

### **Meeting Opening**

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, April 6, 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 Matt Cole, Police Chief E. Pat Bartel, Fire Chief David Northcutt, Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt, Finance Director Cindy Von Holten, Superintendent of Wastewater Cory Bradshaw, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Communication from Visitors**

There was no public comment.

### **Consent Agenda**

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda;

B. Approval of Bills and Payroll

C. Pay Request #9 to Hoerr Construction in the amount of \$320,031.44 for Sanitary Sewer System Rehab

D. Change Order #8 to Hoerr Construction for Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation & Improvements in the amount of \$19,195.20

E. Motor Fuel Tax Audit from IDOT January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2026.

F. Proclamation Declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month

G. Proclamation Declaring April as Autism Acceptance Month

H. Proclamation Honoring the Sterling High School Drama Technical Crew as the 2026 IHSA State Champions

Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – None. Nays – None.

Mayor Merdian presented the Sexual Assault Awareness Month proclamation to a

representative from the YWCA.

Mayor Merdian presented the proclamation to the Sterling High School Drama Technical crew, honoring them as the 2026 IHSA State Champions.

### **Presentations and Awards**

Chief Bartel presented the 2025 non-sworn employee of the year award to Records Specialist Melinda Morgan. Chief Bartel stated that Morgan has been with the City of Sterling Police Department since 1988. Morgan has several responsibilities, including authoring the year-end report and arranging the administrative hearings. Several nominations were received for Morgan; the nominations cited her loyalty, passion for her job, her willingness to help, her problem-solving skills, and her dedication to the police department.

The Cadet T. Thorpe award was initiated by Carmen Thorpe and Chief Chavira. It is given to the officer who best exemplifies commitment to the Sterling Police Department and the community. Chief Bartel presented the 2025 Cadet T. Thorpe Police Officer of the Year award to Officer Jonah Venema. Officer Venema was hired in September 2021. He has served as a DOIC, a SWAT Team member, a field training officer, a firearms instructor, and a drone pilot. He is active in the community as well as the Police Department.

Emily Hammer, the Director of the Whiteside County Senior Center and Whiteside County Transportation, informed the Council that on July 1, 2026, Whiteside County Transportation will be merging with Reagan Transportation in Dixon. This will cause a loss of \$100,000 in revenue.

Hammer provided information on the Senior Center and the services they provide. Among a multitude of services, they host a weekly food pantry every Thursday. Hammer is requesting funding from the City of Sterling.

Alderman Wise asked what the largest need of the Senior Center was. Hammer stated that the greatest need is money for operational expenses. The transportation provider will no longer be paying rent or sharing the cost of utilities.

Alderman Przysucha asked if they were receiving funding through Whiteside County. They do receive funding from a portion of the property taxes.

Alderman Wise advised Hammer that the fiscal year runs from May to April. He suggested she return in November to ask for funding assistance.

### **Business Items**

At 6:59 pm, Mayor Merdian opened the public hearing on the budget. City Manager Shumard

advised that there have been a few changes to the budget. The excess revenue was moved from the general fund to the capital fund for the purchase of an evidence facility for the Police Department.

Alderman Elston asked about additional funding for the Senior Center. Shumard advised that it is a decision that would be made by the Council. Alderman Johnson stated that he would like to see where the Senior Center needs help and what the budget implications would be for the Senior Center by losing the transportation department.

There were no public comments. At 7:09 pm, Mayor Merdian closed the public hearing.

Alderman Elston made a motion to Approve Ordinance No. 2026-04-06 Subdivide of Property Owned by RKH Properties; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt advised the Council that the owner of the property, Roger Hoffman, will be selling the property located at the end of East 5th Street, behind the car wash, to the owner of Boss Roofing. Once this property is subdivided, it will then go to the Plan Commission for a special use for outside storage.

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 that Martin & Company has been working in the Strawberry Fields area and anticipates paving to be completed by May 1. He also noted that the Platt Park playground equipment has been delivered and is scheduled for installation in May. Additionally, crews have cleared brush and trees on the Megli property along Wallace Street to improve sight lines for the Police Department.

Schrader provided an overview of a proposed sidewalk program to replace the existing 50/50 program. Under the new approach, property owners would purchase concrete at the City's bid rate, and City crews would complete the installation. He noted that a neighboring community has seen considerable success with a similar program. Following an evaluation process, a prioritized list will be developed, and work will proceed accordingly. In response to a question from Alderman Baker, Schrader indicated that the estimated cost for a 50-foot section of sidewalk would be approximately \$300 for the homeowner.

Superintendent of Wastewater Cory Bradshaw expressed appreciation to his staff for maintaining operations during his medical leave. He reported an increase in sewer-related calls due to recent heavy rainfall and noted that crews have been performing ongoing equipment maintenance and conducting dye testing.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported that her department has

been working with Brad Schrader to address issues involving Surf, which has damaged residents' sewer lines and has not covered repair costs. She also advised that Rental Inspector Matt Reglin condemned a rental property through the inspection program due to an improperly vented water heater, which caused a dangerous gas buildup. The Fire Department and NICOR responded to the scene. Schmidt emphasized that this situation highlights the importance of the rental inspection program, noting the issue could have been fatal. Mayor Merdian and the Council expressed their gratitude for the hard work Matt Reglin has put into the rental inspection program.

Chief Pat Bartel reported that a replacement vehicle has been placed into service. He reminded the Council that non-highway vehicle registrations will expire on April 30 and stated that the year-end report will be presented at the next meeting. In response to Alderman Elston's inquiry regarding UTV usage, Bartel confirmed that registrants are advised of permitted roadways; however, there have been reports of UTVs operating on 3rd and 4th Streets. Alderman Elston also raised concerns about the increasing presence of motorized bikes in parks, on paths, and on streets. Chief Bartel stated he has been in contact with Jana Jacobs of the Sterling Park District regarding this issue and noted that Deputy Chief Bland is working to implement a bike patrol to address it. Alderman Wise suggested utilizing social media for public service announcements, and Bartel confirmed that a post is currently in development.

Chief Northcutt reported that there were no major weather-related calls. He stated that Deputy Chief applications are due April 10 and that firefighters currently in the academy continue to perform well. He also noted that the hiring list has been finalized with five candidates. Additionally, the cost of Engine 5 has been reduced from \$250,000 to \$225,000.

City Clerk Teri Sathoff reported that staff have met to begin planning 2026 events. While this year's events may not be larger in scale, the focus will be on improving overall quality. She added that she continues to work with Brad Schrader and Sterling Main Street on the Sterling Street Fest and recognized Schrader's efforts in securing donations.

### **Council Reports**

Alderman Baker thanked the City staff for all of their hard work. She welcomed Cory Bradshaw back.

Alderman Strabala-Bright echoed Alderman Baker's sentiments; he thanked the staff as well.

Alderman Elston thanked City staff as well. She congratulated the Sterling High School Drama Technical Crew for achieving the 2026 IHSA State Championship.

Alderman Przysucha thanked Public Works for the pothole repairs that were done on 16th Avenue and throughout the City.

Alderman Wise echoed the sentiments of the City staff.

Mayor Merdian reported that she and City Manager Shumard spoke with Com-Ed and Union Pacific about the installation of the pedestrian bridge. The current pole needs to be moved off the Union Pacific right-of-way. She attended a webinar with DECO on Opportunity Zones. These zones are in addition to the River Edge and Economic Zones. The next riverfront park meeting will be on April 22nd.

### **Executive Session**

Alderman Elston made a motion to adjourn to closed session pursuant to 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1) to discuss the appointment, employment, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body. Pursuant to 5ILCS 120/2.06, to review the closed session minutes; Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

At 10:01, Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to return to open session; seconded by Alderman Johnson. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

### **Business Items**

Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to Approve Resolution 2026-04-08 Review of Closed Session Minutes and Determination of the Need for Confidentiality Still Exists; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk