

## Mayor Report – Brant Walker, City of Alton

February 2019

Over the last two years, \$2 million was raised in private donations to build a new inclusive playground, new concession building and an adjoining pavilion that was completed in 2018 at Gordon Moore Park. The park enrolled over 1,400 kids in last fall's soccer program which leads metro-east recreation programs and it played host to at least 14 large tournaments which brought in over 17,000 people with an estimated economic impact of approximately \$600,000.00. Also, numerous upgrades were done at many of our inner city park.

This year, our Public Works Department was awarded federal dollars for Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP) approved by East West Gateway that will be used to reconstruct sidewalks near Lovejoy Elementary and Alton Middle Schools. The City will partner with IDOT to make improvements on IL 140 which includes parts of Broadway, College and Washington Avenue. Also, Washington Avenue will be going out for bid in this Spring for asphalt paving.

The Planning and Development department reported that American Water Works recently completed a \$1.3 million renovation to its call center and that total employment at the Alton Center Business Park now exceeds 775 full-time jobs. The City recently established its third TIF district to aid the redevelopment of Alton Square Mall and city staff continues to work with the property owner to craft a long-range revitalization strategy for the immediate area. The city is currently vetting interest in the acreage adjacent to the multi-modal station to ensure any prospective development is consistent with the City's planning goals.

Unfortunately, the entire Riverbend region is experiencing a spike in violent crime which is attributed to the criminal element from the St. Louis area but thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Madison County States Attorney office, the Village of Godfrey and the City of Alton, we were able to purchase License Plate Reader cameras. We were the first city in the Riverbend area to have License Plate Reader cameras and they have solved two murders and numerous vehicle thefts. On a fun note, Alton Police Department with help from the community recorded a Lip Sync Video ("Happy") which had over one million hits!

Our Fire Department is wrapping up the public safety radio upgrade project which has included new 911 dispatch consoles, construction of a 184' radio tower in Rock Spring Park with backup generators and over 100 new hand held communication radios for police, fire and public works. The Fire department also responded to 5,520 emergencies last year which included 3,194 patients being transported to the hospital. In order to stay prepared for all emergencies, fire department personnel logged 11,641 training hours in topics including fire suppression, technical rescue, EMS and hazardous materials. Lastly, over 150 smoke detectors were installed free of charge in Alton homes by fire department personnel in 2018 through their continued partnership with the American Red Cross.

In 2018 our Building and Zoning department issued a total of 472 building permits and have over \$14 million in new capital investment by local businesses.

The City has added a new Code Enforcement department. Through this department, the city has implemented Landlord Licensing and rental registration in order to identify who owns rental property in the city. The purpose is to make the landlords accountable for substandard and deteriorated housing as well as the tenants to whom they rent too. We also want to facilitate a relationship between landlords, law enforcement and the Building and Zoning/Code Enforcement department.

It's no secret that the City of Alton has sold the Waste Water Treatment Plant to Illinois American Water and the sale was strictly out of necessity. The city is facing annual payments to the police and fire pension funds mandated by the State of Illinois that has increased to levels the city cannot afford and the obligations are projected to increase each year. With that money, we will make a substantial payment on both pensions which will reduce our annual payments to levels we can afford.

Once again the Liberty Bank Alton Amphitheater was a huge success in 2018, with the sold out concert featuring the Beach Boys. We also had our hugely successful Sauce food truck and Wine and Jazz festival. Last year marked the second year for the return of the Alton Expo with five days of food, games, rides and live entertainment. And if you haven't heard – this June THE legendary Steve Miller Band will take the stage at the amphitheater!

Last but not least, in 2018 Alton won the Small Business Revolution which put us in the national spotlight. The show had more than six million views, has been featured in more than 800 news stories and have had more than two billion media impressions. AARP listed Alton as the top 10 places to live, Forbes listed Alton as one of the best places to retire in Illinois. In 2019, Reader's Digest, who reaches over 40 million people worldwide, reprinted AARP's Top 10 Places to live and to top it off, Alton was featured on the Travel Channel Show – Haunted Alton which aired January 5 and 12. The Travel Channel website also chose Alton as one of the 50 most charming small towns in America!

What an exciting 2018 Alton's had and we are looking forward to what's coming our way in 2019!