

Meeting Opening

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, July 20, 2026.

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

Absent: None.

Mayor for the Day Raegan Prescott, 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

Mary Carlson, 2004 15th Avenue, addressed the Council regarding government-backed housing initiatives. She shared a newspaper article describing Invest Chattanooga, a program in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in which the community works with developers to create permanently affordable housing while streamlining the development process. Ms. Carlson also informed the Council about a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that has converted warehouses into sleeping pods for individuals experiencing homelessness.

John Pickins-Greene, 512 18th Avenue, addressed the Council regarding the Flock Safety camera contract. He stated that, under the City Code, only the Mayor and the City Manager are authorized to execute contracts on behalf of the City. Mr. Pickins-Greene stated that Chief Chavira signed the Flock contract and questioned whether the Chief had been authorized to do so. He requested information regarding whether such authorization was granted, the date it was granted, and written confirmation that the Chief did not violate the City Code by signing the contract. Mr. Pickins-Greene stated his belief that Chief Chavira acted outside his legal authority by executing the agreement.

Mr. Pickins-Greene also addressed a nuisance property located across from his residence. He stated that the property is overgrown and that several stray cats are present. He advised that he had contacted Code Enforcement and was informed that the property is scheduled for an

administrative hearing later this week. He expressed hope that raising the issue during the Council meeting would help expedite its resolution.

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. Mayor for the Day Proclamation Raegan Prescott
- D. Toys for Tots to hold a Bucket Brigade on August 1, 2026

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

Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

No items were removed from the consent agenda.

Recommended Personnel Action

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve the Mayor's Appointments of Personnel to Boards and Commissions; Seconded by Alderman Johnson. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Presentations and Awards

There were no presentations or awards.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Business Items

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to approve the **Bid for 14th Street and 16th Street Mill and Overlay to Helm Civil of Freeport, Illinois in the amount of \$298,129.90**; Seconded by Alderman Wise. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Agenda items 8B and 8C, which reference the purchase of a 2026 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 for the Building and Code Enforcement Department, were removed from the agenda. The vehicle was sold prior to the meeting.

Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to approve **Pay Request Number 3 (Final) to Blue Bird Construction in the amount of \$60,829.35 for the 3rd Street ADA Sidewalk Improvements**; 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 2026-07-16 Authorizing the Disposal of Surplus Property (2011 KME Predator Pumper)**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. 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 Public Works crews have been cleaning up damaged trees, mowing rights-of-way and parks, re-striping crosswalks, street sweeping, and inspecting park equipment. He also reported that 12 sidewalks have been completed through the sidewalk replacement program, with an additional 28 property owners signed up. Schrader reminded everyone that Sterling Street Fest would be held on Saturday from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported that the City's new Rental Inspector, Jessica Tate, began work that day. She also advised that the C & K building on East 4th Street is being demolished and that the house near Aldi is being removed to make way for the planned redevelopment project.

Superintendent of Wastewater Cory Bradshaw reported that check valves were replaced at a lift station and that staff assisted Helm with a sewer line repair. Routine maintenance continues at both the existing wastewater treatment plant and the newly acquired property.

Police Chief Pat Bartel reported that the new Illinois e-bike law became effective July 1 and that Deputy Chief Bland will be appearing on a podcast to discuss the new regulations. He advised that the two police vehicles previously approved by the Council have been ordered and are expected to be in service within six weeks. Bartel also announced that Officer Lucas Nease has returned to the Sterling Police Department as a lateral transfer after relocating back from North Carolina, bringing the department to full staffing. An orientation will be held to establish a new hiring list. He also reminded everyone that National Night Out will be hosted in Rock Falls this year.

Fire Chief David Northcutt reported that firefighter training continues at the house on 1st Avenue. He advised that the exhaust mitigation systems at both fire stations are expected to be completed within the next few days and reminded the Council that the project is being funded through a grant. Northcutt also reported that all officers and acting officers have begun an online leadership development course and that Sauk Valley Plumbing has been working at Station One to address an ongoing plumbing issue.

City Clerk Teri Sathoff reported that 138 participants attended the Chalk the Walk event. She thanked the volunteers and recognized the Sauk Valley Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs for their attendance. She also reminded the public that Sterling Street Fest will be held on Saturday.

City Attorney Tim Zollinger reminded the Council that complaints alleging selective enforcement are investigated and addressed fairly. He stated that the Building and Zoning Department works diligently to obtain voluntary compliance and, when necessary, refers unresolved violations to his office for court action. He noted that the legal process can take time to resolve.

City Manager Scott Shumard reported that he met with representatives from Union Pacific Railroad and the Illinois Commerce Commission for a pre-diagnostic meeting regarding the City's quiet zone project. An on-site meeting has also been scheduled as planning continues, and Union Pacific intends to replace all railroad crossing signals in the City by early 2027.

Shumard also reported that a meeting has been scheduled with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to discuss the pre-bidding process for the Lawrence Brothers project.

Council Reports

Aldersperson Johnson reported that Chalk the Walk was a great event. Nine of the eleven Young Creators sold out of their products. The program was a success. Johnson requested that the Police Department issue a public service announcement about who can and cannot solicit door to door. Johnson is concerned about citizens being scammed by unregistered solicitors.

Aldersperson Strabala-Bright reported that Chalk the Walk was a great event. He thanked City staff for making it happen.

Aldersperson Elston thanked the staff for volunteering for Chalk the Walk. She reminded everyone to attend the municipal band on Wednesday. Elston asked if trees that fell could be brought to Public Works; Schrader suggested contacting a tree service; they do not have a way to accept yard waste.

Aldersperson Przysucha thanked staff for Chalk the Walk. Thanked Public Works for striping the crosswalks, and he thanked the officers who handled an accident that he was involved in.

Aldersperson Wise congratulated Public Works on the success of their Sidewalk program; he hopes that more property owners will take advantage of it.

Mayor Merdian asked about the progress of the mosaic mural. City Clerk Sathoff advised there is a class at City Hall on July 30th for employees, and more group sessions will be announced after that one. Mayor Merdian reminded everyone about Hot Dog Day on August 7th. She

asked City Manager Shumard about the Fire Department IGA with Rock Falls for the training center; he advised they are waiting on additional insurance information.

Merdian reported she will be attending the Mayor's Innovation Project in Madison. She will have a meeting on Friday with the taxing bodies regarding current projects and leadership changes. She has received complaints from residents about neighbors and fireworks.

Mayor for the Day, Raegan Prescott, reported her day was "pretty cool"; she enjoyed the Police and Fire departments.

Study Session

Dustin Wolff of Meade & Hunt provided an update on the issue of dumpsters in the downtown area, noting that the discussion began approximately two years ago after the matter was brought forward by Sterling Main Street.

Wolff outlined several concerns with the current placement of dumpsters, including their cluttered and unkempt appearance, the amount of space they occupy, grease collection issues, and the obstruction of traffic. He explained that he conducted an inventory of the downtown dumpsters and identified the waste haulers servicing each location.

The primary areas of concern include Light Street, the parking lot behind Main Street, and the parking lot behind The Precinct.

Wolff reviewed several potential approaches for addressing the issue, including taking no action, requiring businesses to store refuse in enclosures on their own property (although many downtown businesses have limited space to do so), or having the City provide centralized dumpster enclosures for businesses.

Attorney Zollinger advised that the City has broad authority to regulate waste storage and collection.

Following discussion, the City Council directed Wolff to meet with downtown business owners to discuss the issue and return with a recommendation for the Council's consideration.

Adjourn

At 7:51 pm, Alderman Johnson made a motion to adjourn to closed session to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of a public body, pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act; Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

At 8:30 pm, Alderman Johnson made a motion to return to open session; seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk