



Scott Dixon hosts town hall against Brant Walker's reelection

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
February 16 2017 9:18 AM



ALTON - Alton mayoral candidate **Scott Dixon** hosted a town hall style meeting against the reelection of current **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** on the evening of Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017, at the [RiverBender.com Community Center](http://RiverBender.com).

Dixon's platform against Walker was almost entirely based on what Dixon called Walker's use of deceptive statistics - especially regarding the crime and business numbers in Alton. Dixon said Walker was basing his entire campaign on reelection on statistics, which are not even correct. Dixon cited many of these statistics in a small speech he delivered before opening the floor to questions.

"Walker says crime is down," Dixon said in his presentation. "His claims are based on a tricky formula that doesn't paint an accurate picture. The fact is that total crime is up six percent, not down, as Walker claims. More worrisome, the most serious crimes, violent crimes are up 22 percent."

Rapes and murders have also tripled since Walker took office, Dixon assured. He asserted the people of Alton cannot "afford a mayor who uses tricky stats, rather than telling it like it is."

Slumlords are another issue Dixon tackled in his presentation, claiming Walker - a landlord himself - is lenient on them, despite Walker's claim of issuing 3,500 citations against slumlords. Dixon's proof he said is 88 percent of those citations being disregarded following their issuance. Those slumlords, Dixon said, lead to increased demolitions, which cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars.

He used Walker's claim of 130 demolitions within the city against him, promising he would use "proactive measures" to ensure such demolitions would no longer be necessary.

"We can't afford a mayor who prioritizes destruction and demolition over building and growth," Dixon said.

The claim touted by Walker of a growing economy based on the issuance of 200 business licenses is also deceiving, Dixon said. While 200 businesses sounds impressive, Dixon said, that number is down 25 percent when compared against the administration previous to Walker.

"So many businesses have closed," Dixon said. "So many businesses are struggling and downsizing. This translates to lost jobs. No wonder our unemployment rate is so high."

That unemployment rate, which Dixon cited at 7.1 percent, has been stagnated under Walker's administration, he said. He also said that number is much higher than the Madison County, St. Louis area, State of Illinois and national averages.

Dixon also attacked Walker's claim of attracting \$56 million in private investments to the city.

"Brant Walker claims that things are great because of \$56 million in private investment," Dixon said. "But, he doesn't talk about the investment that never happened because of selective code enforcement, where slumlords are given a pass while homeowners investing in older homes face every code in the book. Brant Walker doesn't tell you how many families and business owners have been hurt by inconsistent standards. We've seen so many businesses downsize or close. We can't afford a mayor who operates like this."

Despite many park improvements under Walker's administration, Dixon said **Riverfront Park** is being under utilized by an amphitheater, which relies on an out-of-town booking service not allowing local vendors to set up shop at many events. Dixon said the riverfront should be Alton's "crown jewel," saying if it were properly used it would cause people to "drive to here and not through here."

An expensive feasibility study conducted during Walker's administration was also cited by Dixon as an example of why Walker should not be reelected.

"Walker proposed \$3 million in taxpayer subsidies for a generic chain motel on the riverfront," Dixon said. "That type of motel would be wrong for Alton. An expensive hotel feasibility study had obvious flaws, and the banks knew it would fail, even with all these subsidies."

After his presentation, Dixon opened the floor for public questions. The first question was asked by **John Simmons**, chairman and CEO of the **Simmons, Hanley Conroy National Law Firm**. Simmons asked Dixon what he would do to attract more businesses to Alton.

In response, Dixon said the city needed to update its two-decade-old plan.

"As a businessman and leader, I know a good plan can install confidence to see where we're heading," Dixon said. "The city has an opportunity to prioritize what's important to the people."

Collaboration, Dixon said would be the key to that plan, saying everyone would be working together toward a similar positive goal. He said other cities similar to Alton, even with similar problems, were able to climb out of the Rust Belt with plans such as that.

When asked about the community policing initiative set forth from Walker's administration, Dixon said he "fully supported it," adding "it is really good to see we're doing that." Dixon said he did not have the answers and would rely on the people on the streets for that.

"Policing is a relationship job," Dixon said. "Police foster those for positive interactions. I'm glad to see the department is going in that direction."

When asked about crime and the drug problem in Alton, Dixon said he did not have all the answers, but said he would partner with organizations already providing help to those in need, saying he would look at the individuals behind the drug problem and try to work to help break their cycles.

Not having all the answers was also Dixon's response when asked how he intended to pay for his proposed reforms. He said he was mostly brainstorming with the public to see what the people wanted. He said working with the people will be the key to solving those issues.

"I am proposing things for people to consider," he said.

Paving the streets was another concern from the crowd. Dixon said he would work to find a way to ensure the streets of Alton get needed repairs, but added several other areas - such as parks and sewers - were also in desperate need of attention. He said he would have to see what was possible before making such decisions.