

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2025. Roll call. Present: Alderperson Retha Elston, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, and 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, Superintendent of Wastewater Cory Bradshaw (Zoom), and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Public Comment**

Hannah Goebig addressed the Council with concerns over the Sterling Park district reducing the size of the dog park at Thomas Park to add additional pickleball courts. She has concerns about the removal of trees and flooding in the area.

John Pickens-Green addressed the Council with the same concern. He would like to see the courts placed at Kilgore Park, as it is more centrally located. The parking lot at Thomas is too small to accommodate those at the dog park and the pickleball courts.

Goebig and Pickens-Green were referred to the Sterling Park District. This park is under their control.

Alderperson Elston made a motion to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

Approval of Minutes.

Approval of Bills and Payroll.

Small Business Saturday Proclamation.

Seconded by Alderperson Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Alderperson Elston, Przysucha, Baker, Strabala-Bright, Johnson and Wise. Nays – None.

### **Presentation**

Dr. Cortez from Sauk Valley Community College presented the Council with information on the Impact Program. The program started with a \$1 million donation from a benefactor in Fulton to provide a college education for students in Fulton and Prophetstown. The amount to fund the students from Sterling in perpetuity would be \$2 million. Currently, there are 1,888 students in the program, and they have completed 97,000 hours of community service. This equates to \$1.5

million. The cities of Sterling and Rock Falls have donated \$25,000 each, and the City of Dixon has donated \$90,000.

Aldersperson Johnson made a motion to **accept the April 30, 2025, actuarial reports and place them on file**; Seconded by Aldersperson Przysucha. Lauterbach & Amen have completed the fire pension fund and police pension fund actuarial reports. The fire pension funding ratio increased .11 points to 84.02% and the police pension funding ratio increased 4.89 points to 98.98%.

The report recommends a minimum contribution to the fire pension fund of \$916,141, compared to \$880,695 for the prior year, a \$35,446 or 4.0% increase. This amount represents 62.18% of payroll, up from 56.64% of payroll in the prior year.

The actuary recommends a minimum contribution to the police pension fund of \$520,063 this year versus \$580,095 for the prior year, a \$60,032 or 10.3% decrease. The new amount represents 21.75% of projected payroll, down from 29.48% last year.

These favorable results are due to pension bond proceeds contributions of over \$11 million during fiscal year 2024.

Voting: Ayes – Aldersperson Elston, Baker, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Przysucha, and Wise. Nays – None.

Aldersperson Strabala-Bright made a motion to **approve the Tax Levy Estimate of \$6,354,947, which is below the requirement for a Truth-in-Taxation hearing**; Seconded by Aldersperson Elston. Voting: Ayes – Aldersperson Elston, Baker, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Przysucha, and Wise. Nays – None.

At 7:17 p.m., Mayor Merdian opened the Public Hearing pursuant to the requirements of Sections 10 and 20 of the Bond Issuance Notification Act of the State of Illinois, as amended, on the plans to issue Taxable General Obligation Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), in the amount not to exceed \$41,950,000. There were no questions or comments. At 7:17 p.m., Mayor Merdian closed the Public Hearing

Aldersperson Elston made a motion to **authorize the Mayor to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with IDOT for the maintenance of State Routes through June 30, 2032**; Seconded by Aldersperson Baker. Voting: Ayes – Aldersperson Elston, Baker, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Przysucha, and Wise. Nays – None.

Aldersperson Baker made a motion to **approve Ordinance 2025-11-40 Authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to Execute a Laydown and Storage Lease Agreement with Scott Hibbard for Property 11-20-352-007**; Seconded by Aldersperson Elston. Voting: Ayes – Aldersperson Elston, Baker, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Przysucha, and Wise. Nays – None.

## **Staff Reports**

Superintendent of Public Works, Brad Schrader, reported that they have started putting up the Christmas decorations, they are crack sealing, and preparing their equipment for winter.

Chief David Northcutt reported that the garage doors have been installed at Station 1. The hiring of one paid-on-call firefighter is pending the results of his physical. There is a Fire Police Commission meeting on Wednesday night, and they should be approving the hire of one new firefighter. There will be a joint training exercise at the mill with Rock Falls and Dixon fire departments on Wednesday morning.

Chief Pat Bartel reported that the Shop with a Cop program will be held on December 14<sup>th</sup> at Walmart. The police department hopes to hire three new officers at the Fire Police Commission meeting on Wednesday night. Chief Bartel thanked Public Works for assisting with placing the drone station on the roof at City Hall. Bartel showed the Council the new badges; the design process was started 18 months ago by the retired Chief Chavira.

Finance Director Cindy Von Holten reported that her team has started working on the property liability insurance renewal. The draft budgets will be sent out to staff next month.

Superintendent of Wastewater, Cory Bradshaw, reported that the furnace in the office area needed to be replaced as it had failed.

City Clerk Sathoff reminded everyone of the Sleigh What?! Holiday decoration Showdown. This is a Christmas decorating competition for businesses and residences in the City limits of Sterling.

Attorney Zollinger advised that there is legislation on the Governor's desk relating to cities and State agencies cooperating with federal law enforcement. There are several legal questions that will need to be sorted out.

City Manager Shumard said the paving on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street started today, and they hope to have it open in early December. The charging station grant opened today, and we will be applying. Alderman Strabala-Bright stated that logistically, it is nice to have the chargers banked together. The environmental cleanup at National continues, and we are planning to discuss the cleanup at the Lawrence building with the USEPA.

### **Council Reports**

Aldersperson Strabala-Bright thanked the City Staff and Department heads for continuing to work hard and move the City in the right direction. Strabala-Bright thanked the concerned citizens for attending the meeting and bringing issues to the City's attention.

Aldersperson Elston thanked the Superintendent of Public Works for the Christmas decorations. They look great. Elston thanked the superintendent of Building and Zoning for the work done on the nuisance property in her ward. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Aldersperson Przysucha thanked Janna Groharing for the invitation to the Illinois Main Street convention and congratulated her on the awards she received.

Mayor Merdian reported there will be an open house for the rental inspection program on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The parking subcommittee will begin soon. She stated she attended the Illinois Main Street convention last week, and there were some interesting classes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk