celebration at Grandon Civic Center on June 20, 2026, with an additional request to waive deposit/rental fee(s) and a request for road closure.
- F. Request from Community VBS to host a Worship at Grandon Civic Center on July 19, 2026, with an additional request to waive the deposit and rental fee(s).
- G. Request from NAMI Sauk Area to host a Suicide Awareness Event at Grandon Civic Center in September

10, 2026, with an additional request to waive deposit and rental fee(s).

H. Proclamation Declaring March 8 through March 14 as Girl Scout Week

Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson , Aida Baker , Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

### **Presentations and Awards**

Dallas Knack, Executive Director of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber, provided information regarding the Future Founders Entrepreneur Camp. The camp is designed for middle school-aged students and will offer participants the opportunity to develop and operate a pop-up business. Students will showcase and sell their products at the City-sponsored Chalk the Walk event on July 11 at Grandon. The program is intended to serve as a stepping stone to the CEO class. Knack has requested that the City consider a \$500 donation to support the program.

### **Business Items**

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to Approve Ordinance 2026-03-05 Authorizing Entry into an Economic Development Incentive Agreement with Liven Holdings LLC; Seconded by Alderman Elston.

This ordinance authorizes the City of Sterling to enter into an Economic Development Incentive Agreement with Liven Holdings LLC for property located at 502 E. 2nd Street (Parcel ID 11-22-353-008).

Liven Holdings LLC has undertaken substantial improvements to an outdated and underutilized office building with the intent of redeveloping the property and making it suitable for business occupancy. In coordination with the 2nd Street reconstruction, they would like to reconfigure the parking lot so they can improve the flow of traffic within the lot and utilize an exit on 2nd Street, which the property is entitled to. Currently, vehicles must exit the lot by backing into the alley. Per the WHA engineer, the proposed improvement will cost approximately \$42,000 and include drainage improvements, barrier curb, ADA parking, and sidewalk.

Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

### **Staff Reports**

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader reported crews have been trimming trees, cleaning islands and sidewalks, and working on the riverfront.

Chief Bartel reported that the PD would be losing an officer to North Carolina through a lateral transfer. The PD will be one officer down. There was one candidate on the list, but they

turned down the offer. Testing will start on March 16th. Deputy Chief Potthoff is exploring FOIA software for city-wide use. The call volume is up 33% for the year so far.

Chief Northcutt reported that a department from West Virginia will be submitting a bid for engine 5. The two newest firefighters have started the academy, and the testing process for the open position has started. Alderperson Strabala-Bright asked about the increase in outside fires. He inquired if there was a fine for anyone who burns while we are under a burn ban.

Chief Northcutt stated that city residents are not allowed to burn at all; the State of Illinois EPA requires certain criteria to be met before open burning is allowed. The County where the fire took place is currently responsible for issuing fines.

City Manager Shumard reported that IDOT will award the bid for East 4th Street; the bids were submitted on Friday, the 27th. They stated the bid was \$2.7 million, and a pre-construction date has not been set yet. On Friday, negotiations with the fire union will begin.

### **Council Reports**

Alderperson Baker reported she and her husband walked the riverfront, and the progress was looking good. She stated she drove in the area of 23rd Street, and she agreed that the area was dark.

Alderperson Elston reported she assisted with the Frosty Fun Day Event, and she attended the birthday party for Millie at Pet Smart. Elston congratulated the Girl Scouts on their proclamation and thanked them for all of their volunteer efforts.

Alderperson Przysucha reported he has a concern that there has been an increase in accidents at 1st Avenue at 3rd and 4th Streets. Chief Bartel stated that the increase in accidents is due to distracted driving.

Mayor Merdian reported she met with City Manager Shumard, Developer Ron Clewer, and both Chiefs about funds from the congressman's office. The grant is due this Friday.

### **Study Session**

The following budgets were presented and discussed.

Stormwater - This fund has a projected fund balance of \$7,586,000.

MFT - The State increased this in 2019. There are only certain things this can be spent on. This money is typically spent on maintenance items such as salt, gravel, and street traffic lighting.

This money is only used on major road projects as it requires a lot of IDOT approvals and reviews that add time and money to a project. The fund balance is at \$ 2.6 million. The majority of these funds will be used on 2nd Stree when it has been completed.

SIDC - This fund has a projected fund balance of \$776,983.

Coliseum - This fund is used for the maintenance of the Coliseum building. It is primarily funded through a specific Coliseum levy. This fund has a projected fund balance of \$551,800.

Strong Communities Program - Sterling was awarded \$246,400 in IHDA grant funds, followed by an additional \$264,000. \$150,000 is being held for the potential rehabilitation of houses acquired.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk