

Meeting Opening

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, August 3, 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, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Communication from Visitors

Sara Sheimo, 204 15th Avenue — Ms. Sheimo addressed the Council about concerns she has with the neighbor's fence being installed on her property. They have since built a pergola on their deck that she believes is over the property line as well. Ms. Sheimo stated she has never been able to speak to a code enforcement officer regarding her property survey. She states she was advised to obtain a survey for her property. She stated she would like a formal review of how her complaint has been handled, and she would like to be provided with information on how a permit is issued.

Jeff Gale 1706 17th Ave — Mr. Gale stated that he believes the City of Sterling did not follow the City Code as it pertains to contracts. Gale asked why Chief Chavira was allowed to sign the contract and why the cameras were put in place prior to the budget being approved. Gale asked if Chief Chavira was given authority to sign the contract with Flock and, if so, when, and did the City Council vote to give permission to sign the contract. City Attorney Zollinger stated that the code provision Mr. Gale referenced has been in existence for over 100 years. The code was implemented at a time when Sterling was a Mayor/Commission form of government.

Sterling is now a manager form of government. Attorney Zollinger advised Mr. Gale that, in his opinion, the lack of the Mayor's signature does not make the contract invalid or void. If the City attempted to void the contract, the court would likely rule in favor of Flock based on the authority in the code for the Chief of Police. Sterling has purchase orders and contracts that do not need to be approved by the Mayor or Council. LPR systems are law enforcement tools. Mr.

Gale asked the Council to nullify the contract, as he believes it is not a legal contract. Gale stated that the Council did not have a clear understanding of what they were voting for.

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. Newman Central High School Homecoming Parade on September 25, 2026, at 2:00 pm

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

There was no recommended personnel action.

Presentations and Awards

There were no presentations or awards.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Business Items

Alderman Johnson made a motion to approve **Resolution 2026-08-26 Authorizing the Mayor to Execute and Submit Historic Register Nomination Applications to the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service for the Lawrence Brothers' Site and the National Manufacturing Site, collectively known as the "Project"**; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. The City Manager advised that National Register designation is a necessary step to qualify the properties for federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and the Illinois River Edge Redevelopment Zone Historic Tax Credit Program. City Manager Shumard cautioned that if the historic tax credits were to go away, the buildings would still have the designation, and it would be more difficult to demolish the properties if that was needed. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve **Waiving the Bid Process for Masonry Work to Be Completed at Sterling Public Works**; 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 the **quote from Mike Harrison, mason contractor, for \$43,400 to tuckpoint and repair the building at Public Works**; Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to approve **Change Order #9 to Hoerr Construction for Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation & Improvements in the amount of \$(55,027.75)**; Seconded by Alderman Elston. City Manager Shumard advised the reverse siphon on Griswold was not as involved as they thought it would be. 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 Pay Request #10 to Hoerr Construction in the amount of \$740,699.39 for Sanitary Sewer System Rehabilitation**; Seconded by Alderman Baker. 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 **Ordinance No. 2026-08-17, Ordinance Amending Chapter 63, adding a new Section 3, Banning Smoking in Public Parks, Recreational Trails, or Upon Bike Pathways**; Seconded by Alderman Johnson. Alderman Przysucha raised concerns about the definition of pathways in the ordinance. He asked if the definition could be clarified. Przysucha also asked if the ordinance could be amended to accommodate smokers with designated smoking areas in parks. Przysucha was concerned that by eliminating all smoking, not all constituents would be represented; smokers and non-smokers. Alderman Strabala-Bright stated he did not agree with a designated smoking area in parks. Alderman Elston and Alderman Johnson advised that school and hospital campuses are smoke-free. Attorney Zollinger advised the Council that it is a possibility to have designated smoking areas. Alderman Elston stated it would be confusing to residents since Sterling Park District parks are all non-smoking.

Alderman Wise made a motion to table Ordinance No. 2026-08-17 Amending Chapter 63, adding a new Section 3 Banning Smoking in Public Parks, Recreational Trails, or Upon Bike Pathways for the purpose of clarifying the definition of pathways to the August 17th Council meeting; Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – Joe Strabala-Bright.

Alderman Elston made a motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2026-08-18 Amending The Official Comprehensive Plan of The City of Sterling Relative to Property Owned by CGH Medical Center (Pin # 11-16-452-005; 11-16-452-006; 11-16-452-007; 11-16-452-008) (1816 & 1818 1st Avenue)**; Seconded by Alderman Wise. Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt advised that the Plan Commission received a request to rezone the property for the use of an EMS facility. Schmidt advised the current buildings have been used for temporary employees.

They are not in good shape, nor have they been rented to the public for several years.

Alderman Wise asked if the building had design standards. Schmidt advised there are standards in the code and the Building Department will oversee that portion of the project.

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

Alderman Wise made a motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2026-08-19 Amending the Zoning Map to Reclassify Property Owned by CGH Medical Center From MR-6 (Multi-Family) to CB (Community Business) With Special Use to Allow for an EMS Facility (Pin # 11-16-452-005; 11-16-452-006; 11-16-452-007,11-16-452-008) (1816 & 1818 1st Avenue)**; Seconded by Alderman Baker. 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 crews completed five additional sidewalks through the City's new sidewalk program, with thirty-one more on the waiting list. Striping operations continue throughout the City. The street sweeper completed a full pass through the city, crews made repairs to the riverfront bridge, and staff cleaned up fallen trees.

Schrader thanked the City Council for its support of Street Fest. He also thanked the public for attending, the participating businesses, vendors, sponsors, and volunteers for making the event a success. He stated that the committee intends to continue hosting Street Fest in the future.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported that battery energy storage systems and data centers were discussed at the recent Plan Commission meeting and noted that she has received several inquiries regarding battery storage systems. She also reported that the cleaning staff at the riverfront has been doing an excellent job.

Finance Director Cindy VonHolten reported that the first month of outsourcing the printing of utility bills has gone well. The change has resulted in both cost savings and increased staff efficiency. She advised that a software issue caused some customers enrolled in recurring credit card payments to be charged twice. The software company has implemented an update to prevent the issue from occurring again. Any customers who incurred overdraft fees as a result will be reimbursed by the software company.

Police Chief Pat Bartel reported that information regarding solicitors and e-bikes has been posted on both the Police Department's website and the City's website. Deputy Chief Bland will begin the 10-week Staff and Command School, attending on a two-weeks-on, two-weeks-off schedule. Hot Dog Days will be held Friday in the south parking lot. He also noted that officers, and Millie, will attend National Night Out in Rock Falls on Tuesday. Applications continue to be accepted for the Citizens Police Academy.

Fire Chief David Northcutt congratulated the Street Fest Committee on a successful event. He

reported that Engine 5 is scheduled to be sold on August 13, with pickup planned for the following week. The Cadet Program continues to move forward as insurance requirements are finalized. Northcutt also met with the owner of Cimco to discuss the company's operations and provide recommendations. He reported that the Rural Fire Board has committed \$50,000 toward the purchase of tools and swift water rescue equipment. In addition, the building exhaust mitigation system has been installed and is fully operational. Receipts will be submitted to FEMA for reimbursement.

City Clerk Teri Sathoff reported that election packets are now available for the offices of Mayor and Aldermen representing Wards One through Four. Packets may be picked up in the Clerk's Office. She reminded everyone that Movies in the Park would be held Friday at Grandon Civic Center Park, featuring Cars. Pre-movie entertainment will begin at 6:00 p.m., with the movie starting at 8:00 p.m. Sathoff also reported that City employees have begun working on the community mosaic mural tiles and that additional work sessions are planned. She will be contacting schools, businesses, daycares, and nursing homes to encourage participation, as well as hosting sessions at the Farmers Market.

Sathoff thanked everyone who attended Street Fest, stating that it was a wonderful family event. She gave special recognition to Brad Schrader for his dedication and hard work in making the event a success. She encouraged anyone with suggestions or feedback to share them with a committee member, noting that planning is already underway for next year's event.

City Manager Scott Shumard reported that the Downtown TIF Redevelopment Agreement will be included on the next City Council agenda. He also congratulated Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader on receiving the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Customer Service Award.

Council Reports

Alderman Johnson reported that he attended Street Fest and had a great time. He congratulated the Street Fest Committee on a successful event.

Johnson asked Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt to clarify the situation involving Sarah Sheimo and her neighbors. Schmidt explained that City staff has devoted a significant amount of time to the matter. In addition to responding through the Building and Zoning Department, the Police Department and Fire Department have also been involved. Schmidt stated that Ms. Sheimo is not receiving the answers she wants to hear and has been advised that the matter is civil in nature and beyond the authority of the Building and Zoning Department to resolve.

Johnson also asked City Manager Scott Shumard for an update on Phase II of Riverfront Park. Shumard reported that Strand Associates is separating Phase II into two separate projects to allow the City the opportunity to pursue grant funding for the parking area.

Alderman Elston congratulated Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader on receiving the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Customer Service Award. She also thanked Schrader and the Street Fest Committee for organizing a successful event. Elston reminded everyone that the final Municipal Band performance of the season would be held on Wednesday and thanked the department heads for providing project update memorandums to the Council.

Alderman Przysucha agreed that Street Fest was a great success. He commented that he believes the City's ordinances are outdated and should be reviewed. Przysucha also asked Schrader about the possibility of reconstructing Avenue C and Avenue I.

Schrader responded that Avenue C is not currently among the City's highest priorities. Avenue I had previously been at the top of the list until issues arose with the Avenue G Bridge. He explained that repairs to the bridge are estimated to cost more than \$1 million. To avoid depleting the road fund, the City plans to divide the Avenue G Bridge project over two years. As a result, the Avenue I reconstruction has been delayed until 2027, which also postpones other planned road projects.

Alderman Wise stated that the capital fund has been significantly depleted and that it will take several years to rebuild it to a level sufficient to undertake another major road project. He thanked all departments for the reports provided to the Council.

Wise also expressed his appreciation to Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt for her dedication and hard work. He noted that the Building and Zoning Department often receives more criticism than appreciation and that it can be a thankless job. Wise said the department's report demonstrated the amount of work accomplished by its small staff and stated that it is unfair to judge the department solely by any perceived mistakes or shortcomings. He commended Schmidt for the work she does and encouraged her to continue.

Mayor Merdian echoed the Council's comments regarding Street Fest, describing it as an outstanding success. She said the location was excellent, the bands were outstanding, and everyone appeared to have had a great time.

Mayor Merdian also reported that she attended the 20th anniversary celebration of the Walmart Distribution Center, where she met with Congressman Sorensen.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:46.
Teri Sathoff

City Clerk