



Four Alton mayoral candidates provide viewpoints at Community Awareness Panel town hall forum

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - The Community Awareness Panel hosted a town hall forum Thursday for all the four mayoral candidates running in the April 4, 2017, election. It was the first event featuring all four candidates in a question and answer forum.

Candidates were given one minute each to answer questions, and were told not to use profanity and be respectful. The forum was monitored by Cedric Parker who, along with Charles Walker, Trish Cooley and new member, Kimberly Sheppard, composes the Community Awareness Panel.

Parker said the panel works with the local community to help people become more aware of their options involving programs to help them with financing, home ownership and college funding, among other items. Parker said he has even hosted forums with the city administration and once hosted a question and answer informative session with a Grammy-winning record producer regarding how the modern work force operates.

The forum was held at Alton VFW Post #1308 just after 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017. Parker monitored the event, but the questions were not screened beforehand.

A teacher from Alton High School said her students have been submitting questions to her to ask the Alton Mayoral Candidates. The first question, she said, was: “Do you recognize the need for an improved relationship between the police and black community? What can be done to improve that relationship?”

JY: Young, a black man himself, said he was a “social advocate.” He said he would “tackle that issue” first, saying he did not believe in the community policing model championed by Walker, Alton Police Chief Jake Simmons and former St. Louis Police Chief Daniel Isom, who is helping facilitate a community policing study in Alton through the University of Missouri St. Louis (UMSL).

Instead, Young said he wanted to see more “local champions” work to improve their neighborhoods, asking for police assistance when it is needed. He cited a grassroots movement from the area erroneously known colloquially as the “Mexico” area of Alton called “Fists Up, Guns Down.” That movement was created by Alton native, Brian Newman, who has encouraged young men in his neighborhood to settle disputes with boxing gloves in a one-on-one match instead of having large fights with uneven numbers, which Newman said leads to gun violence.

Young admitted the current police department has been extremely helpful with that initiative, with Simmons even offering to provide helmets and gloves, assuming Fists Up, Guns Down finds a place for matches to take place safely with the proper insurance. Alton Police Chaplain Jason Harrison said he would talk with Deliverance Temple to possibly have a place for young men to box, or at least play basketball.

If elected, Young said he would work to create a community center to support both martial arts and health and wellness training, which would be open to the public. He said such initiatives have been successful in cities such as Detroit and Los Angeles, but he did not offer any ideas on how to fund such an initiative.

BW: Walker, on the other hand, claimed it all “goes back to community policing.” He said the police department under his administration has faced “difficult and hard” changes through the community policing initiative facilitated through UMSL, which is currently in a community focus group phase.

To prove his commitment to community policing, Walker showcased several initiatives undertaken by the police under his administration, including putting police on bicycles.

“We got the bikes out of the closet, and officers are getting on the bikes, going out there and getting more social,” he said.

Besides police pedaling around the city, Walker touted the fact he hired the first black police chaplain (Harrison).

Walker then listed several initiatives the police department started under his administration, which do not specifically target minority involvement or relationships with the black community, but instead work with everyone in the community. Those include Coffee with a Cop, Shop with a Cop and even Ballin' with a Cop, during which people are encouraged to play basketball with police officers. These initiatives, Walker said, break down the social barriers between police officers and citizens, allowing people to see police officers as human beings instead of only part of the law enforcement machine.

Because of his policies, Walker said the police have been receiving more calls from local citizens who he would not have formerly trusted the police to help them.

SD: Dixon said the question would apply to “building trust,” which is one of his main priorities if elected. He said the “most important thing police have” is a “bond of trust between themselves and the community.” He said that trust must be a part of the culture from top to bottom.

Dixon said his time as a part of Weed and Seed - a community-based program once facilitated through the Department of Justice, which has since lost funding – he worked to help “bridge the gap” between police and the community.

He said he would champion such initiatives such as inviting people to the police station for an open house at least once a year. He also said he would like to continue and build upon the current community policing initiative being facilitated by Isom.

DR: Rauschkolb, a 22-year veteran of the Alton Police Department, said he has seen the city administration “try all sorts” of initiatives. Some, he said, worked. Others, he said, did not. He said the biggest issue with relations between the police department and the community reduces to neighborhoods. He said people need to see police officers as members of the community, so he would encourage more officers to live within the community and be active in it.

He said encouraging police officers to be a part of the community would only be a fraction of the solution. He said he wanted to strengthen neighborhoods overall. If elected, he said he would sponsor neighborhood watch initiatives with direct links to the police department. He also said he would encourage neighborhood gatherings so people would get to know each other.

“We have to work on keeping people here and keeping them proud to be here,” he said. “That will keep our neighborhoods safe and strong. It takes a community to raise a child.”

JY: For his rebuttal, Young said the main solution would be “intrinsic justice.” He said people need to know the police will be held accountable for their actions as well.

“Of course I believe in citizenship and compassion,” he said.

Young said he has witnessed incidents from Alton Police officers he described as not being like the “Officer Friendlies” he knew when he was a young man.

An audience member who did not give a name asked: How would you make grow? He noted each candidate offered answers and solutions he found to be “vague” and “typical of politicians.”

BW: Walker said “unlike these other politicians,” he has a track record to prove his ability to make things better. He said, under his administration, unemployment has fallen from 11.6-7.1 percent. (Most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts Alton's unemployment at 7.2 percent as of Dec. 2016, but Walker's original figure is accurate. Research done by Riverbender.com did show unemployment in Alton has been on a steady decrease since Walker took office). Walker also quoted his figure of Alton gaining as many as 200 business permits and more than \$60 million in capital investments from those permits. He said his retail numbers have increased by \$35

million to \$515 million in Alton (according to information from the Illinois Rural Affairs Council, retail sales in Alton have been on an increase during Walker's administration, with 2015's numbers being as high as an estimated \$536, signaling growth each year from 2013 and the highest amount generated since 2008's Great Recession).

Walker said citizens have also “seen his commitment to youth.”

“We want to see neighborhood kids in neighborhood parks,” he said.

To illustrate that point, Walker said as many as 1,300 kids have joined the city's sports leagues, which he claimed is the most in the Metro East (numbers for Edwardsville, Belleville, O'Fallon and East St. Louis could not be found at this time to back that claim). He also touted an estimated \$3.2 million his administration has secured in park grants. With that money, he said his administration has used as much as \$850,000 to improve the entrance to Gordon Moore Park and more than \$300,000 to create a bike trail around Rock Springs Park. He said the basketball courts at James Killion Park at Salu have been repaved, and tournaments may even come there soon.

“You can drive through the city and see the things we've done,” Walker said, citing an estimated \$3 million his administration has spent on street repairs. “They can talk about it, but I've done it,” Walker said of his opponents.

Walker said his administration has been able to do these things without raising fees or taxes and without cutting services.

DR: Rauschkolb said he has seen several mayors make similar problems, but said none of them had “a vision.” He said his vision was to bring large “Fortune 500” companies to Alton, instead of Wood River, Edwardsville and Belleville. He said other communities are constantly trying to court business away from Alton.

He said Alton “cannot wait for the Port of America to bring jobs here like it did in Granite City and Pontoon Beach.” The Port of America he cited is a part of “America's Central Port District,” which acts as a unit of government to provide a variety of assistance to businesses along the Mississippi River.

Not waiting for businesses was a common theme of Rauschkolb's response. He said he would “beg and borrow” for large corporations to come to Alton, bringing with them defense and automotive industry contractors as well as technology and biotech initiatives. He said, if elected, Rauschkolb would help create a tech and biotech district in Alton.

He also suggested working with local colleges to bring businesses to Alton, much like the University of Illinois partners with Caterpillar. He said Alton could not “sit back and wait,” while other communities in the Metro East took advantage of their potentials.

SD: Dixon agreed with Rauschkolb's idea to partner with local schools, saying Alton had “wonderful local colleges.” He said Alton could gain tech industries from the knowledge base at its “doorstep.”

He disagreed with Rauschkolb about the need of large corporations, instead championing the recruitment of small businesses into Alton. Dixon said he was trained in marketing by one of the best marketing firms in the world, Anheuser-Busch, saying he would use that knowledge to “go to bat” for Alton. Dixon said most new jobs in post-recession America are being created by small businesses (he's right, according to the Small Business Administration, which said as much as 67 percent of new job growth is coming from small firms from 2009-2011, and 64 percent came from small businesses between 1993-2011).

Dixon said Alton has plenty of assets to attract businesses, including brick streets, historic housing and its proximity to St. Louis.

JY: Young agreed with both Dixon and Rauschkolb, saying Alton needs to “do everything.” He said Alton needs to attract corporations and foster its own businesses through incubators. He said the city should share resources to create more legacy businesses, which are created by family business expansion. He said he would use his Progressive Democrat platform, which is modeled after former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt's early 20th Century Progressive Movement, to both bring in new companies and help existing ones grow. He said Walker has not done enough in his administration to foster growth of either.

Another audience member who did not give his name said he saw significantly more black police officers, firefighters and public workers when he was younger. He asked the candidates what they would do to make the public workers reflect the diversity of the city.

BW: Walker interjected, saying the city does have black police officers and firefighters. He said he is looking for ways to recruit more minorities into the police force. He also said he his appointments have been some of the most diverse in the city's history (the current city administration has appointed several women and minorities in positions, but data could not be found to corroborate Walker's claim or prove it false).

He said city hires were chosen based on blind results from a civil service exam.

JY: Young said the fact a bachelor's degree is now a requirement to be a police officer in Alton (see Walker's rebuttal), many black youth no longer see it as a possibility for them, saying it “shot down their dreams to be a police officer.” Young said he would lower the education requirement to be a police officer if elected.

BW: Walker interjected again to correct Young. Alton Police officers are not required to have a bachelor's degree. They require an associate's degree and experience in something law enforcement related, such as the military, the police cadet program or even being a prison guard.

He said higher levels of education are required for officers, especially with today's technology. He said the inside of a police vehicle now looks like “a spaceship off of *Star Wars*.”

“We need to find the best and brightest to serve our community,” Walker said.

SD: Dixon said he would expand the police cadet program and model it on St. Clair County's program, which Dixon said was able to recruit more minority officers into its departments (according to the New York Times, Belleville has 26 percent more white police officers than population, meaning it still does not reflect the population's diversity, however, it is better than several St. Louis County municipalities, save the city itself, which has 21 percent more white officers than population, and Florissant, which has 20 percent more white officers than population). He also championed more police involvement with the youth and suggested creating an Equality Panel to oversee diversity in the city's workforce.

Another audience member who did not give his name asked: Why doesn't the city have a community center or pools? He said he remembered kids playing at school gyms as part of extensive after-school programs, and wondered what happened to those. He asked if such programs could be brought back.

DR: Rauschkolb said he would love to see things such as a “splash park” or indoor sporting area come to Alton. He said communities such as Edwardsville and Belleville have such places. Funding, he said, would be the largest hurdle. He suggested the city seek more federal grants and private donations to fund such projects, as the current administration has sought for park improvements. He agreed kids need sports year-round.

JY: Young said such programs already exist in Alton, and are being managed by people he continuously referred to as “champions.” One of those champions, he said, was Al

Womack, the Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club in Alton. He said his administration would work to support those champions and give them what they need to keep doing what they are already doing with their “passion.”

BW: Walker continued his narrative of “local kids in local parks,” saying he would continue to provide “clean, safe parks,” including Rock Springs and Killion Park at Salu. After running out of time to respond, Walker continued to name different sports programs the city offers to its youth as he returned to his seat.

SD: Dixon said he, like Rauschkolb, would seek grants for community center projects, and included the possibility of looking at some of Alton's many empty buildings to secure a location for such a place. He said he agreed with Walker's assessment of people needing parks, but said he would ask local people living near local parks what they wanted to see improve in their neighborhood parks.

He also addressed an issue, which caused many members of the crowd to murmur in agreement. Dixon said many poor youth and minorities have trouble getting transportation to Gordon Moore Park. He said he would work to create a form of public transportation to that park.

After addressing the question of adding more black people to the police force (as well as other city work forces), a man from the crowd said he had no objection to police requiring a bachelor's degree before asking Dixon the following: "When you were on “We Might Disagree,” a podcast hosted from Riverbender.com, you were asked what you would do on your first day of office. You said you would make a plan. What would it be? And, why not have it prior to being in office and start off running?"

SD: Dixon said he would not have a plan on his first day in office, because he would have to engage the citizens and give people a voice. He said the input of the citizens would be the most important part of his administration. He said he has been exercising his ability to listen and learn during his campaign.

A woman from the audience, who did not give her name, asked Walker what his current plans are for both the riverfront and the mall if he were to get reelected.

BW: On the riverfront, Walker said development is difficult. The Supreme Court has ruled the Alton Riverfront must remain a commons area, which makes future development there very difficult. Other areas of the riverfront have easements from railroads and the Army Corps of Engineers, so future work would be extremely difficult.

He did say, however, the city has attracted more steamboat tour services, which means the summer air of Alton will be full of steamboat whistles singing old-timey songs even more this year. He also said a craft beer festival will be coming this April, and showcased the movie showings at the amphitheater as proof of community involvement. He said any member of the public wanting to use the facilities only has to go in front of the Alton Amphitheater Commission for its use.

He said the Alton Square Mall has good ownership currently. The Hall Group, of Augusta, Georgia purchased the property more than a year ago, and even purchased the property formerly owned by Macy's before that Alton location closed its doors in a move Walker said was surprising. He said he is very optimistic for the future of the mall. The Hall Group owns more than 30 malls nationwide, which Walker said is a sign they know how to manage (according to *Time*, as many as 400 of the nation's 1,100 enclosed malls will fail in the next few years).

Another member of the audience asked Walker why all the park equipment was taken from Aberdeen Park near Milton.

BW: Walker could not recall exactly why that occurred, but said he believed it was because the playground equipment was “in disrepair” and had become a “safety hazard” for children playing on it. He said it was “on the radar” to replace it.

Greg Norris said he was part of the Weed and Seed initiative, but did not remember seeing Dixon involved. He said police were responsible for the “weeding,” and said “players are people who get it done.” He said the community needed to get back to “seeding,” and said groups such as the Alton NAACP and the 100 Black Men organizations were involved with that. He said Walker is deeply involved in the schools, adding he was glad to see that partnership. He asked what the candidates were going to do to get community champions the support they need.

SD: Dixon said he was “always a champion of collaboration and coordination.” He said several groups across the city were working to get the “seeding” done. He said he would work with Lewis and Clark Community College and the Scott Bibb Center to help disadvantaged youth get certifications for various forms of employment, realizing he was privileged to have that opportunity compared to many minorities who, he said, face an “uphill battle of even getting the basics.” He said he would try to help people through cooperative groups.

DR: Rauschkolb described Weed and Seed as a “fed initiative to change neighborhoods.” He said he would partner with schools, churches, sporting leagues and the “large families who run Alton” to make a difference. He said schools do “wonderful jobs,” adding partnering with churches and families would help.

BW: Walker said the city under his administration would “collaborate with anybody.” He said he has collaborated with Young as well as the YWCA. He said proof of that came when the city worked to repair a sinkhole at the middle school. He also touted his administration's ability to partner with schools by showcasing work done to Killion Park by high school students, who learned trades as they did so.

Walker promised he would “bend over backwards” to provide community support to anyone trying to better Alton. He said he would “support anybody with a good idea.” He said this was most shown by the community policing initiative, which he said was the only one of its kind in the Metro East (in previous interviews with Riverbender.com, Isom said the Alton Police Department is the only one allowing full access to both community and police records).

JY: Young accused the other candidates of “dancing around” the question. He said the champions doing things in the city did not require much city assistance, adding many of them were doing what they would normally do with their “passion.” He said he would work to create “shared economics.”

A man who owns a barbershop on Central asked what the city would do for the Fourth Ward. He said that part of the city has been neglected and only the fringes have been beautified. He asked the candidates: What would you do to improve the condition of the Fourth Ward.

JY: Young, a precinct committeeman from the Fourth Ward, said he would take the area known as “Mexico” and create the first African-American historic district. He said the area is rich with African-American history, saying it held a mostly black population during World War I, when many men went to fight for the French. He said he proposed the idea to Walker, but since first applying for the designation for free, Young claimed the Walker administration passed a law costing as much as \$1,800 for Young to apply for that designation (claim could not be either verified or falsified by research. Young did not name the ordinance or why the fee was required).

SD: Dixon said it was important to him for every Altonian to “have a voice.” He said he would make sure all the wards had a plan involving individual ward units. He said he

wanted each of Alton's wards to be “fairly represented.” He said 25 percent of Alton's population needs prioritized, saying “everybody deserves to be heard and have improvements.

BW: Walker said he chose the Fourth Ward to start a business – saying he worked with Alice Martin to put 300 people to work. He said he has invested in that community (claim could not be verified or falsified through research).

In response to Young, Walker said historic districts had to do with structures – not people – so there is nothing his administration can do to secure such a designation, even if it wanted to do so.

He said people in the Fourth Ward can call his office with any complaint and he said he will make sure it is fixed.

A woman from the crowd said she was worried about Alton's ability to maintain its black history. She told an anecdote about a woman who held several items of Alton's black history, but refused to share them, saying no one cared about them. The woman said the woman she met was called by Edwardsville to organize its black history, but has been neglected by both the City of Alton and the Alton Museum of History and Art, which she said did not hold nearly enough black history within its walls. Alton is rich in black history, of which many people are not aware, the woman said. She asked the candidates what they would do to preserve and showcase Alton's rich black history.

DR: Rauschkolb agreed Alton's black history should be showcased alongside the rest of its proud, and not-so-proud history. The issue, he said, would be funding such an initiative.

“How can we pay for a museum in which everybody's history can be placed?” He asked.

He said a lot of empty buildings are “horrible eyesores.” He said locations such as the former Alton Cine on Homer Adams Parkway could be used to house such places, but said they had been “let go” by both landowners and the city, who Rauschkolb said was lax on code violations. He said he would implement more fines for code violations to secure funding for a more expansive history museum, which would include everyone's history.

BW: Walker said Alton's history is one of the main reasons people travel to visit it. He said he would love to meet the woman of whom the audience member spoke. He agreed Alton has a lot of empty buildings, which could be utilized for such projects. He said the trouble would be how to fund and sustain such a place.

SD: Dixon, who described himself as a “history buff,” agreed he would like to meet that woman. He said Alton's history is an “important draw.” Dixon said he met with the Miles Davis group at the Alton Museum of History and Art and added he would like to discuss the matter with them and ask the museum about black history.

“If they don't want to do it, we will have to find a way to have our own museum to give the proper recognition it deserves,” he said.

JY: Young again cited his failed push to make the “Mexico” area of Alton into an African-American historic district. He said Walker does not understand black history. He said many areas of black history in Alton are ignored. He said he walked more than 130 miles across the State of Illinois in recognition of the Buffalo Soldiers, a brigade of black soldiers who fought in Cuba during the Spanish American War of the late 1800s. He said the Miles Davis Commission does not understand black history either, and that Alton should listen to some of its black historians and recognize some of its unsung black history as it does the rest of its history.

SD: As a rebuttal to Young, Dixon said he was not using his connection to the Miles Davis Memorial Project Commission, which consists of mostly white people, to prove his connection to Black History. He said he simply visited the Alton Museum of History and Art on their invitation.

A man who identified himself as a seasonal park worker said the parks department was the lowest funded “on the totem pole” in Alton. He said people say “screw the parks,” when it comes to the budget, which he said makes the parks “look like crap.” He asked if the department would ever get more people.

BW: Walker said a lot of his effort went into the parks, but the budget does not allow for more than what they have. He said he would have to find a way to get more money in the budget without raising taxes or fees. He showcased the fact all the water features in the city were fully-functional for the first time in three decades.

SD: Dixon seconded Walker's concern about finding room in the budget to support parks. He said it would not be easy, but promised to do his best and work his hardest to get more work done to the parks.

JY: Young misunderstood the comment, thinking the man said there were 27 park employees, instead of 27 properties. He told the man he would leave the park maintenance to grassroots groups who would clean and repair the parks with their passion, adding he would fire that man if elected.

Following that comment, the man and Young shared heated words, with Young standing up and challenging the crowd member. Parker agreed the crowd member's comments were unacceptable, but threatened to escort Young from the forum as well as that man. Young took his seat following those words from Parker.

Michelle Brooks asked the candidates what they would do about vacated properties, nuisance homes, slum lords and properties in various states of decay.

JY: Young said people in Alton are paying slumlords as much as \$700 a month in rent on average (according to data firm, Rainmaker Insights, the average cost of rent in Alton for a one-bedroom home is \$568 a month. For a two bedroom home, it is \$609 a month. Even assuming all landlords are slumlords, his figure is an exaggeration, however). He said he would encourage home ownership, saying the average mortgage cost in Alton was \$550 a month (mortgage rate averages are harder to calculate, however, they are on average lower than rental costs, meaning Young's number seems to be within the expected rate given Rainmaker Insights' figures).

He said ordinance inspectors are also overworked, saying many of them can only spend as much as 20 minutes inside of apartments. He said he would encourage neighbors to police their own and help alleviate the burden of ordinance inspectors. Home inspectors, on the other hand, could spend as much as three hours inspecting a home (information could not be found to verify or falsify Young's assertions regarding inspection times).

SD: Dixon described slumlords as a “pet peeve” of his. He said Alton had too many rental properties. He said he would work to hold those property owners accountable for issues. He said without accountability, people would be unable to have good, safe rental options. He said he would champion “firm and fair” enforcement.

BW: Walker – a landlord himself – said he would continue to work against slumlords, saying his administration has seen more than 3,500 citations regarding code violations (88 percent of which, Dixon claimed had been disregarded by the courts. Neither claim could be independently verified or falsified at this time).

When he took office, Walker said the city was still using “carbon paper” and “typewriters.” Since taking office, he said the city has gained a proper IT department and is now in the process of creating a vacant property registration database. He said that would “beef up” the city's ability to hold slumlords accountable.

DR: Rauschkolb agreed slumlords were an issue in Alton, promising to take code enforcement within the police department. He said that solution would hold both landlords and potential tenants accountable. He said inspectors could ensure properties

were up to code and could also properly vet tenants applying to live in those properties. He said Alton needed “good people” living in “good properties.”

Alton Police Officer Manny Espinoza asked the candidates what they would do to “bridge the gaps” to ensure the police department is not involved in politics.

JY: Young said Espinoza was a good cop, citing his behavior following a man being shot in the leg on Fountain earlier this month. He said he did not have an issue with officers like Espinoza, but said he had issues with an officer sitting near Espinoza, Brian Brenner, who was investigated following a dashboard video showing him allowing his canine officer, Kenzo, to bite a man named Cedric Phillips as he was lying in the street on Nov. 30, 2014. Young said the department would not be politicized if it had more officers like Espinoza and less like Brenner.

BW: Walker said he “respected the police tremendously,” as well as anyone who puts on a uniform for the public good. He said he did not want the police department or any other public service to become politicized. He said, while disagreements between his administration have happened and probably will again in the future, he was proud to be the mayor over the current Alton Police Department.

SD: Dixon said he wanted to “echo the mayor's comments.” He said politics needed to stay out of the police department.

DR: Rauschkolb, as a police officer himself, said the city could “bridge the gap” with police union leaders. He said he would promote transparency in the police department and city hall if he was elected.

A woman from the audience asked Walker why her street was never treated during severe winter weather. She said she lived on a hill, but did not specify exactly where she lived. She asked the mayor why her streets were so dangerous during winter weather.

BW: Walker misunderstood her question, and believed she was talking about a street sweeper. After saying the city did not have a street sweeper when he started, she corrected him. He then told her to call city hall. She said she has left several messages and has even gone to city hall. Walker said he did not remember her. She disagreed and said he did. Walker said he was sure she was right – forfeiting further arguments. She did not specify where she lived, despite Walker asking several times.

Phillip Green, who witnessed his uncle, Dennis Green's, death in 1995 at the hands of Alton Police officers who shot him in the back, said he wanted to be a police officer until he saw his uncle murdered without consequences. He said officers like

Diane Young and Dan Rauschkolb are the reasons he currently respects the police department. He said their influence is why he decided to return to Madison County, where he currently works at Illinois American Water. He asked if any of the candidates supported body cameras.

JY: Young simply said “yes” to body cameras.

BW: Walker said he supported the use of body cameras, but did not support the cost of storing the data. He said the cost to store that data could be as much \$150,000 for the city. Walker said he would love to store the data if it were more cost-efficient (according to a government technology news service www.govtech.com, the cost of storing data for 200 cameras is \$20,000 a month, or \$240,000 a year. Alton has slightly less than half that amount, so Walker's assertion is likely a true assessment of the costs to store that data).

SD: Dixon said body cameras are “important for both sides,” guaranteeing both officer and public safety. He saw storage costs as a hurdle he said he would have to research further.

DR: Rauschkolb, an officer himself, said body cameras would become necessary. He agreed the costs were high, adding they were also a “nightmare” for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and often suffered issues in the field. He said the technology was in its “infancy,” and assured many of those issues would have solutions in the next coming years. He said body cameras were not a matter of “if,” but instead a matter of “when.”

The teacher who asked the first question said the candidates addressed several of her students' other concerns, including the construction of a community sports center and opportunities following high school graduation within the city. She also said the Alton School District has a very large and ever-growing population of autistic children, telling the candidates to be cognizant of that. She then expressed her concerns for the outlandish towing fees charged by Fred's Towing when they are contracted by the police. She advocated for options for other towing services, saying the fees are costing people their livelihoods, because they cannot afford to get their only source of transportation out of impound.

BW: Walker agreed with the teacher, despite Fred's Towing donating \$1,000 to Citizens for Brant Walker as recently as Feb. 3, 2017, according to the Illinois Board of Elections. He said the contract will go for bid soon, and Fred's Towing may lose it, unless, he said, they offered the best bid.

SD: Dixon said he agreed 100 percent with the bidding system, saying such capitalistic measures helped found the U.S. He said high tow fees created a “vicious cycle,” describing it as a “critical issue.” He said despite doing something wrong, people do not deserve to lose their livelihood over a simple mistake and high fee.

DR: Rauschkolb said people who are not found guilty should not be charged for their cars being impounded. He said tow fees should be included with fines if someone is found guilty for his or her offenses.

JY: Young said outrageous towing fees have been something against which he has been campaigning for years. He said, if he is elected, he will decrease social suffering, saying people are becoming the change they want to see. He said he would run on a Progressive platform, which will reverse tow fees and bring social equality.