

### **Meeting Opening**

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, May 18, 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, 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**

Jeff Gale, a Sterling resident, requested that the City discontinue use of the Flock camera system. Gale expressed concerns that footage collected by the cameras could potentially be accessed or used by ICE and other outside entities. He stated that one of the Flock cameras appears to be directed toward the splash pad area at the new riverfront park.

Gale also expressed concerns regarding the security of the system, stating that the cameras and stored footage could potentially be vulnerable to breaches. He clarified that he is not opposed to the use of license plate reader technology in general, but specifically objects to the use of the Flock system. Gale further stated that he believes there was a lack of transparency regarding the purchase and installation of the cameras.

Oliver Swietzer stated that the Flock cameras violate the 4th amendment. There is concern that they could be hacked. Swietzer would like the cameras removed and the contract canceled. He stated that the data is not encrypted, and it can be accessed.

Marissa Rodriguez lives at the intersection of Avenue F and West 10th Street. Rodriguez stated that officers do not yield at these uncontrolled intersections. There is debris on the sidewalk and in the yards from the most recent accident; she would like to have this debris cleaned up. Rodriguez asked if there had been any traffic study updates. City Manager Shumard stated that a signed agreement was submitted last week.

Daryl Deterlie, Freeport Road, Sterling, stated he built a house on Freeport Road, and he is

upset that he is not allowed to have a flared apron on his driveway due to the current code. Deterlie would like to have the code changed.

### **Consent Agenda**

Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Bills and Payroll
- C. 2026-2027 MICA Insurance Renewal Premium
- D. Res 2026-05-20 to Close Street for Memorial Day Service on May 25th, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- E. Proclamation Recognizing Pride Month
- F. Proclamation recognizing National Public Works Week, May 17–23, 2026.
- G. Proclamation Recognizing Pastor Scott Porter and Pastor Terri Porter of Abiding Word Church For 40 Years of Service

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

### **Presentations and Awards**

Jim Wise presented a check on behalf of Commander Jerry Celleti from VFW Post 5418 in Rock Falls to Mayor Merdian. The check was for \$12,500 and is to be used for the construction of a Veterans' Memorial.

### **Business Items**

Alderman Elston made a motion to Approve Resolution 2026-05-18 Authorizing Initial Funds for the Fire Training Center; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Baker made a motion to Approve Waiving the Bid Process for the purchase and installation of a 5200 Series Snow Wing; Seconded by Alderman Elston. The Superintendent of Public Works advised that this plow will be used in the downtown area, the Avenue G Bridge sidewalks, and to push back the lanes on Lynn Blvd. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Baker made a motion to Approve Accept the quote from Bonnell Industries for the purchase and installation of a 5200 Series Snow Wing in the amount of \$28,999.23; Seconded by Alderman Johnson. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement with IAFF Local 2301; seconded by Alderman Wise. City Manager Shumard stated that this contract changed the residency requirement from 20 minutes to 30 miles. There are some promotional changes with performance evaluations, and there is also a provision for callback bonuses.

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

Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to approve waiving the bid process for the purchase of a 2026 3/4 ton truck for the Public Works Department; Seconded by Alderman Elston.

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

Alderman Wise made a motion to approve the acceptance of the quote from Sterling Chevrolet for a 2026 pickup truck in the amount of \$61,757.20 for the Public Works Department;

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

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to approve waiving the bid process for the purchase of a 2026 3/4 ton truck for the Waste Water Department; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting:

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

Alderman Wise made a motion to approve the acceptance of the quote from Sterling Chevrolet for a 2026 truck in the amount of \$53,820.63 for the Waste Water Department; Seconded by

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

Alderman Elston made a motion to Approve Ordinance 2026-05-13 Approving License Agreement for the Use of the Alley Adjacent to 312 Locust Street; Seconded by Alderman Wise.

The owner of Dunks at 312 Locust Street, Brick Boss, was in attendance to answer any questions. Alderman Przysucha asked if fencing would be required on the west side of the alley. City Clerk Sathoff stated that the owner had purchased planters to match the city planters to be placed at each end of the alley. Superintendent of Building and Zoning Schmidt and Superintendent of Public Works Schrader met with the owner and discussed the options. They were in agreement that the planters would be sufficient. The alley is narrow, and traffic does not use the alley. Alderman Elston asked how much seating there would be. There will be five tables to start, and they could grow up to ten tables. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

**Adjourn to Study Session**

City Manager Scott Shumard reviewed the results of the downtown parking survey. Recommendations included converting portions of Lot 11 behind Grummert's into free public parking, returning the YWCA parking lot to Sterling Federal, and selling the north row of parking spaces, and converting the south half of Lot 8 from permit parking to all-day public parking.

Brick Boss, owner of Dunks, expressed concerns that customers may not realize permit parking spaces are available for public use after 5:00 p.m. He encouraged the Council to make parking decisions based on what best serves customers. Boss also requested that the permitted parking spaces on Light Street be removed and converted to three-hour parking spaces.

Oliver Sweitzer spoke about the possibility of expanding public transportation and questioned whether a bus system could help reduce the demand for downtown parking.

Alderwoman Elston inquired about regulations regarding food truck parking within the downtown business district. She was advised that food trucks are permitted to park downtown provided they are legally parked, the serving window faces the sidewalk, and the truck is located more than 100 feet from a brick-and-mortar restaurant.

Alderman Strabala-Bright stated that it was frustrating that customers are willing to walk farther distances at locations such as Walmart but are expected to have closer parking downtown. He expressed concern that some business owners and employees prefer to occupy nearby parking spaces while customers are expected to park farther away.

Alderman Johnson and Alderman Wise both stated that they support allowing the three businesses that only have access from Light Street to retain dedicated parking spaces.

City Clerk Sathoff noted that, in the past, businesses were permitted to reserve one parking stall with signage if they purchased a parking permit.

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader stated that dedicating parking spaces to select businesses could create issues with other downtown businesses and could also present enforcement challenges for the Police Department.

It was the consensus of the Council to speak with current permit holders in the Light Street lot to determine whether there is still a need for reserved permit spaces if free parking becomes available in Grummert's lot.

### **Staff Reports**

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader reported that solar tables and benches have been installed at the riverfront park. Four Touch Truck events were held for area kindergarten classes. Trees and grass at the riverfront continue to be watered. Twenty-one residents have signed up for the sidewalk program. Crews have cleaned and repaired catch basins throughout

the City. The Green and Clean program was a success, and statistics will be provided at the next meeting. The playground at Platt Park has been removed, and installation of the new playground equipment will begin this week.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported that summer help will begin on Wednesday. Applications for the Rental Inspector Officer position have opened, and several applications have already been received. Schmidt also reported that several properties with property maintenance issues will be referred to the City Attorney. Two properties with the Sterling Industrial Development Commission (SIDC) are expected to return to the City next month for redevelopment opportunities.

Superintendent of Wastewater Cory Bradshaw reported that the bridge repairs have been completed. Staff continues maintenance activities and jetting sewer lines. The sludge-reducing bacteria program is scheduled to begin this week.

Finance Director Cindy VonHolten reported that the Finance Department is preparing for the annual audit. Finance staff is encouraging vendors to enroll in ACH payments. She reminded Council members to sign up for paperless payroll. Mayor Merdian thanked VonHolten and Accounts Payable Specialist Nikki Morgan for working with ComEd to consolidate billing accounts.

Chief Pat Bartel reported that he met with Sauk Valley Media regarding new E-bike regulations. He also met with Attorney Zollinger concerning potential State legislation related to E-bikes. House Bill 3336 addresses the issue. Current City ordinances allow officers to issue State citations, and there are options for requiring registration of E-bikes.

Chief Bartel reported that the Run for the Badge event was successful, with more than seventy participants. The event raised \$2,100 for the COPS Organization. Bartel thanked Public Works, Sterling Township, Sgt. Blomstrand, Mary Toth, and Millie for their assistance with the event. He also thanked the community and local businesses for their support during Law Enforcement Week.

Bartel stated that he met with Sterling Township and the Post Office to address postal employee parking in residential neighborhoods. Post Office employees are now parking in the Township lot east of the Post Office. He also reported that the speed trailer will be placed on 2nd Street this week, and officers have been conducting traffic enforcement in the area since the street reopened.

Chief Northcutt reported that firefighters are completing visits with kindergarten classes and providing station tours for graduation activities. The department has responded to several issues at Lawrence Lofts, which are being addressed in coordination with the State Fire Marshal's Office and the Police Department. Northcutt also reported that the Deputy Chief candidate is currently undergoing the background investigation portion of the hiring process.

City Attorney Zollinger reported that he and Mayor Merdian met with Mr. Deterlie regarding a requested driveway. Deterlie was advised of the current code requirements but was dissatisfied with the response. The code would need to be amended to accommodate the request. The proposed entrance for the separate driveway is located on the neighboring property. While a flared driveway is permitted, the requested size exceeds what is currently allowed under the City code.

City Manager Scott Shumard reported that he is meeting with IDOT and project engineers on Wednesday to discuss the pedestrian bridge. A meeting regarding the quiet zone was also held last week. The contractor continues working through the punch list items for the riverfront park project. The City is also moving forward with the installation of cameras throughout the park, including on pathways, at the playground, and near the splash pad for safety purposes. Shumard further reported that the developer at Avenue B and West 7th Street has officially broken ground on the project.

### **Council Reports**

Aldersperson Baker thanked Public Works for cleaning the graffiti on the red bridge. She thanked the public for coming and voicing their concerns.

Aldersperson Johnson thanked the members of the parking committee. Johnson suggested a study session for the Flock camera system.

Aldersperson Strabala-Bright reported that he has property owners complaining about some of the lawn maintenance by out-of-town property owners.

Aldersperson Elston thanked Public Works for the touch-a-truck event as well as the Green and Clean. She congratulated them on their proclamation. She thanked all the volunteers for placing the flags at the cemeteries for Memorial Day. The service will be on Monday at Grandon Civic Center.

Aldersperson Przysucha thanked the Police Department for the work on the Run for the Badge.

Aldersperson Wise thanked the Police Department for their efforts in the Propheter Park area. He thanked the Code Enforcement for their response to grass issues in the City.

Mayor Merdian reported the ribbon cutting for Northwestern Steel and Wire Park will be on June 13th at 11:00. The Big Boy Steam Engine will be at the Wallace Street crossing on June 2nd. The Mayor for the Day will be touring the city departments on Friday. The River Edge designation has been awarded to the City of Sterling by the DCEO. Mayor Merdian thanked those who attended the National Day of Prayer.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk