

Alton Mayor Brant Walker Delivers State of the City Address, Synopsis of Speech

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ALTON – Alton Mayor Brant Walker delivered his State of the City address Tuesday night at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Alton. The East End Improvement Association hosted the event. This is a summary of Walker's speech.

QUALITY OF LIFE

PARK:Michael Haynes - Director

- Grant received for new splash pad at Riverfront Park from NRPA/American Water for \$250,000.
- The addition of an inaugural prospect league baseball team to Hopkins Field starting Summer of 2021 which promises to increase revenue and economic impact by visits to Alton and to watch top of the line collegiate baseball talent
- In 2019 we started an adult pickle ball program and it has over 80 memberships in its first year.
- Over 1400 kids enrolled in this fall's soccer program, which leads metro-east recreation programs. Other successful programs our Park and Rec department started are; day camp, Daddy Daughter Dance, Mother Son Bowling, Christmas Workshop, adult softball and in the process of making sure every park and playground is ADA accessible
- Gordon Moore played host to at least 14 large tournaments this year consisting of baseball, softball, football, soccer, tennis, and kickball. These events alone brought in over 17,000 people with an estimated economic impact around \$600,000. This year, tournaments will be closer to 30 with the GameTime youth baseball contract.
- General attendance in our parks is approximately 1.5 million visits every year.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT:Greg Caffey-Director & Deanna Barnes

- The City received a \$500K Great Streets planning grant focused on the downtown corridor to emphasize economic vitality, branding and identity, connectivity and safety. The project deliverables will be completed in May 2020.
- To that end, the City has maintained close coordination with the Alton Works project, the proposed \$100-million-dollar downtown revitalization effort led by local philanthropists John and Jayne Simmons.
- Homer Adams Parkway continues its near capacity growth with recent new construction and renovation activity. Recent developments include Smoothie King and Santino's Steak & Pasta.
- Renovation of Central Plaza on Homer Adams Pkwy is underway, including the development of a 28,000 sq. ft. Planet Fitness location.
- The City continues to vet interest in the 35 acres adjacent to the train station. Future announcements are expected later this year regarding development plans.
- The greater Alton community continues to benefit from capital investments by BJC and OSF including the recently opened \$14 mm Moeller Cancer Center at St. Anthony's Hospital.
- The City of Alton is actively working to implement a long-range revitalization strategy within the industrial corridor. Components of the strategy will include identifying sites for remediation, repurposing of brownfield and former industrial sites, property acquisition and public transportation improvements.

- Our unemployment rates are trending down year over year, in November 2018 our unemployment rate was at 5.9, in October 2019 it was 5.1 and as of November 2019 our unemployment rate is 4.7!!
- We also continue to make strong strides in the tourism arena. We had approximately 87,307 hotel room nights and an estimated \$23,224,000 local economic impact for calendar year 2019.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

PUBLIC WORKS:Bobby Barnhart - Director

- Washington Avenue from Killion Park to College Avenue will be paved this spring.
- Public Works received grant assistance for the repaving of State Street from Rozier to Harold with work to be on April 2020 IDOT bid letting schedule
- Coordination with IDOT are ongoing for the repaving of Il 140 from Annex to Broadway which includes paving large areas of College and Washington Avenue
- Public Works was authorized to pursue grants from East –West Gateway for two projects for the repaving of Milton Avenue from Brown Street to Hillcrest and State Street from Rozier to Logan
- Parker Road at the Gordon Moore Part Entrance will finally be going out for bid in March of 2020 for the realignment, widening, repaving, and addition of bike lanes, to improve traffic flow and relieve congestion at the intersection of Il 140
- Plans for the repaving this spring of sections of several local streets in every one of the city's seven wards to include Oakwood, Elm street, and Muny Vista and many others
- Public Works worked to stop the record setting flood of 2019 and is working with FEMA to request reimbursement for expenses related to the disaster

Park Maintenance:

- The completion and dedication of the new concession building is to be planned for spring 2020
- Clearing of the lakeshore to promote recreation activities is currently under way with funds being utilized from the Madison County Sustainability Grant
- Refinishing and improvements to two additional tennis courts at the Simpson Complex to begin in summer of 2020
- Re-grading and sodding of multiple fields was completed at GMP in 2019
- Currently the replacement of the remaining sidewalks and the south parking lot at Killion park are underway to include ADA compliance
- Phase I of the restroom improvements at Killion park are to begin spring of 2020

- Completed playground, pavilion, and parking lot replacements at Norside Park with land clearing and site work activities to begin in summer of 2020
- Public Works is applying for grants to install new playground equipment and pavilions at Milton Park and Rock Springs Park in 2020
- Finalization of landscaping and site improvements are planned at Riverview park and the Sunken Garden this summer

PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE DEPT:Jake Simmons - Chief & Marcos Pulido – Dep Chief

- The Alton Police Dept. continues to build relationships with other Departments on both sides of the river to solve crimes in our community. Alton is the hub for over 13 cities who are using LPR cameras to solve many crimes in the riverbend.
- Alton partnered with Godfrey, Wood River, Bethalto, Granite City and the Madison County States Attorney Office to install LPR cameras in each of our communities.
- These cameras have helped to solve countless violent crimes, including murders in Alton and various riverbend communities.
- Our Juvenile diversion program continues to grow to allow kids that make a mistake to be able to go to college or the military and obtain gainful employment later in life. After attending an 8-10 week counseling class their record is expunged.
- Alton pd hosted the **Road to Work** program last year. In this we partnered with the Secretary of State, the MADCO Third Judicial Court, the Simmons Law Firm and the Land of Lincoln Law Firm, and were able to get drivers licenses back for over 30 people. Several people had their traffic warrants taken care of also, so that they could gain employment. Approximately 25 employment/business venders were present also and dozens of people obtained employment.
- Alton has partnered with the Madison County Third Judicial Court and the Granite City Police Department and obtained a grant, to be one of three nationally picked agencies to be part of a pilot program, with John Jay College, to work toward reducing intimate Partner violence reduction strategies. Alton will be part of a national change in how domestic violence is reduced by increasing the attention and institute harsher legal responses to the offenders of Domestic Violence.
- Alton continues to increase diversity within the city and police dept to better reflect the makeup of our community. Since 2014, our percentage rose from 6.5% to 14.75% today which includes African American police officers and jailers. Alton has more female officers employed than any other municipal department south of Springfield.
- We held our 6th annual Domestic Violence walk this is the only recognized walk toward Domestic Violence awareness in the St. Louis area
- We have partnered with Centerstone of Alton and a counselor will be assigned to the Alton Police Department to assist with people in crisis. We also work with other

community based groups in keeping with our community policing model by doing so, the police department have such events as; Ballin' with cop, Chillin' with Chief (free ice cream), coffee and cookies with a cop. Food baskets and Shop with a cop, Summons of joy, (gift cards in lieu of traffic tickets)

FIRE DEPT:Jesse Jemison - Chief & Brad Sweetman – Deputy Chief

- The Fire Department is anxiously awaiting the March delivery of two brand new Spartan 1500 GPM pumpers to help replace an aging fleet.
- The Fire Department responded to 5522 calls last year. Of that, 1347 were fire calls. The remaining 4175 runs were ambulance calls which generated over \$900,000 in revenue. That means the department's 60% pension contribution obligation will be at least \$540,000 for calendar year 2019.
- In order to stay prepared for all emergencies Fire Department personnel logged 13,213 training hours covering such topics as fire suppression, EMS, technical rescue and hazardous materials mitigation just to name a few.
- Lastly, the department was awarded a FEMA/Department of Homeland Security grant in the amount of \$227,273 for a Regional Mobile Firefighter Trainer, with a local financial commitment coming from Lewis and Clark Community College. The trainer is housed on the grounds of the Public Works Department and was nicknamed "The Jake" in honor of Captain Jake Ringering who tragically lost his life after sustaining injuries battling a fire on March 5, 2019.
- Over 148 smoke detectors were installed, free of charge, in the City of Alton by fire department personnel in 2019 through our continued partnership with the American Red Cross.
- In conjunction with Code Enforcement department, over 40 board ups of vacant properties were done throughout the city which helps reduce crime.

B & Z and CODE ENFORCEMENT:Terry Buhs – Director & Ofcr Vince Warlick

- Last year Building and Zoning issued a total of 635 building permits and have over \$12 million in new capital investment by local businesses
- City has implemented Landlord Licensing with 1022 landlords currently identified and 60% have complied with the Crime Free Multi-Housing class.
- The Building and Zoning department has identified 161 houses for demolition with 41 houses demolished.
- Code Enforcement will continue to teach the crime free multi-housing program to area landlords which will result in a better vetting process for better tenants.