

Mayor Lee called the Sterling City Council to order at 6:30 pm on Tuesday September 7, 2021. Roll call. Present: Mayor Lee, Aldermen Retha Elston, Josh Johnson, Joe Martin, Christine Wilen, Kaitlyn Ekquist and Jim Wise. Absent: None.

Also attending were City Attorney Tim Zollinger, City Manager Scott Shumard, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt (Zoom), Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader, Interim Fire Chief Michael Dettman, Police Chief Alex Chavira, and City Clerk Teri Sathoff.

Mayor Lee opened the floor to public comments, Tom Brackemeyer, 1512 5th Avenue Sterling, thanked the City Council for the work that was done to replace the sidewalk near Sterling High School.

Britney Stanley, 203 17th Avenue Sterling, requested the City Council's assistance in obtaining a permit to add a greenhouse to her property on 17th Avenue. Stanley stated that she has been denied a permit from Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt. Stanley stated she was not given a reason for the denial nor has she been receiving return phone calls.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt informed the Council that she has been in contact with Ms. Stanley several times. Stanley requested a permit in July and at that time Schmidt advised Stanley she would need to take care of the outstanding property maintenance issues she had and if she was able to maintain her property for one month they would revisit the status of the greenhouse permit. Schmidt stated that her department has continued to receive complaints. Stanley called the office several times in that one-month period, sometimes multiple times a day. Alderman Elston and Alderman Ekquist both stated that they have received complaints on property maintenance at this residence. Mayor Lee agreed with Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt, the property needs to be maintained before a permit can be issued. Mayor Lee asked if there was a list of items that need to be fixed, Schmidt stated that the Code Enforcement officers have sent letters.

Mayor Lee stated that since this involves multiple departments he would like City Manager Shumard, Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt, Chief Chavira and Chief Dettman to meet and discuss it and have City Manager report the findings back to the City Council.

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. Pay Request to Strand Associates Inc. for the 2020 Stormwater Projects in the amount of \$31,382.72.
- D. Newman Central High School Homecoming Parade on September 24, 2021.

- E. Sterling High School Homecoming Parade on October 1, 2021.
- F. Proclamation Declaring September 12th through September 18th, 2021 as Chamber of Commerce Week.
- G. Knights of Columbus #662 to hold a bucket brigade on 9/11/2021.
- H. Sauk Valley Marine Corps League to hold a bucket brigade on 9/25/2021.
- I. PADS Homeless Shelter to hold a bucket brigade 10/9/2021.

Alderman Wilen inquired about the payment to Bryan Cave, Wilen stated she was under the impression that the City was done paying him. City Manager Shumard stated the City was done paying him until the eastern training building was removed from the site remediation program. This required legal counsel from him to complete this.

Motion seconded by Alderman Ekquist. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Elston, Martin, Wilen, Johnson, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mayor Lee read the Proclamation declaring September 12th through September 18th, 2021 as Chamber of Commerce Week. Kris Noble from the Sauk Valley Chamber of Commerce was presented with the proclamation.

Alderman Ekquist made a motion to Approve Ordinance No. 2021-09-21 Authorizing the Lincoln Highway Business District; seconded by Alderman Johnson. Alderman Wise asked if the Business Development District was inside the TIF District, City Manager Shumard stated that this applies to sales tax only and all TIF rules apply. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Elston, Martin, Wilen, Johnson, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Wise made a motion to Approve Ordinance 2021-09-22 Authorizing Economic Development Grants to a Defined Group of Holders of Liquor Licenses; seconded by Alderman Wilen. Mayor Lee stated that the businesses that followed both sets of mitigations will receive 50% of their license fee back, the businesses that followed the first set of mitigations will receive 25% of their license fee back. Mayor Lee advised the Council that businesses pay different permit fees, this is the reason the amounts are different. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Elston, Martin, Wilen, Johnson, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Elston made a motion to Waive Bid Process and Award Bid to Sterling Environmental for Underground Storage Tank Removal at the Stanley National Training Building; seconded by Alderman Wise. City Manager Shumard stated the City could have sought the bids, however, Sterling Environmental is local and the least expensive option. Alderman Wilen asked City Manager Shumard if there was a way to make Stanley National responsible for this, Shumard stated no. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Elston, Martin, Wilen, Johnson, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Alderman Elston made a motion to authorize the City Manager to enter into an agreement with Willett Hofmann and Associates to complete a Wastewater Facility Plan for the City; seconded by Alderman Martin. Superintendent of the Waste Water, Scott Howard, stated that the EPA requires a facility plan to be in place five years prior to the start of the project. Howard stated that Willett Hofmann has done a good job with the current plant and he recommends using them for the new plant. Alderman Wise asked if this would need to be bid out, City Manager Shumard stated that for an engineering agreement that is not necessary as long as there is an existing satisfactory relationship with the engineering firm. Alderman Wise asked if the City of Rock Falls Waste Water Plant was built so the two cities could combine their plants. City Manager Shumard stated that he was part of the discussion concerning that in the early 2000's, for the City of Sterling to go across the river would be expensive and challenging, the Rock Falls plant was built with expansion in mind but not to the City of Sterling. Shumard stated that he believes having the low or no interest loan and the savings that has been put back by the City of Sterling the residents should see little to no rate increase. Howard stated that the current permit expires in three years and the next permit can not be acquired without a facility plan. Shumard stated that the current plant was built in 1981 and it does not have the ability to treat for phosphorous. Alderman Martin asked if Willett Hofmann was looking to future requirements that the State will have, Howard advised that yes, they will take all that into consideration. Voting: Ayes – Aldermen Elston, Martin, Wilen, Johnson, Ekquist and Wise. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Police Chief Chavira reported that the Pedal with the Police was a success, he thanked the Optimist Club for cooking and everyone that assisted. There were approximately 75 people that attended. Chief Chavira stated that two officers have been hired and they will be reporting to the Police Training Institute on Sunday, September 12, 2021.

Interim Fire Chief Dettman reported that the two new firefighters graduated, and they are now on shift.

Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader reported that 4th and 5th Avenues are on schedule and 1st Avenue is moving along, NICOR is putting in a basin for a gas main. The playground equipment has been completed at Lincoln Park; we are waiting for a part for the equipment at Platt Park.

Finance Director Cindy Von Holten reported that utility bill penalties have been suspended due to COVID. In November of 2020, the penalties on the current balance were reinstated however the monthly service charge of 1.5% on unpaid balances has not been put back into place. VonHolten stated that the delinquent accounts are down. Mayor Lee suggested that City Manager Shumard and VonHolten discuss the fees and come back to the Council with a recommendation.

City Clerk Sathoff reported that she has investigated several software companies to digitize the documents in the Clerk's office as well as the rest of the City Departments. Sathoff recommends

going with the Laserfische software. The software will save time searching for documents as well as cutting down on the use of paper.

Clerk Sathoff reminded all Council members to do their NIMS training and return the certificates to her.

Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt advised the Council that there is a current bid for the demolition of the structure at 602 West 7th Street. She also stated, 711 Avenue C has been demolished and the lot has been seeded, the neighbors may be interested in purchasing the lot.

Attorney Zollinger reported that Firefighters and Police Officers that are certified first responders will need to comply with the Governors mandate of vaccination or testing. Attorney Zollinger also reported that we are currently waiting for the census block data, when that information is available the Council will be notified about the needs for redistricting.

City Manager Shumard reported that the wastewater building on the riverfront is near completion, the pedestrian bridge is at Public Works and the bid opening for installation will be on September 21, 2021.

City Manager Shumard reported that he has read municipalities are looking into pension bonds, this is something that the City may be interested in, it would save money each year.

City Manager Shumard reported that he and Mayor Lee discussed developing a formal committee with regular meetings with Staff, Council, and business representation. This committee would prioritize the list of projects. Shumard would like to have a study session at the next Council meeting to develop a committee for this as well as a committee for the ARPA Money that needs to be spent by December 31, 2026.

City Manager Shumard stated that Attorney Zollinger is currently working on the agreement with Surf Air Broad Band. Sterling would become a Fiber Backbone.

Shumard reminded the Council that there will be a September 11, memorial at Grandon Civic Center.

Alderman Martin thanked the Police Department for the Pedal with the Police.

Alderman Johnson thanked City Manager Shumard and Finance Director Von Holten for talking to him about bonds, he stated he learned a lot.

Alderman Wilen questioned who had taken care of the weeds at the WACC house, Superintendent of Public Works Brad Schrader stated that Code Enforcement has been receiving

complaints about the condition of the yard so crews from Public Works graded the lot to assist them in controlling the growth of weeds. Alderman Johnson stated that the dirt should not have been removed and would like to have it returned to use for fill.

Alderman Elston again thanked Public Works the new playground equipment at Lincoln Park, she stated that the kids are enjoying it.

Alderman Wise asked the Mayor if the City could investigate USDA Bonds. Wise asked Superintendent of Building and Zoning Amanda Schmidt if the house at 1802 East 3rd Street is on the list for demolition. Schmidt stated that it has been slated for demolition, we are currently waiting on Com-Ed to pull the electrical meter. Elston inquired if the owners of the residence would be able to have the opportunity to remove their property, Attorney Zollinger stated that the owners have been given the opportunity to remove their items and they have not responded.

Alderman Wise thanked Public Works for the work that was done to upgrade the parks. Wise stated that the Public Works crews is an outstanding group of workers and they worked consistently as a team; Wise would like to see a similar playground in a park on the west side of the City.

Mayor Lee stated that he and the City Manager meet once a month GSDC, The Chamber and Main Street, this month housing was discussed. Mayor Lee advised the Council that 91% of the housing in Whiteside County is occupied. Landlords in the area have long wait lists. Lee spoke to Neil Anderson's staff about addressing this issue. Childcare is also an issue, finding affordable quality care is difficult.

Mayor Lee stated that there will be a ceremony at Grandon commemorating the memory of September 11th, this is the 20-year anniversary of the attacks.

Mayor Lee also stated that at the next Council meeting there will be a Resolution adopting the riverfront as a priority, Lee reminded the Council that the riverfront is not the only priority of the City, however it is a priority, and we need to have a tentative timeline. The riverfront has come a long way and a great deal of progress has been made.

Mayor Lee extended his congratulations to Administrative Assistant to the Mayor and City Manager, Deb Dillow and Superintendent of Public Works, Brad Schrader as they both have welcomed grandchildren into the world.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01pm.

Teri Sathoff
City Clerk