



Monday, February 9, 2026
City of Sterling Council Meeting at 3:30 PM

CITY OF STERLING COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Council Chambers - First Floor

212 Third Avenue

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89251068027>

1. Meeting Opening

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call

2. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Minutes

3. Business Items

- A. Liquor License Request at 311 1st Avenue The Alibi
- B. Liquor License Request Dair Mart Plus Banquet Facility

4. Adjourn

The City of Sterling in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requests that persons with disabilities who require certain accommodations to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting or have questions about the accessibility of this meeting or facilities, contact the ADA Coordinator at (815) 632-6630 to allow the City of Sterling to make reasonable accommodations for these persons.

A Tobacco Hearing was held on November 24, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., regarding the unlawful sale of tobacco to a minor at Liquor and Wine 2930 East Lincolnway on October 30, 2025.

Present: Mayor Diana Merdian, Police Chief Pat Bartel, Alderman Retha Elston, Alderman Aida Baker, City Attorney Tim Zollinger, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff.

Also present: Business owner Kalpesh Patel and employee Larry Woodyatt.

At 2:05 p.m., Mayor Merdian invited employee Larry Woodyatt into the hearing. Mr. Woodyatt was the employee who sold tobacco to the minor. Attorney Zollinger gave a brief explanation of how the hearing would proceed. Chief Bartel will review the details of the incident. Then the Mayor and the Aldermen will have an opportunity to ask additional questions to better understand what happened and determine the proper action. Afterward, the owner and employee will have an opportunity to confirm or deny the allegations.

Chief Bartel explained the details of the incident that occurred on October 30, 2025. He stated employee Larry Woodyatt violated city code by selling a tobacco product to a minor. He stated a female minor was instructed by his officer(s) to enter the establishment and attempt to purchase a tobacco product. The minor was instructed to provide identification upon request and not to lie if asked her age. Chief Bartel noted Woodyatt did ask the minor for identification, scanned it, and then completed the transaction.

Mayor Merdian reviewed the City file before the meeting and noted there was one violation in 2024 for this business.

Alderman Elston made a motion to impose a letter of reprimand and a \$100 fine to Liquor and Win located 2930 East Lincolnway Sterling, IL. for the violation of unlawful sale of tobacco to a minor. Alderman Baker seconded the motion. Voting – Ayes: Alderman Elston, Alderman Baker, and Mayor Merdian. Nays: None. Motion Carried.

Kalpesh Patel and employee Larry Woodyatt returned to the hearing and were issued a letter of reprimand and the fine by Chief Bartel.

With nothing further to discuss, the Tobacco Hearing closed at 2:26 p.m.

Kalpesh Patel and employee Larry Woodyatt left the hearing, and the Commission proceeded with the Liquor Commission meeting.

Mayor Merdian wanted to discuss the current liquor licenses that have been issued and are not in use. Azul Cantina was issued a liquor license in January of 2025, and they have not opened for business yet. Building and Zoning Superintendent Amanda Schmidt advised the commission that

her department has had issues with the contractor obtaining a building permit and showing up for inspections. After a discussion, it was decided to send a letter to the owner asking what their timeline is. Mayor Merdian wanted to make sure the City is being consistent with businesses that obtain a liquor license and do not utilize it promptly. The liquor license at the Artisan Oven was discussed; the owner is waiting on a pizza oven to be shipped, and the first one arrived damaged. Their timeline is to open as soon as that is received and opened. The Mercantile has been closed for approximately 4 weeks. They are looking at moving locations.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Teri Sathoff
City Clerk

The Alibi

A Prohibition-Era Inspired Bar & Lounge

Owner / Founder: Megan Wilson (Sole Proprietor)

Location: 311 1st Ave.

Historic Building – Built 1882

Renovation Budget: \$15,000 (self-funded)

Executive Summary

The Alibi is a 1920s-themed speakeasy-style bar and lounge located in the heart of Sterling, Illinois. Housed inside a historic 1882 building, the establishment will celebrate Sterling's colorful past during the Prohibition era, when stories of Al Capone's influence and bootlegging activity reached deep into northern Illinois. The concept blends historical storytelling, craft cocktails, and light dining in a vintage-inspired setting that invites guests to step back in time. The Alibi is owned and founded by Megan Wilson as a sole proprietorship, self-funded with a focused renovation budget and a clear vision for long-term community impact.

Business Concept & Theme

The Alibi offers an immersive experience inspired by the 1920s—complete with jazz music, dim lighting, vintage décor, and cocktails crafted from original Prohibition-era recipes. Staff will wear period attire, and the bar will host occasional themed events and small live music performances. The concept honors the folklore of Sterling's past, when Al Capone's network reportedly passed through the Sauk Valley region, using small towns like Sterling as distribution points for bootleg liquor. The Alibi will position itself as a modern-day speakeasy where every drink, detail, and story nods to that hidden history.

Location & Historic Restoration

Located at 311 1st Ave., The Alibi occupies a building constructed in 1882—an architectural gem that embodies the rich industrial history of Sterling. The \$15,000 renovation, funded by Megan Wilson, will focus on preserving the building's original charm while adding period-style fixtures, vintage signage, and furnishings reminiscent of a 1920s speakeasy. The restoration will prioritize exposed brick, wood accents, and historically inspired design elements, creating a space that feels both timeless and authentic.

Menu & Experience

The menu at The Alibi will feature light appetizers and pizzas designed to pair well with crafted cocktails and to encourage guests to linger and socialize. Signature offerings will include classics like Old Fashioneds, Bee's Knees, Sidecars, and other 1920s-era drinks, alongside a curated selection of modern favorites. The overall experience will balance sophistication and nostalgia, providing a warm, welcoming escape from the modern world.

where guests can relax, celebrate, and connect.

Entertainment & Atmosphere

Music and ambiance will play central roles at The Alibi. Occasional live jazz and blues nights will bring the room to life, creating an intimate and lively setting reminiscent of Chicago's Prohibition-era lounges. The décor will include Edison lighting, antique-inspired furniture, framed historical photos, and subtle references to Sterling's local legends and rumored Capone connections. Together, these elements will create a setting that feels like a well-kept secret—inviting guests to make The Alibi their go-to hideaway.

Market Overview

Sterling and the surrounding Sauk Valley region offer a growing market for distinctive nightlife and entertainment experiences. With limited themed venues in the area, The Alibi will stand out as a destination for both locals and visitors seeking a unique, history-rich atmosphere. The primary customer base will include adults aged 25–60 who value quality, ambiance, and storytelling in their nightlife choices. Secondary markets include tourists, business travelers, and regional visitors exploring the downtown district.

Community Revitalization & Tourism Impact

The Alibi will contribute directly to downtown Sterling's economic and cultural revitalization. By restoring and activating a historic 1882 building, the project supports the city's goals of preserving local heritage and increasing foot traffic in the downtown district. The bar will collaborate with neighboring businesses, local musicians, and community organizations to help establish downtown Sterling as a vibrant, historic destination. As word spreads, The Alibi has the potential to become a must-visit stop for travelers interested in Prohibition history and small-town Midwestern charm.

Operations & Staffing

The Alibi will open with a core team of three staff members, led by owner and founder Megan Wilson. Staffing will include a lead bartender, a kitchen attendant focused on appetizers and pizza, and an additional bartender or server as needed. Megan will oversee daily operations, vendor relationships, scheduling, and quality control. Occasional live performers will be booked for special events and themed evenings. The focus will remain on warm hospitality, consistency, and a memorable guest experience.

Marketing & Brand Storytelling

Marketing efforts for The Alibi will highlight its speakeasy theme, Prohibition-era inspiration, and Sterling's colorful history. Social media campaigns will use storytelling, vintage-style graphics, and historical trivia to build intrigue. Collaborations with local historical societies, tourism boards, and community events will help deepen its roots in the community. The brand identity will revolve around secrecy, discovery, and nostalgia—inviting guests to 'find their alibi' in downtown Sterling. Branded merchandise such as glassware, apparel, and souvenir

'moonshine' jars will reinforce the experience.

Financial Overview

The Alibi is self-funded by Megan Wilson as a sole proprietor, with an initial renovation and setup budget of \$15,000. These funds will be allocated toward building improvements, décor, furniture, bar equipment, kitchen essentials, and initial licensing and permits. Operating expenses will be controlled through a lean staff model and a focused menu. Revenue will be generated through cocktail and beverage sales, food sales, and occasional private events. The business aims to achieve stable cash flow and profitability within the first year of operations.

Vision & Future Growth

Megan Wilson's vision for The Alibi extends beyond opening night. In the long term, The Alibi aspires to host regular themed events, historical talks, and collaborative evenings with local artists and businesses. There is potential to develop historical walking tours or Prohibition-themed experiences that begin or end at The Alibi. As the brand grows, it may inspire additional locations or partnerships in other historically rich Illinois communities—all rooted in the same respect for storytelling, history, and hospitality.