

Meeting Opening

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

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

Absent: Alderman Josh Johnson.

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, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Communication from Visitors

Jeff Gale, 1706 17th Avenue, Sterling, addressed the Council about the use of Flock cameras.

Mr. Gale stated that several municipalities have ended their contract with Flock due to credibility issues. Mr. Gale would like the license plate readers removed from the City of Sterling. He stated that citizens were not given the opportunity to speak out against the Flock cameras before the contract was signed.

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. Petition to Close Miller Road for the Sterling High School Boosters Back-to-School Block Party Fund Raiser
- D. Optimist Club of Sterling to hold a Bucket Brigade on July 18, 202

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

Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

There were no items removed from the consent agenda.

Recommended Personnel Action

Chief Northcutt introduced the three probationary Firefighters, Justin Kalina, Garrett Helfrich, and Jonathan Finlon. These firefighters were promoted to the rank of Firefighter.

Presentations and Awards

Chief Bartel recognized Tom Ausman for his dedication of 18 years to the Fire and Police Commission. The Commission is responsible for the recruitment, hiring, and promotion of firefighters and police officers. Mr. Ausman said that it is a pleasure to see the men and women they have hired over the years serving the City of Sterling.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Business Items

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve **Pay Request Number 2 to Blue Bird Construction in the amount of \$69,610.34 for the 3rd Street ADA Sidewalk Improvements**; Seconded by Alderman Baker. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Wise made a motion to approve **Ordinance 2026-07-15 Amending Chapter 78, Article VI, Section 78-199 Private Tree Loan Removal Program**; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve **waiving the bid process to hire a cleaning company for the Northwestern Steel and Wire Park**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Baker made a motion to approve **the contract with Professional Cleaning Services, owner Larry Karn, in the amount of \$2,730.00 per month for Cleaning Services at NWSW Park**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Elston made a motion to **Approve Waiving the Bid Process to purchase a Camera Trailer for the Police Department**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha

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

Alderman Wise made a motion to approve **the purchase of (1) MPS Falcon 3100 Trailer System for the Police Department from Mobile Pro Systems for \$60,236.25**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Elston made a motion to **approve Waiving the Bid Process for Seal Coating Parking Lots at the Wastewater Treatment Facility and the Public Works Building**; Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Baker made a motion to **approve the Quote From Gaared LLC for \$18,110.76 for Seal Coating the Parking Lots at the Public Works and Wastewater Treatment Facility**; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to **approve Pay Request No. 12 to Sjostrom & Sons in the amount of \$297,811.72 for the Sterling Riverfront Phase I project**; Seconded by Alderman Wise.

Alderman Wise expressed concerns about approving the payment without prior approval from the Riverfront Commission. Following discussion, Alderman Wise made a motion to table Pay Request No. 12 to Sjostrom & Sons in the amount of \$297,811.72 for the Sterling Riverfront Phase I Project. The motion was seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright.

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader explained that the punch list had been completed and that the pay request had been held pending completion of those items. He further advised that the Riverfront Commission would be seeking his recommendation regarding approval of the payment. Schrader noted that one additional pay request remains, along with the retainage and warranty bond.

Alderman Strabala-Bright stated that the City was not satisfied with the quality of work performed by Sjostrom & Sons and emphasized the importance of ensuring that all work is completed satisfactorily before the final pay request, retainage, and warranty bond are approved.

With the consent of the seconder, Alderman Strabala-Bright, Alderman Wise withdrew his motion to table Pay Request No. 12.

Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha. Nays – Jim Wise.

Staff Reports

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader reported that seven sidewalks have been completed through the Sidewalk Replacement Program, with eleven additional projects pending. He also noted that he received two additional inquiries about the program that day.

Schrader reported that Public Works crews cleaned up trees and debris following the recent storms, assisted Sterling Township with cleaning drainage tubes, repaired sinkholes, completed cold patching of streets, mowed rights-of-way, and pressure washed the downtown planters.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported that her department continues to address tall grass and weed violations, noting that the recent rain and heat have contributed to ongoing growth. She also reported that the department has applied for an additional housing grant.

Alderman Wise inquired about the inspection process for rental properties that are vacant and listed for sale. Schmidt explained that properties sold for use as single-family residences will not be inspected. She further advised that the rental inspector is currently working through a list of vacant rental properties whose owners have requested inspections.

Finance Director Cindy VonHolten reported that the printing, stuffing, and mailing of utility bills will now be outsourced. She explained that outsourcing the service is more cost-effective than replacing the City's bill-stuffing machine. She also noted that the change will allow Finance Department employee Christina Carr to devote more time to other departmental responsibilities.

Chief Pat Bartel reported that two officers were assigned to the City's fireworks display, and there were no significant incidents.

Chief Bartel advised that speed enforcement continues throughout the City and that the speed trailer is currently deployed on Lynn Boulevard.

He reported that the new Illinois e-bike law took effect on July 1 and that educational materials will be distributed to the public.

Chief Bartel also reported that the JoinSterlingPD.org recruitment website is now active. The website was funded through a grant, which also provides sufficient funding for one year of maintenance and updates.

Finally, Chief Bartel announced that the Police Department was awarded a \$12,000 grant from the Illinois Attorney General's Office to be used specifically for license plate reader cameras.

Chief David Northcutt reported that he and Fire Department personnel were on standby during the City's fireworks display.

He advised that the paint samples for the new aerial truck have been approved. The company will be sending pictures, and he will forward them to the Council

Chief Northcutt also reported that the Fire Department recently responded to a fire at a Sterling apartment complex. He thanked the Building and Zoning Department's Code Enforcement staff and the Sterling Police Department for their assistance during the incident.

The two probationary firefighters continue to train.

City Clerk Teri Sathoff reminded everyone of Chalk the Walk on Saturday the 11th, from 11 am to 2 pm at Grandon Civic Center. Sathoff stated this is the first year that preregistration has been an option and over 75 people have signed up. This is an increase in participants from previous years. We have always planned for 100 participants. This year there will be well over 100 participants.

Sathoff thanked Sauk Valley Media for the recent article highlighting the employees who volunteer for our community events.

City Attorney Zollinger reported that properties associated with defaulted loans under the Rural Housing Development Program continue to present challenges for the City. He explained that when borrowers default, the federal government's process for addressing the properties is often slow, resulting in nuisance complaints and code enforcement issues for the City.

Council Reports

Aldersperson Baker reported the fireworks display was amazing. She thanked Public Works for placing trash cans along the riverfront. She thanked Public Works for the work being done at Woodburn and Griswold.

Aldersperson Strabala-Bright thanked Chief Bartel for the increase in speed patrols along Lynn Blvd. Bright asked about the noxious weed law. The State of Illinois has a noxious weed law and Canada Thistle is designated as a noxious weed. This weed is growing in several yards. Schmidt advised that Sterling's weed ordinance only addresses height. It does not address the types of weeds. Bright asked if an ordinance could be designed to mirror the State law. Attorney Zollinger stated it is something that could be looked into.

Aldersperson Elston thanked Sauk Valley Media for its recent article highlighting City events and volunteers. She also commented that the Sterling Municipal Band's Fourth of July concert was well attended and excellent.

Aldersperson Elston stated that the fireworks display was a success but expressed concerns regarding the Jaycees' solicitation of parking donations. She suggested that additional signage and public education regarding parking arrangements be provided for future events.

City Clerk Sathoff explained that the City did not plan a formal riverfront event this year due to the timing of the park's opening. She noted that the Jaycees had requested and received permission to solicit voluntary donations in the parking area. Clerk Sathoff added that the concerns raised would be documented and considered during planning for future events.

Elston thanked the Superintendent of Public Works for removing a large deceased animal from the middle of the road.

Alderperson Wise reported that he had been made aware of an individual smoking at the new Riverfront Park. He noted that the Sterling Park District prohibits smoking in its parks and requested that staff prepare an ordinance prohibiting smoking in City parks. He also stated that, because there are no cigarette receptacles in the city's parks, cigarette butts are being discarded on the ground.

Mayor Merdian thanked City Clerk Sathoff, Community Service Officer Mary Toth, and Millie for conducting a tour of City Hall for the YMCA Girls on the Go program in her absence. She also reminded Council members to register for the Illinois Municipal League (IML) Conference through the City Clerk's Office.

Mayor Merdian shared that she had spoken with members of the Fire Department regarding the Building and Zoning Department's code enforcement response following the recent apartment fire. She stated that the firefighters were very appreciative of the assistance provided and thanked City departments for working well together.

Mayor Merdian requested an update on Streetfest. City Clerk Sathoff reported that volunteers are still needed to assist with cleanup at the conclusion of the event. She also advised that press releases and social media promotion would increase during the coming week and that event banners and signs have been installed.

City Clerk Sathoff further reported that the mosaic mural had been delivered and is ready for painting. Sonia from Color Me Happy will conduct a training session for City staff so they can assist civic groups and community members with painting the individual mosaic tiles.

Mayor Merdian stated she is working with Attorney Zollinger, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Schmidt and City Manager Shumard about the requirements of the SIDC board members.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.
Teri Sathoff

City Clerk