

### **Meeting Opening**

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 PM on Monday, February 2, 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, Finance Director Cindy Von Holten, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Communication from Visitors**

There was no public comment.

### **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. R2026-02-03 for Motor Fuel Tax expenditures in the amount of \$270,000.
- D. IDOT Maintenance Engineering Agreement

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

### **Items Removed from the Consent Agenda**

There were no items removed from the consent agenda.

### **Recommended Personnel Action**

There was no recommended personnel action.

### **Presentations and Awards**

Sterling Main Street Director Janna Groharing, Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader,

City Clerk Teri Sathoff, and Sauk Valley Bank Sterling Market President Bailey Schneiderbauer requested City Council support for a new community event, Sterling Street Fest. The event is scheduled for July 25 from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on 3rd Street at Light Street in downtown Sterling.

The group has been working to develop a family-friendly event that will celebrate America 250 and is intended to become an annual tradition. Sterling Street Fest will feature live bands, food, entertainment, and vendors, and will be free to the public. Funding for the event will be provided through sponsorships. The group requested the use of event fund monies to cover initial fees and deposits, with the intent to replenish the event fund as sponsorship revenues are received. It was the consensus of the Council to allow the group to move ahead with this project.

### **Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

### **Business Items**

Alderman Wise made a motion to **approve Pay Request #7 to Sjostrom & Sons in the Amount of \$627,881.00 For the Riverfront Park Improvements - Phase I**; Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Wise made a motion to **approve Pay Request #13 to Gorman and Company in the amount of \$17,611.36**; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to **approve Ordinance 2026-02-02 Amending Chapter 42, Article II, Section 42-274 To Authorize the Chief of the Fire Department to Appoint the Deputy Chief**; Seconded by Alderman Elston. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Johnson made a motion to **approve Ordinance 2026-02-03 Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Property**; 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 Waive the Bid Process for the purchase of a 2025 Chevy Tahoe**; Seconded by Alderman Johnson. Chief Bartel stated this vehicle will replace the one that was damaged beyond repair in an accident on Christmas Day. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Przysucha made a motion to **approve Accept the acceptance of the quote from Karl Chevrolet for a 2025 Chevrolet Tahoe Police Pursuit Vehicle in the amount of \$52,464.20;** Seconded by Alderman Baker. 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 Upfitting of the 2025 Chevy Tahoe;** Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Strabala-Bright made a motion to **accept the Quote from Guardian Fleet Safety in the amount of \$24,605.53 for upfitting the 2025 Chevy Tahoe;** Seconded by Alderman Elston. 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 the Installation of the batten bar on the National Roof;** Seconded by Alderman Przysucha. Voting: Ayes – Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Aida Baker, Allen Przysucha, Jim Wise. Nays – None.

Alderman Wise made a motion to **approve Waiving the Bid Process for the Installation of the batten bar on the National Roof;** Seconded by Alderman Strabala-Bright. 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 crews continue to work on cold patching, trimming trees and maintaining equipment.

Finance Director Cindy VonHolten reported that the HR portal is available. If the council would like to opt into the paperless checks, it will save the City money in postage and paper.

Chief Pat Bartel reported the drone training was scheduled to begin this week. All the trainers are ill, so training will start next week. The police department is in need of an annex building. Information on that will be forwarded to the Council in the coming week. There was a total of 23,660 calls for the year 2025. This is an increase over the past few years.

Chief Northcutt reported that a few of the operational guidelines with Lexipol have been implemented. On Wednesday, the Fire Police Commission will authorize the hire of 2 new firefighters. The new hires will start the academy at the end of February. This will bring the department to full staffing.

City Clerk Teri Sathoff reported the next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, February 17th. The 16th is a holiday, and the offices will be closed. The statements of economic interests have

been sent out. Please fill them out and send them in ASAP.

City Attorney Zollinger reported that one of the worst property maintenance cases the city has had to deal with went to court last week. The occupant refused to follow four court orders to vacate the property. The court assessed a \$17,000 fine to the occupants for refusing to leave. The occupants have vacated the property, and the owner has been ordered to demolish the property.

City Manager Scott Shumard reported he reached out to US Bank in reference to the property on 4th Avenue. The contact person he was dealing with is no longer with US Bank, so he will be starting over with a new contact. The quiet zone proposal was received. It is estimated to cost \$78,000 for engineering and \$278,000 for construction. This will be brought to the Council at the next meeting. IDNR has given historic preservation designation to the Lawrence Brothers Building, which will assist in getting the asbestos abated. The Safe Streets for All Grant is almost finalized; we are waiting for one final item from the USDOT.

### **Council Reports**

Aldersperson Przysucha reported that the west side of 6th Avenue on Lynn Blvd had developed a very large pothole, Schrader advised it will be addressed in the morning.

Mayor Merdian reported there is a Riverfront meeting on Thursday. She and the Chiefs met with a group that would like to produce a movie in the City, and they are working on funding.

### **Study Session**

#### **City Manager Shumard reviewed the following budgets.**

Band – The levy was raised by \$3,000, providing for a slight increase. Wages are down overall. The amended expenses are up due to percussion equipment that needed to be replaced. Allen Lee stated this is the 98th year for the band. Attendance has been up about 15%.

Civil Defense – Each municipality was authorized to create a Civil Defense fund in the 1950s. This fund has a separate tax levy and takes in approximately \$25,000 a year from the replacement tax and property tax. The money in this fund is used for storm siren maintenance. The revenues are decreasing due to the replacement tax.

2021A CGH Bonds - this operates as an in-and-out fund. CGH sends the City the funds required to make the annual payment.

2021B CGH Bonds - this operates as an in-and-out fund. CGH sends the City the funds required to make the annual payment.

2022A Bonds - This is an in-and-out fund; \$22,050,000 in bonds were issued in 2022. The

proceeds go into the general funds and are then transferred to the City's local police and fire pension fund, and then transferred to the downstate consolidated investment fund.

2022B Bonds - This is an in-and-out fund; \$7,465,000 in bonds were issued in 2022, and the proceeds are split between capital and stormwater project funds.

Health Insurance - The employer contribution is not increasing. FY23-24 was the worst year for claims. The claims are down significantly for FY 25–26, so the renewal came in flat. The rates for employees will not change. This is the fourth time in six years that premiums have not been increased.

Police Pension - The funding ratio for this fund is 98.98%, which is up from 94% last year.

Fire Pension - the funding ratio for this fund is 84.02%, which is up from 83.91% last year.

Trust Committee - this fund holds funds for a future veteran's monument or display. There is a fund balance is \$1,296. The plan is to utilize this in Phase 2 Riverfront Development.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk