

CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026  
IN CITY HALL

1. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Mayor Taylor led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk, gave the Invocation.
3. Council Members present at roll call: Robert Mijac, Michael V. Radtke, Jr., Maria G. Schmidt, Liz Sierawski, Michael C. Taylor, Henry Yanez, Barbara A. Ziarko.

Also Present: Mark Vanderpool, City Manager; Marc D. Kaszubski, City Attorney; Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk; Carol Sobosky, Recording Secretary.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**  
Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Schmidt, **RESOLVED**, to approve the agenda as presented.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0).

5. **REPORT FROM CITY MANAGER**  
Mr. Vanderpool stated the Sterling Heights Ethnic Community Committee invites the community to join them for their second annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Walk on Monday, January 19, 2026 starting at 10 a.m. at City Hall. He explained the event will feature opening remarks from guest speaker Bishop Williams, a reading from poet Zig Zag Claybourne, light refreshments, and a short one mile walk through the community, starting and ending at

City Hall. He noted it was blustery and cold last year, so they shortened the walk a little, and they will do the same this year if the weather is cold. He encouraged everyone to attend. Mr. Vanderpool reminded that the City Offices will be closed on January 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Vanderpool also announced that the Sterling Heights Public Library has launched their first-ever Little Free Sled Library, adding that it has received media coverage in the news. For those who would like to sled on the hill at Delia Park, the Sled Library will be located near the pavilion in the park's north parking lot. There are thirty sleds that can be checked out for free to residents. He commented that the remainder of this week will be too warm for sledding, but he understands the weekend of January 16<sup>th</sup>, a cold front is anticipated, and hopefully there will be some snow accompanying that cold so that sledding will be possible. Mr. Vanderpool reminded that the City's ice rink is open Mondays through Thursdays from noon to 9 p.m., Fridays from noon to 10 p.m., and there are weekend hours as well.

Mr. Vanderpool stated the Strategic Planning Session is scheduled for Tuesday, January 27, 2026, beginning at noon. He outlined some of the presentation topics for this year's session, including a Short-Term Rental Ordinance, Neighborhood Traffic Safety, Future of Library Services, Commercial Right-of-Way Trees, Future Ideas for the Dodge Park/Clinton

River District, ITC Path Extensions, as well as many legislative topics, including Improved Regulation of Fireworks at the State Level. He stressed fireworks have grown out of control in heavily populated areas, so they want to look at ways to push forward some ideas for the State to allow cities such as Sterling Heights to improve regulation of firework use. Mr. Vanderpool stated this concludes his report.

**6. PRESENTATIONS**

**A.** Mayor Taylor stated this is a presentation of the Twenty-fifth (25<sup>th</sup>) and Twenty-sixth (26<sup>th</sup>) Recipient of a Sterling Heights Fire Department's Survival Coin. He invited Fire Chief Kevin Edmond to give the presentation.

Fire Chief Kevin Edmond stated he is here this evening to present the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Survival Coins. He stated that, as Fire Chief, it is a great honor to be able to reunite people they bring back with the responders. He explained that approximately 300,000 people suffer cardiac arrests each year, with about ninety percent of those being fatal. They stress the survival chain of having first responders or people who can administer CPR. He invited Mike and the paramedics who helped him that night to come to the podium. He explained what happened that evening, noting that Mike was at his wife's dance studio that night and suffered cardiac arrest. He credited two people who are not here this evening, one being a doctor and

one being a physician's assistant, who participated in administering CPR to Mike before the Fire Department arrived, and that is why he is here today. Their crews arrived and began advanced life support care, and it took a total of about eight shocks to restart Mike's heart, suffering an eighty percent blockage. They are happy he is here today, and Chief Edmond presented Mike with the 25<sup>th</sup> Survival Coin. He also gave Mike the two Citizen Awards and Challenge Coins for him to pass on to the doctor and physician's assistant who both began CPR before the Fire Department arrived.

Chief Edmond invited John and the paramedics who helped him the afternoon of November 15<sup>th</sup>. John called his wife, letting her know he suspected he was having a heart attack, and the 911 call was placed. While being treated, he became unresponsive and went into cardiac arrest. The paramedics successfully resuscitated him by applying the defibrillator and administered one shock to restore John's heart, followed by advanced life support care, and a code (STEMI) was called to reduce the time a patient spends waiting for heart catheterization. He needed additional shocks once he arrived in the Emergency Room, and he eventually had an angioplasty and a stent to restore his heart's blood flow. Chief Edmond presented John with the 26<sup>th</sup> Survival Coin. He emphasized that both of these stories emphasize the importance of knowing CPR and recognize the signs and symptoms. It is now easier on their

website for anyone interested in signing up. This year, they will be installing three (3) AED cabinets, one at Dodge Park, one at Baumgartner Park, and one at Delia Park. He pointed out all three of these parks have the AED, but they are only accessible when staff are present at those parks. These will be installed on the outside of the buildings. He thanked City Council for the support they give to the Fire Department, enabling them to be able to do what they do.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she is a nurse, and this is something that touches her heart. She congratulated both of the Survival Coin recipients, adding that the City's firefighters and paramedics are the best. She congratulated them and is glad the first responders were able to do what they did and give them more time.

Councilman Radtke requested the names of the firefighter/paramedics, noting they came up but were not recognized by name.

Chief Edmond called up the firefighter/paramedics, and they introduced themselves to everyone.

Councilman Radtke stated that he appreciates the Survival Coins, noting that they highlight the importance of the Fire Department to the community, as well as the extensive training and daily work performed by its members. He remarked that the department is present this evening because of strong

resident support, exceptional training, and teamwork, which together make it the best fire department in the state and enable it to keep residents safe. While the reunions associated with these presentations are moving, Councilman Radtke noted that not all communities are as fortunate as Sterling Heights, as many do not adequately fund their fire and police departments. He emphasized that the survivors present are here today because of supportive residents and highly skilled paramedics who work diligently to save lives.

John, the 26th recipient of a Survival Coin, stated that the entire experience was comforting. He noted that the firefighters and paramedics were proficient, confident, and knew exactly what to do at the right time. He expressed his gratitude for the training they have undertaken to provide that level of care and remarked that while the City may raise his taxes, he is confident that "it goes to them."

Mike, the 25<sup>th</sup> Survival Coin recipient, thanked everyone, noting he was out for thirty-four minutes.

Councilman Radtke stated they are blessed to have these two survivors here tonight, and this is a perfect moment for their City to see the success of the hard work these people do.

John's wife spoke, commending the firefighter/paramedics for operating with surgical precision. She called 911 and was present to see how they were one step ahead of the entire process. She knows her husband would not be alive today if it were not for these men, and she expressed her gratitude for the City in supporting this department. She was even more impressed to find out they are also firefighters in addition to paramedics.

Councilman Radtke thanked the members of the Fire Department for the work they do, from the bottom of his heart and on behalf of all of the residents they serve.

Mayor Taylor echoed the sentiments expressed by his colleagues, and he thanked the members of the Fire Department for the work they do. He acknowledged some recent life-saving events in the Police Department where police officers rushed to locations to save a young infant who was choking or not breathing. He emphasized this does not go unnoticed, but this is what the men and women in the Sterling Heights Police and Fire Departments do every day at work. They are confronted with situations every day with situations where people are having the worst day of their lives, and these first responders are there to save them. All of the smiling faces here tonight are testament to the incredible group of men and women they have in their Fire

Department, and he thanked them for dedicating their lives to this and putting their lives on the line to save others.

**7. ORDINANCE ADOPTIONS**

**A.** Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider adoption of the first amendment to the Appropriations Ordinance for the 2025/26 fiscal year. He opened the floor for public comment, but no one spoke.

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Schmidt, **RESOLVED**, to adopt the first amendment to the Appropriations Ordinance for the 2025/26 fiscal year.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt this has been well-explained, so she has nothing to add and no further questions.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0).

**B.** Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider adoption of the ordinance amending Chapter 29 of the Code of ordinances to add licensing and other operational regulations for virtual currency machines and associated devices. He stated that before they get into audience participation, he gave special recognition to two council members here tonight from Grosse Pointe Farms. He noted this ordinance was brought to City Council by Councilman Radtke, who had read that this was passed in Grosse Pointe Farms. They were able to take this on as well, with the hopes of getting other communities to rally behind it. It is an action that is hard to imagine anyone being in objection.



He thanked the two council members from Grosse Pointe Farms for being here tonight and their leadership on this issue.

Mayor Taylor opened the floor for public comment.

- Lev Wood – A Grosse Pointe Farms City Council member, accompanied by Councilwoman Sierra Donaven, stated they co-sponsored their community's cryptocurrency device regulation ordinance. He explained the ordinance was initiated after a resident was scammed into depositing \$20,000 into a bitcoin ATM after being promised a \$50,000 return. He cited information from State Attorney General Dana Nessel indicating that funds sent through bitcoin ATMs are nearly impossible to recover and that limited oversight makes these machines attractive for fraud and money laundering, particularly targeting older residents. He noted that discussions began with the Mayor, City Manager, and City Attorney in May, continued in June, and resulted in adoption of the ordinance in July 2025, making Grosse Pointe Farms the first city in the state to enact such regulations. He added that Harper Woods has since adopted a similar ordinance and that Sterling Heights is considering one as well. He emphasized the importance of neighboring communities adopting similar measures to create a regional buffer across southeast Michigan and offered to answer questions.

Mayor Taylor thanked Councilman Wood for being here, and he appreciates his leadership on this issue. He hopes this goes far beyond Sterling Heights and Grosse Pointe Farms.

- Dennis Brozis– volunteer advocate for AARP, stated that senior citizens are frequently targeted by cryptocurrency scams, often involving urgent calls claiming a relative is in danger and directing victims to deposit money into specific bitcoin ATMs. He noted that many seniors are unable to respond logically in such emergency situations, resulting in transfers that are extremely difficult to recover. He expressed support for the ordinance adopted by Grosse Pointe Farms and emphasized the need for regulations to prevent these scams.

- Cassie Thierfelder – thanked City Council for the revisions they made to their proposed ordinance; this will benefit those who may have lost their entire life savings in one of these scams; thanked the City for taking this into consideration.

Mayor Taylor thanked Ms. Thierfelder for coming to speak three weeks ago, noting it was very impactful in making these changes.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Sierawski, **RESOLVED**, to adopt the ordinance amending Chapter 29 of the Code of Ordinances to add licensing and other operational regulations for virtual currency machines and associated devices.

Councilman Radtke stated that the revisions suggested by AARP representatives and discussed by the City Council are beneficial. He acknowledged that while the ordinance is not exactly what he would prefer, it reflects the work of a consensus-driven body. He expressed concern over the level of fraud occurring through virtual currency machines and noted that the ordinance represents a modest but meaningful step toward addressing the issue. He inquired whether letters regarding the ordinance have been sent to legislators.

Mr. Vanderpool replied they are waiting for City Council's approval tonight, and the letters will go out tomorrow.

Councilman Radtke expressed concern that individuals may be directed to neighboring communities without similar regulations to continue fraudulent activity; however, he stated that the City can only do its part. He thanked the

Grosse Pointe Farms council members for attending and noted that he learned of their ordinance through a news article after its adoption, describing it as a strong and thoughtful approach. He acknowledged that he had not previously considered the lack of regulation surrounding bitcoin machines and their vulnerability to fraud and stated his support for the ordinance.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked the Grosse Pointe Farms council members for their ideas and the action they took, noting that good ideas are valuable regardless of where they originate. She also thanked Cassie and Dennis, advocates representing AARP, stating that their input and perspective assisted the City Council in making informed decisions and shaping an ordinance they believe will be impactful for residents. She emphasized that the ordinance supports the City's primary responsibility of protecting residents and expressed appreciation to all who contributed to the effort.

Councilwoman Schmidt thanked the Grosse Pointe Farms council members and stated that their Council meeting three weeks prior was one of the most productive in recent memory. She credited Ms. Thierfelder for providing information that helped refine the proposed ordinance and expressed appreciation for the teamwork involved, while acknowledging the challenges of gaining broader adoption among other communities. She emphasized that

the ordinance is about protecting residents and stated her support for its passage.

Councilwoman Ziarko thanked all who assisted in the decision-making process, particularly the Grosse Pointe Farms council members and AARP representatives. She agreed with Councilwoman Schmidt regarding the value of the information provided by Ms. Thierfelder and noted that AARP is the nation's largest and most effective advocate for seniors. She encouraged greater use of AARP's resources in City decision-making, including discussions at the Senior Center, and expressed hope for continued collaboration.

Mayor Taylor thanked the Grosse Pointe Farms council members and AARP advocates for their participation, as well as the City's legal counsel and Council members for their work and deliberation on the ordinance. He emphasized the City's commitment to protecting vulnerable populations, stated that the ordinance represents a significant step forward, and characterized it as a victory for Sterling Heights residents. He expressed hope that similar efforts will be adopted by other communities in southeast Michigan, across the state, and beyond.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0).

## **8. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Taylor stated this item is consideration of the Consent Agenda as presented. He opened the floor for comments from the public, but no one spoke.

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Schmidt, **RESOLVED**, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented:

- A. To approve the minutes of the December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Meeting.
- B. To approve payment of the bills as presented: General Fund - \$945,724.67, Water & Sewer Fund - \$2,197,676.39, Other Funds - \$1,993,896.24, Total Checks - \$5,137,297.30.
- C. **RESOLVED**, to approve final payment to Z Contractors, Inc., 50500 Design Lane, Shelby Township, MI 48315, in the amount of \$152,198.50, inclusive of Change Order No. 2, plus interest on retainage, for the Nature Center Bridge Rehabilitation, City Project #24-438, and West Schoenherr Pedestrian Bridge over Plumbrook Drain Rehabilitation, City Project #24-433.
- D. **RESOLVED**, award a bid for a backup water main repair contractor to Superior Excavating, Inc, 2420 Auburn Road, Auburn Hills, MI 48326, at unit pricing provided, through June 30, 2026.
- E. **RESOLVED**, to award a bid for the purchase and installation of two Aerco BMK 2000 boilers inclusive of intake venting, circulation pumps, and exhaust venting at the Sterling Heights Police Department to W.J. O'Neil Company, 35457 Industrial Road, Livonia, MI 48150, at bid pricing provided for a total cost of \$179,340.00.
- F. **RESOLVED**, to:
  - 1. Purchase and install one (1) ChargePoint 6000 Series Dual Port Pedestal EV Charger and two (2) ChargePoint CPF50-L23 dual port Pedestal Chargers from Labelle Electrical Contractors, 241 Church Street, Mount Clemens, MI 48043, for a total cost of \$66,290.00; and,
  - 2. Authorize the City Manager to sign the DTE Energy eFleet Charger Rebate Agreement on behalf of the City.
- G. **RESOLVED**, to purchase a Fouts Bros, Inc Quick Attack Unit on a Ford F-550 chassis and associated accessories from Advantage Fleet, d/b/a Axes & Irons, 920 O' Malley Dr., Coopersville, MI 49404, at pricing available through HGAC-Buy cooperative purchasing contract no. FS12-23, for a total cost of \$306,603.12, and authorize the City

Manager to sign the Agreement of Sale for Fire Apparatus on behalf of the City.

- H. **RESOLVED**, to approve a Services Contract between the City of Sterling Heights and EMS Management & Consultants, Inc, 2540 Empire Drive Suite 100, Winston-Salem, NC 27103, for emergency medical (EMS) billing and collection services at unit rates provided, through December 8, 2029, and authorize the City Manager to extend this agreement for two (2) additional three (3) year periods upon mutual consent of all parties, and authorize the City Manager to sign this agreement on behalf of the City.
- I. **RESOLVED**, to continue the existing licensing agreement between the city of Sterling Heights and Arbiter Sports, LLC, 9815 S Monroe Street, Suite 204, Sandy, Utah 84070, for access to software for the scheduling and payment of umpires and referees at unit rates provided through December 31, 2026, and authorize the City Manager to renew this agreement for additional one (1) year periods under the same terms, conditions, and pricing.
- J. **RESOLVED**, to split the award for sewer maintenance supplies to the vendors and at the unit prices specified for a one (1) year period through January 7, 2027, at the unit pricing provided:
  - 1. Etna Supply Company, 4901 Clay Avenue SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49548
    - a. Item A: Type "S" masonry cement
    - b. Item F: 2 1/2" x 8" manhole brick
    - c. Item H: 3' x 6" manhole block
    - d. Item I: 4" perforated weep tile
    - e. Item K: 4" tee
    - f. Item L: 6"x4" Tee
    - g. Item M: 6" Tee
    - h. Item N: 4" Caps
    - i. Item O: 6" Caps
    - j. Item P: 4"x6" Coupler
  - 2. Core & Main LP, 6575 23 Mile Road, Shelby Township, MI 48316
    - a. Item B: Portland Cement
    - b. Item C: Expansion strip 3" x 5' x 3/8"
    - c. Item D: Expansion strip 6" x 5' x 1/2"
    - d. Item E: Expansion strip 6" x 5' x 3/8"

- e. Item G: 2' x 6" manhole block
- f. Item J: 6" perforated weep tile
- g. Item Q: Hydraulic cement (5-gal Bucket)

3. Reject the bids received for item R: 2ft x 5ft Brick Red Cast In Place ADA Warning surface 2.35 Dome Spacing

- K. **RESOLVED**, to schedule a special joint meeting of the Sterling Heights City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals at the Sterling Heights Community Center, 40250 Dodge Park Road, on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 7:00 p.m., and direct the City Clerk to provide public notice in conformity with Michigan's Open Meetings Act.
- L. **RESOLVED**, to set the public hearing on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. regarding the application by Skilken Gold for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that would allow for a gasoline self-service station and convenience store with a fast-food restaurant that includes a drive-through (formally known as Sheetz) on approximately 2.6 acres of land situated on the southeast corner of Metropolitan Parkway and Mound Road; PPUD25-0003.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0).

## 9. **CONSIDERATION**

A. Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider a budget amendment to increase the City Council Education & Training Budget by \$30,000 for the fiscal year 2025/26. He opened the floor for public comment, but no one spoke.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Sierawski, **RESOLVED**, to approve a budget amendment from General Fund reserves to increase the City Council Education and Training Budget by \$30,000.

Councilman Radtke thought this was going to be included in the mid-year Appropriations Ordinance, although if it is a separate item, it has the same

affect. With new and continuing members on Council, they are all working hard to learn about issues, and he cited the recent ordinance on cryptocurrency as a perfect example, pointing out the idea was taken from Grosse Pointe Farms. This amendment to increase the City Council's Education and Training Budget provides all City Council members with the opportunity to attend these conferences and meetings to learn about the best ideas in the State. It makes it fair for everyone to attend, and he noted that he has brought back some great ideas from these conferences, including an idea he got from the National League of Cities to use AI to monitor their vehicle fleet so they know their locations, cameras on them, and placing air tags on their equipment. He is in favor of this amendment, and he felt it will fix the budget going forward for these conferences to make sure they can all attend and bring ideas back to improve this community.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked Councilman Radtke for bringing this forward. She stressed how expensive it is to attend, and this \$30,000 increase will allow all seven Council members to attend some events. She emphasized this money will be used for the good of the City because there are so many good ideas and networking available from people in other cities. She admitted she does not attend a lot of conferences, but some of the larger conferences, and those that apply to a broad base, are very important. She is



very much in favor of this amendment because it will provide them more tools to help them provide good services to the City.

Councilman Mijac appreciated the comments from his colleagues. He explained he is not going to support this motion because it increases the cost of government. He met a lot of residents over the summer who are dealing with higher costs on a daily basis, and being a new Council member, he does not feel comfortable so soon after being elected to vote to increase the budget of Council by \$30,000; however, he respected the talking points of the other Council members.

Councilwoman Ziarko agreed with Councilman Mijac, and explained that, as a senior member on Council, she does not feel this is something that has to be done. She felt there needs to be a reason rather than to just add \$30,000 to the budget. She pointed out that Council members prioritize what they want to do, whether it is a Michigan Municipal League (MML) conference or convention, or it could be the National League of Cities (NLC) conference in Washington D.C. for legislators. She pointed out that they periodically talk to their legislators, and they are all very approachable, but talking to them in Washington is more for the communities that do not have that same opportunity. She indicated she did not attend the National League of Cities in Salt Lake City or in Washington D.C., but rather than spend the money

there, she wanted to go to the Policy Conference on Mackinac because having attended in the past through the Michigan Municipal League, she learned that there are times where things that would take three to six months to accomplish can actually be done at a state-level conference in three hours. She did not anticipate they would be proposing to increase the budget so they could all go. She recalled asking Councilman Yanez a few years ago why he did not attend an MML event, and he had indicated he would prefer to attend a sustainability conference because that was his priority that year. She expressed concern that if they approve a blanket amount, it will not be equal. There will be some members who cannot attend because of their work schedule or interest, and others will go because they want to go. She suggested that if they do something like this, every Council member should get an allowance to decide how they want to spend those tax dollars. She indicated she is not in favor of it as it stands now.

Councilman Yanez stated he will not be supporting this motion. If they are going to give \$30,000 for education, he would prefer to give it to the employees who work here everyday so they can have a better education, pointing out the importance of education actually saves lives. He recalled when he worked for the Fire Department, they tried to make sure there was enough money in their budget so he could go to a three-day advanced

cardiac life support training, but there was no guarantee that the money would be there for that. He appreciated the fact that legislators need to be educated, and he stressed that he has learned a lot from materials he reads. He added that the amount of information available through AI is unbelievable, and they do have to choose their priorities. He is a strong advocate for the environment, so he attends the Sustainability Conference, which costs \$120, although it costs more to stay at the hotel than it does for the conference. He appreciates that some members may want to go to the Mackinac Policy Conference, noting he has attended and has paid for it out of his own pocket. He agreed there is a lot to learn there, but he pointed out that the breakout sessions are streamed live on their website, so it is not necessary to have to go to see the breakout sessions. He admitted that networking can be extremely valuable, but he does not understand how they arrived at the amount of \$30,000. He reiterated that he will not be supporting this amendment.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated she is not in favor of this motion, pointing out that, as a Council, they have many opportunities to educate themselves. They may have an opportunity to rotate who goes to some of the bigger conferences. Because of her work schedule, she is not able to attend all of the conferences, but she added that she does not always feel she receives

feedback from the council members who attend. She suggested they consider a rotation of council members to attend the more expensive conferences, followed by a workshop or communication so that those who attended can share what they learned. She commented that they can do this a better way than adding \$30,000 to their budget at this point, so she is not in favor of this motion.

Mayor Taylor stated he is going to support this motion, but in counting the votes, it does not seem like this will pass. He commented that the \$30,000 is fairly well explained, noting it would cover registration for four Council members to attend the Mackinac Policy Conference, and another \$8,000 for other professional development. He understands there are budgeted funds for him to attend the U.S. Conference of Mayors, but his schedule has not allowed him to do that the past few years, so that money has not been spent even though it has been budgeted. In his personal experience, attending these conferences is incredibly valuable and very rewarding. He noted that, as Councilman Radtke pointed out, what happened tonight is a good example, and when they are able to be in an environment with a number of people who are also involved in municipal government, they are networking with them, talking about successes they have had, and sharing ways that the great things happening in Sterling Heights can be brought to other

communities, and vice-versa. They can do that by watching city council meetings from other communities and watching taped sessions from conferences, but there is no substitute for being there in person and establishing those relationships. He reminded this is a big city with a \$300 million budget, so although \$30,000 is a lot of money, it is only a small portion of the overall budget. He pointed out that they spend money to train their police officers, firefighters, DPW workers, etc., and they have training for all City employees. He pointed out that this is not requesting that the money be taken from somewhere else and spent on this instead, but they have very healthy reserves, and this investment may improve the services the residents get, it may provide a better environment for their managers, directors, and employees to provide services if Council members are operating at their highest capacity. He reminded that budgeting the \$30,000 does not mean it will automatically be spent, pointing out they come in under budget year after year, but the money will be there if Council members feel it is important to get some professional development out of this. He felt it is a benefit to the City and worth the expense, so he will be voting yes, although he understands the arguments, so he requested a roll call vote.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Radtke, Sierawski, Taylor.

No: Schmidt, Yanez, Ziarko, Mijac.

The motion failed (3/4).

B. Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider reappointment to the Sterling Heights Area Community Foundation Board of Directors. He opened the floor for public comment, but no one spoke.

Moved by Sierawski, seconded by Taylor, **RESOLVED**, to appoint Dr. Mary Smolenski to the Sterling Heights Area Community Foundation Board of Directors to a term ending December 31, 2028.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0).

#### 11. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS**

Mayor Taylor opened the floor for communications from citizens for any item not on tonight's agenda.

- Carol Chi – Sterling Heights resident living on Moravian since 1981; expressed concern about the Sterling Oak and all of the other trees that will be cut down behind it; upset that the City encouraged everyone to vote for the Pathways to Play and Preservation millage, yet she commented that the City sold the largest green space it had remaining; recalled when the County wanted to widen Moravian to four lanes, but about three hundred people got together to stop it; expressed opposition to building on wetlands and floodplains and cited the negative effects; emphasized that “trees are the lungs of the world.”
- Nicholas Romano – thanked the Mayor and City Council for their help following the last City Council meeting to have someone contact him about his vehicle that was ticketed; it has been resolved; however, he expressed concern that it is a discrepancy in the ordinance, and the police have to enforce it as it is written; several ways of getting around it were suggested to him, including using foldable ladders where they could be stored inside the truck, and also removing the company name and information from the outside of the truck; he explained neither of those options would work because foldable ladders are not approved by OSHA for the type of work they do, and taking his name and contact

number off of the truck eliminates one of the main ways potential customers contact them and it is the way they are identified; noted the ordinance allows a one-ton truck but not a one-ton van, and suggested possibly something needs to be rewritten; indicated he lost his job because he had to get rid of the truck, and one of the requirements of the job was that he be able to go right from his home to the customers' homes.

Mayor Taylor stated they will look into it.

- Robin McGregor – represents Metro Detroit Petroleum Alliance; concerned about Sheetz coming into Sterling Heights, citing the reasons for her opposition, including transparency, fairness and treating a community equally; opposed to their predatory pricing to undercut the local businesses; talked about possible conflict of interest between Sheetz and their law firm, which also represents many municipalities; concerned that Sheetz leases but does not own their properties; urged Sterling Heights to support their local businesses and fair competition.

Mayor Taylor questioned when this item will be coming before City Council.

Mr. Vanderpool replied that it will be on March 3, 2026 City Council agenda.

- Rami Yousef – long-time Sterling Heights resident and business owner of BP Gas Station at 15 Mile and Mound; pointed out the local business owners have employed local people and have given back to the community; their business employs 20 to 30 positions outside of the gas station that bring in vending items, and they are a hands-on business; opposed to Sheetz coming in, commenting that they are not a local business but are based out of Pennsylvania, and they train and bring in their employees from out of state; she will address her concerns at the meeting when this is discussed.
- Elizabeth Copolo – representing the Sterling Heights Drug-Free Coalition; informed they are changing their meetings to the second Monday of each month, with the exception of June through September, where they will be meeting at Dodge Park on the second Thursday of each of those months; stated their first meeting of the year

is next Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room at the Sterling Heights Public Library; invited anyone interested to join them, and she thanked City Council for their support of this mission.

Mayor Taylor stated they appreciate the work the Sterling Heights Drug-Free Coalition does, adding it does not go unnoticed.

**11. ~~REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION AND CITY COUNCIL~~**

Mr. Vanderpool stated he had nothing further to add this evening.

Councilman Yanez questioned, regarding the earlier discussion on City Council education, whether the City has any corporate accounts with any publications, such as Crain's, that City Council can access.

Mr. Vanderpool replied to inquiry that he would be happy to provide a list of memberships the City has, as well as the credentials if City Council members would like to access those publications.

Councilman Yanez thanked Mr. Vanderpool, adding that he has his own separate account for Crain's, and he finds it very valuable. It is a great local publication that talks about real estate and business in this area. He felt the rest of City Council would find it interesting as well. He was happy to see the presentation of the Survival Coins this evening. He confirmed the Fire Chief's earlier comment that it is now easier for residents to sign up for CPR classes online, which start on January 14<sup>th</sup>. He noted there is a charge for the class, but he understood from talking with one source that there is money taken



from the Fire Department's budget to help put these classes on in the amount of about \$50 per attendee, and when people pay, the money comes back to the City but is deposited into the General Fund rather than the Fire Department.

Mr. Vanderpool deferred the question to the Finance & Budget Director Jennifer Varney, who is present this evening.

Finance & Budget Director Jennifer Varney stated that is true, but that is how they handle any cost reimbursement. When his was proposed by the Fire Department many years ago, it was proposed to add the expense with an offsetting revenue. She pointed out that this is how they handle any expenditure with an offsetting revenue. The expenditure gets budgeted, but the revenue goes into the General Fund. She clarified the reason the CPR classes were approved was because it was an expenditure with offsetting revenue; however, they do not track revenue by department. Ms. Varney stated she would have to go back to look, but she believes that at the time these classes were approved, the primary expense was overtime because the firefighters teach these classes on overtime. They would have increased the overtime budget to cover that overtime, but it does not affect the change in fund balance because there is offsetting revenue. She compared this to Parks

and Recreation classes and pointed out that it costs money to hold the classes, but there is offsetting revenue.

Councilman Yanez recalled the earlier conversation about investing \$30,000 in education, and he questioned why they are not spending this to give grants for people who want to learn CPR but may not be able to spend that money for the class. He suggested they look at having a revolving fund where they invest a certain amount of money into life-saving CPR classes, and that money gets paid by the individual and goes back into that revolving fund, as well as having some money set aside for grants for those who cannot afford it. He gave the example of first-time parents who may want to take infant CPR classes but cannot afford that cost. He commented that he cannot think of a better way to spend money than to help save lives and make sure their Fire Department is properly funded so they can continue to offer these classes. He appreciates any other consideration or thoughts from his colleagues on doing something like this.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked Councilman Yanez for making a good point. She questioned whether the City has any type of hardship list, account, or opportunity for their residents who would like to participate in any of the City's classes or anything they offer but find it cost prohibitive.

Ms. Varney replied to inquiry that they do not have anything for this particular class at this time. She suggested she could meet with the Fire Chief and possibly create a program. She felt the simplest solution would be to set certain criteria where residents would not have to pay the fees. They have a complex program like that for property taxes, and she believes Parks and Recreation has something similar. If City Council wants, she can meet with the Fire Chief to create a proposal.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski felt that is appropriate, commenting that there are situations every day and age where there are hardships, and the City should always be able to accommodate them. She added that taxes are for equitable reception of services. She thanked Councilman Yanez for that idea. She addressed the \$30,000 that was proposed to increase the education fund for City Council members, and she assured that by voting in favor of it, she was not "thumbing her nose to the residents" in voting to spend that, but she emphasized that everything is so expensive, they need to increase that amount but they can look at that during the budgetary process. She liked Councilwoman Ziarko's idea of an allotment per Council member, and she would like to pursue that. If a Council member is not going to go for scheduling reasons, that member could proxy his/her allotment to someone else. She would prefer to see that option rather than a lump sum that is not

fairly distributed. She wished the residents a Happy New Year, hoping that 2026 will be a good year.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned how many CPR classes are offered per year, and how many participants are in each class. She suggested if the Fire Chief does not have that answer tonight, he can get back with them. She understands there are expenses because the Fire Department issues American Heart Association cards. She questioned whether they are hosting Heart Saver or Basic Life Support (BLS) classes.

Fire Chief Edmond replied to inquiry they offer both classes.

Councilwoman Schmidt understands there is a different price involved for Heart Saver cards and BLS cards, and they also have to purchase books, mouthpieces, and other equipment. Some of the money the residents are paying is being used for those items. She stated she would like to see the classes offered for free, not because of hardship, but if the City is going to push safety in the community, they should break down the numbers to see how they can offer these classes to the residents. Councilwoman Schmidt felt the basic resident needs the Heart Saver classes, and that BLS classes are a little more extensive than what the laypeople need. The Heart Saver class is two hours, and possibly they can limit the number of participants they have each year, but she would like to see that included in the budget. It would be

on a first come, first served basis. She reiterated she would like to see no fee, or a very minimal fee just to cover the American Heart Association costs. She would like that information but indicated there is no rush in it but for future discussion.

Councilwoman Schmidt noted that, over the holidays in the City of Royal Oak, they were able to get a dumpster delivered from Priority Waste specifically for residents to bring all of their excess cardboard boxes from the holidays. She understood that Priority Waste collected overflow from the residents in Sterling Heights, but she pointed out that people are receiving Amazon and other deliveries well before Christmas, so many residents have an abundance of boxes. Since Priority Waste did that for Royal Oak, she would like to see if the City could look into that possibility next year for Sterling Heights to have something available for their residents.

Councilwoman Schmidt stressed how pleased she is that Moravian Drive was paved; however, she is concerned about how unsafe it has become because of how it has been restriped. She explained that there used to be a left-turn lane from 15 Mile Road to Edshire, and there were two westbound lanes and one eastbound lane, with a bypass lane at Woodvilla Drive and at Alta Vista Drive. She pointed out it is now a left-turn lane from 15 Mile to Hayes, and three times in a week-and-a-half, she was almost involved in a head-on

collision because she was in the left turn lane, and drivers heading westbound onto Moravian and want to go around cars turning left on Woodvilla or Alta Vista, go into that left-turn lane to go around them. It sounds confusing, but it is a definite problem and is very unsafe. She added that the fast speed limit does not help the situation. She has reached out to Mr. VanSyckel and Mr. Romano on the Macomb County Board of Commissioners, but something needs to be done with the striping because people will get injured. She concluded her comments by wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned whether CPR classes would qualify for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money. She stated she would like to find out more about data centers. She acknowledged that they have received some background information, but when she noticed that data processing computer centers have been a permitted use in five zoning districts by an ordinance that was adopted in 1978, she felt that they have come a long way since that time. She would like to find out more about the objections that other communities have, and how it could impact Sterling Heights if someone decided to put a data center at 16 Mile and Mound. She talked to a CFO of a small energy company, and they were being courted by a company that wanted their services so they could start a data center. One of the concerns is the sound generated from these centers, which sounds like

a continuous hum. She felt they need to find out more about this, and she heard on the news this evening that Northville, or possibly Northville Township, placed a moratorium on data centers for one year until they could research it further before any decisions could be made in the future. She would like to look closer at the ordinance to see if there are any changes and place a hold on this until they receive more information so they can protect their residents. She does not want the City to be caught in a situation where they will not be able to say no if they do not want it. She concluded her comments by wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

Councilman Mijac understands that there are Council members interested in attending the policy conference taking place in a couple of months. He questioned whether Mr. Vanderpool can help the City Council members by keeping them posted on things happening in Lansing. He explained he was a former County Commissioner and had attended this conference. They have incredible access to many people, including State Representatives and State Senators, and it is a great opportunity to spend time with them. He suggested that possibly the City Council could look at a few of the issues happening at the State legislature during that time period so the Council members not attending the conference can hear some of the talking points.

Councilman Radtke seconded Councilwoman Ziarko's comments on data centers, noting they have some valuable industrial property in the City that could be repurposed for some type of data centers. He suggested they should consider putting a moratorium in place or at least investigate that possibility. He would hate to see a new item brought to them, and they do not have any kind of structure or framework for how to evaluate it. He would like to hear thoughts on where these centers should go, how they should work, or best practices that other cities are putting in place. He pointed out this involves not only potential noise, but also deals with issues such as water and electricity usage, setbacks, whether they should be near residential neighborhoods, etc. He would like some information on that, and he also seconded Councilman Mijac's comments, noting the City is good at keeping the Council members up to date on issues in Lansing. He has always used his time with legislators to push the policy he felt best benefits Sterling Heights, but some background can be beneficial. He wished the residents at home a very happy and prosperous 2026, and he hopes 2026 will be better than 2025. Mayor Taylor felt whatever they come up with regarding the CPR classes will be a good improvement. He explained they will be able to talk about the Sheetz Gas Station proposal at a future Council meeting, but with regard to hearing other residents, stakeholders and business owners who are interested



in this issue and want to present reasons why the City Council should consider voting one way or the other, he stated what is not at all convincing to him is complaints that Sheetz will offer a product that too many people will want. He reminded it is his job to give the people what they want, and being an elected official, if he is not doing what the people want, then he questioned why he is here. He clarified that blindly doing what people want is not the only thing that matters, but he is hearing that "their prices are going to be too good, their service is going to be too good, the local stations will not be able to compete with them because their products and services are too good."

He cautioned that those reasons will not be convincing to him. He admitted this is expected to be a hot button issue because it has been in every other community. He recommended that if there are legitimate reasons why this will be bad for the community, he wants to hear them, and he will do what he has to do to support the community. Mayor Taylor recalled an example of a time when they were told if they allowed a popular restaurant in Sterling Heights, it is too popular and the residents will want it so much that they will have to say no to it. He emphasized that it does not make sense to him. People shop at Walmart, and they pay the City toward the cost of a police officer.

Ms. Varney confirmed Walmart pays the City approximately \$30,000 a month.

Mayor Taylor noted that the Walmart at 14 Mile and Van Dyke pays the City of Sterling Heights \$30,000 per month so they can have a police officer at that location. He understands there are mom-and-pop shops and small business owners, as well as good products made with more skill, love, and better quality, but this country is addicted to cheap materials from overseas. He reiterated that he would like to hear if there are legitimate reasons as to why this is a bad proposal.

**12. ~~UNFINISHED BUSINESS~~**

There was no unfinished business.

**13. ~~NEW BUSINESS~~**

There was no new business.

**14. ~~CLOSED SESSION PERMITTED UNDER ACT 267 OF 1976~~**

Mr. Kaszubski stated there are no items for closed session this evening.

**15. ~~ADJOURN~~**

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Sierawski, **RESOLVED**, to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: All. The motion carried (7/0), and the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

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MELANIE D. RYSKA, City Clerk