

Mayor Diana Merdian called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, September 5, 2023. Roll call. Present: Alderperson Retha Elston, Joe Strabala-Bright, Josh Johnson, Joseph Martin, Kaitlyn Ekquist and Jim Wise. Absent: None.

Also attending were City Attorney Tim Zollinger, City Manager Scott Shumard, Deputy Police Chief E. Pat Bartel, Fire Chief Michael Dettman, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt (Zoom), Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader, Superintendent of Waste Water Cory Bradshaw and City Clerk Teri Sathoff.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Gayle Evans of 23102 Prophet Road Rock Falls, addressed the Council with questions about overdue sewer billing. Ms. Evans is the landlord of property in the City of Sterling, she received a notice that the water would be shut off at her rental property if the sewer bill was not paid. Evans wanted to know who was responsible for collecting the money from the tenant. City Manager Shumard informed Evans that City ordinance dictates the sewer bill stays with the property and the owner would be responsible for the bill. Attorney Zollinger stated when the property owner pays the bill they can pursue reimbursement from the tenant through civil channels. Evans inquired why the water was not shut off prior to this, Shumard advised the City is limited to how many shut offs can be done with Illinois American Water.

Shirley Sharp of Sterling, addressed the Council with concerns about the public being able to hear the Council and staff. Sharp stated the Council tends to speak at a volume that only they can hear. City Manager Shumard stated a speaker system has been ordered and some of the equipment is on back order and once the equipment arrives it will be installed.

Alderperson Elston made a motion to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Bills and Payroll
- C. Sterling High School Homecoming Parade on October 6, 2023
- D. Newman Central High School Homecoming Parade on September 29, 2023
- E. Proclamation Declaring September 10th through September 16th, 2023 as Chamber of Commerce Week.
- F. Proclamation Declaring September as Attendance Awareness Month
- G. Pay Request #1 for Resurfacing Various Streets to Martin and Company Excavating in the amount of \$57,832.78
- H. Refer to the Plan Commission the Vacation of a Portion of West 5th Street Right of Way
- I. Refer to Plan Commission a Request for a Special Use from Locust Street Solar, LLC for a Solar Farm Located at Locust Street and Science Ridge Road

Seconded by Alderperson Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Alderperson Elston, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Martin, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mayor Merdian presented Kris Noble, Executive Director of the Sauk Valley Chamber of Commerce with the Proclamation Declaring September 10th through September 16th, 2023 as Chamber of Commerce Week.

Mayor Merdian presented Anji Garza (Director of Professional Development and Student Services) and Nellie Burke (Attendance Support for Whiteside County) from the Regional Office of Education with the proclamation declaring September as Attendance Awareness Month.

Alderperson Ekquist made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-09-19 establishing and designating the Northland Mall Business District Eligibility Study and Business District Plan and approving the Northland Mall Business District in the City of Sterling, Whiteside County, Illinois; Seconded by Alderperson Johnson. Resident Shirley Sharp questioned the increase in the sales tax, City Manager Shumard explained this is a way for the property owner to generate revenue to reinvest into the property. City Manager Shumard explained the purpose of a Business District to Ms. Sharp. Alderperson Strabala-Bright stated this is an alternative to seeing a large commercial section of the City become a blighted property, he stated this may not be a perfect answer but it is the best solution to make sure the Mall is sustainable. Alderperson Johnson stated this is a way for the citizens to reinvest in the community, if these businesses close up citizens will have to drive a greater distance for these goods. Mayor Merdian stated this will bring neighboring community members to our city to shop as well. Voting: Ayes – Alderperson Elston, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Martin, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Alderperson Ekquist made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-09-20 imposing Business District taxes within the Northland Mall Business District; Seconded by Alderperson Strabala-Bright. Voting: Ayes – Alderperson Elston, Strabala-Bright, Johnson, Martin, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Deputy Chief Bartel Reported Sergeant Shane Bland's shift held the Curls with Cops event, there was not a lot of participation but it is a tough work out. The next community event is Trunk or Treat on October 25th from 4pm to 6pm. The two new recruits are doing well in the academy they are currently in the top five.

Chief Dettman reported engine 5 is back in service, tower 4 needs a new fuel tank and that has been ordered. All Council members are invited to ride in the parade.

Superintendent of Waste Water Cory Bradshaw reported they have continued to clean wet wells and make minor repairs and conduct normal maintenance.

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader reported the concrete and dirt work are done at Tori Pines, the gravel and paving will be done next. The pavilion has been started at Platt Park, it may take a bit longer to complete as it came with minimal instructions. Alderperson Wise asked about the status of North Locust, Schrader stated he will look into it.

Finance Director Cindy Von Holten reminded the Council there was a memo sent out about per diems and receipts for the IML conference, if there are any questions on this please contact her. Alderperson Wise asked about the status of the 2022-2023 audit. Von Holten stated everything has been submitted and we are currently waiting on the report.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt reported the structure at 612 West 3rd Street has been removed. The demo has started at 406-408 East 3rd Street, the contractor stated he will be done by Friday, once that is done and the rubble is removed the fence can be moved back and the lane opened.

Schmidt stated that a while back Alderperson Strabala-Bright coined the term “corridor of sadness” she stated she is pleased with the growth and changes that have been made to the area. Schmidt added that Mallard on West 4th Street has done a lot to the property they are developing. They have added a detention pond even though it was not required.

Schmidt stated there are currently several property maintenance cases in court with Attorney Zollinger. These are cases that have gone beyond tickets and are still in violation, hopefully we can get some cleanup orders, demo orders or acquisition of the properties.

Schmidt reported progress has been made on the CDAP grant, the contractor has the paper work and is filling that out, once it is returned the property owner will fill out their portion of the paperwork and the projects will be able to commence.

Alderperson Wise asked about the trailer park on the west end of the City, since it recently sold does that open the door to review the code compliance there. Schmidt stated that at the very least it will open the doors for communication and a relationship with the new owner, something that the City did not have with the previous owner. Wise asked if there has been any news from the Stronger Communities Grant, Schmidt stated she has not heard anything yet from that grant or the other grant that has been applied for.

Alderman Martin asked if the building a 304 4th Avenue has been condemned and if that property would be coming down as well. Shumard stated the owners will have to discuss this with their insurance companies.

City Clerk Sathoff reminded everyone that IML is the 21st thru the 23rd of September. She reported there has been a delay in the food truck ordinance, staff would like to meet with the Health Department to discuss their regulations, the City does not want to contradict anything the health department requires.

Alderman Johnson asked City Clerk Sathoff if there could be a discussion on allowing non-highway vehicles on the City of Sterling Streets. Sathoff stated this is something that could be discussed with the Police Department, Deputy Chief Mohr had done a study on this, she will get the results and send them to the Council. Alderperson Elston asked if they would have to follow the rules of the road, there are too many instances with the gas-powered bicycles now. Mayor Merdian stated this is something that would warrant a study session.

City Manager Shumard reported the mini pitch soccer park at Wallace Park will be delivered this week and installation completed by the 15th of September. Mayor Merdian asked about the security system for the park, we are currently waiting on the electric set up with Com-Ed.

Alderperson Martin complimented Deputy Chief Bartel and Chief Dettman, Bartel spoke at the Rotary and Dettman spoke at the Optimist Club. Alderman Martin stated the feedback he received was that it was apparent that they are committed to the community and are good at what they do. Martin also wished Mayor Merdian a happy birthday.

Alderperson Johnson stated WACC held the third PC for people event and they have given away a total of 800 computers in the three events. There are approximately twenty desk top computers still available if you know someone in need please have them call WACC.

Alderperson Bright stated he has a question about a property on 5th Avenue, he will approach staff with it after the meeting.

Alderperson Elston stated there are several owner-occupied properties that continue to receive nuisance tickets, they are sent to the administrative hearings and there seems to be no corrective actions. Elston asked if there is something more that can be done to these residents in addition to the administrative hearings. Attorney Zollinger stated the residence on 17th Avenue is currently in court. Superintendent of Building and Zoning Schmidt sends the more troublesome properties to the attorney and they get a court order for compliance. Alderperson Wise asked if having a two court sessions per month or if we separate from Rock Falls. Attorney Zollinger stated two sessions would not help with the current issues.

Aldersperson Wise asked Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader about the work being done on 6th Avenue, they are grinding more than just the cut area. Schrader stated that since the road is new, IAWC chose to go to center seam instead of just patching the trench.

Mayor Merdian congratulated Aldersperson Johnson on his upcoming wedding. Mayor Merdian thanked Sgt. Bland and his shift for the Curls with Cops workout, she praised the Police Department for all of the community events they put on.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Teri Sathoff

City Clerk