

The Abilene Chamber of Commerce recently asked the 2018 candidates for City Council a few questions. The questions come from Chamber leadership and are aligned with the core values of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce. The candidates' answers are presented here, complete and unedited, for your information. The intent of the Chamber is to arm our members with as much information as possible, which results in informed decisions at the ballot box.

The Candidates are:

Place 1: Clinton Embry

Shane Price

Place 2: Bruce Kreitler

Jack Rentz

Alex Russell

**Not all candidates responded to the questionnaire or answered all questions. All responses received are below.*

For more information about the Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee, please email erica@abilenechamber.com

1 Physical Infrastructure of a high quality and sufficient quantity is essential to attract, grow, and retain jobs. What is your position on street maintenance fees?

Shane Price: The Street Maintenance Fee will represent what is effectively the largest tax increase implemented by the City Council. That is why I pushed for having a referendum from voters before we implement it. However, the Street Maintenance Fee is only one portion of the Street Maintenance Fund. Whether or not the voters approve the Fee, I believe we need to commit to implementing the other aspects of the Street Maintenance Fund.

Bruce Kreitler: We need our roads repaired. My position on the proposed street maintenance fee is that if the voters approve it, we will use the money generated by that fee to start, finally, working on our backlog of streets. If the fee does not pass the voter's approval, we will have to come up with a different plan, but either way, the streets need fixed.

Jack Rentz: If elected I will vote for the solution that makes the most sense for Abilene taxpayers, including the current street maintenance fee proposal. I would continue to look for better ways to raise the money needed to restore and maintain our streets while ensuring that spending is in check and our priorities are balanced. I believe

that streets are an expensive yet vital piece of infrastructure and agree that our priorities have been in other places in years past. Abilene must identify a means of prioritization, but current revenue sources alone will not pay for street improvement on a broad scale without stakeholder participation.

Alex Russell: We are still discussing street maintenance fees because our current city council decided to take the easy way out. Our current council has had ample opportunity to instate and provide relief in our roads and infrastructure but have repeatedly chosen not to make the difficult decisions that we elect them to make. Since the council has decided to delay once again, and make the voters vote on this decision, I will respect the voter's decision on SMF after the May election, and when I am on council I will vote for or against SMF based on the outcome of the citizens' vote.

2 Physical Infrastructure includes not only transportation, but also covers broader issues such as water resources, agriculture, and planned growth. Please tell us your plan to ensure that Abilene is "water-secure" for years to come.

Shane Price: The City of Abilene is a regional supplier of water. We currently have three main sources of water - Lake Fort Phantom, Hubbard Creek Reservoir, and the O.H. Ivie Reservoir. During the most recent drought, the City Council was aggressive in pursuing additional water from Lake Possum Kingdom. We have reserved water rights there, built a treatment facility in Breckenridge and built a pipeline to connect the Breckenridge plant with Lake Possum Kingdom. The water coming out of the new treatment facility in Breckenridge can be fed into the existing water line from Hubbard Creek Reservoir in order to reach Abilene. In addition, we have made significant progress towards realizing a long-term goal of constructing a new reservoir near Cedar Ridge. We need to continue pushing forward on this to help secure and additional source of water for Abilene and the Big Country.

Bruce Kreitler: Due to the emergency created by the drought that started in 2011, a lot of work on this has already been done. We have the capacity to re-use septic water, which can net about 7m gallons of water a day, and pull water from Possum Kingdom Lake, which is a "new" reservoir for Abilene. However, in the arid, drought-prone, region where we live, there is no such thing as too much available water supply. I think that we should seriously consider building the Cedar Ridge Reservoir, and also seriously explore adding some groundwater supplies to our water inventory.

Jack Rentz: If elected I would be in favor of continuing the efforts to secure the Cedar Ridge Reservoir to ensure safe water for Abilene for generations to come. Much time, energy and expertise has been invested in this solution and progress has been made. Far too much water makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico. It will not benefit me in my lifetime, but at some point, it will be vital to the future of Abilene and we cannot wait until then to build it.

Alex Russell: We are in the heart of West Texas, we don't have a "life-blood" river or canal running through our middle, so we are always going to have to ensure that Abilene and her surrounding areas have protected water sources. Luckily, we had leaders over the last decade who made that a priority. With the completion of the Possum Kingdom project and others, we are water-secure, and there is already great water infrastructure in place. As a council, we must ensure we make securing funding for our city's water and treatment plants a priority. Though we do currently have solid water-infrastructure, that does not mean we can stop innovating. Abilene must come up with solutions to efficiently use the pools around rain-water run-off and street flooding.

3 The Chamber believes that social and cultural infrastructure are crucial quality of life components to creating, attracting and retaining talented workers. Social and cultural infrastructure includes funding for arts and cultural programs; effective assistance for veterans, elderly, and underprivileged citizens; and robust special events availability. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? And could you expand on your plans to support or oppose this position?

Shane Price: I am a strong supporter of and believer in the positive impact the arts has on our community. That impact begins in the earliest grades at school and extends to all ages. The funding the City Council currently provides the the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council is vital as a catalyst to encourage matching gifts from individual, corporate, and foundation donors in the community. These artistic endeavors not only enrich the lives of the citizens of Abilene, they also serve as additional attractions to people visiting Abilene. It is important that we all recognize these benefits and continue to support the arts. I'm not sure what you mean by "social and cultural infrastructure" that provide "effective assistance for veterans, elderly, and underprivileged citizens". However, one aspect of our infrastructure that we've only recently started to address is effective conveyance for citizens that are hearing impaired, visually impaired, and/or struggle with physical mobility. We are working towards being intentional in including measures that meet their needs when we consider street and sidewalk improvements. One example is the material used at crosswalks. If we can put bricks for crosswalks, this provides a tactile indicator for the visually impaired as they cross the street so they know when they are straying off the crosswalk.

Bruce Kreitler: I agree. Using computer terminology to put things in perspective, think of the physical parts of the city, and city services, as the hardware, with the arts and cultural programs being the software. Both are needed, and one is not going to succeed without the other. I think Lynn Barnett and her crew at Cultural Affairs are doing an outstanding job. As to the second part of the question, as far as the elderly and veterans, I think we do a little better in Abilene than

other communities, but there is always room for improvement. This is something I'm behind. The newest tax-credit, low-income, elderly, housing unit, which is being built on Rebecca lane, would not be under construction if not for my vote on the issue. As far as the homeless community in Abilene goes, I will say this, what we are doing now is not working, or at least not working very well. Without realizing that there was already a study underway, I have been asking staff for solutions to part of this problem. Since the results of the study have recently been brought before us, and some of that information looked pretty helpful, I intend to support anything that looks like a reasonable step in the right direction (the right direction being a way to curb homelessness, and integrate those people back into society).

Jack Rentz: I agree with this assessment and will do all I can to support our professionals in the field. We have them and we need to support their efforts. We have been told as a community that securing a trained and available workforce is our number one economic development challenge. Improving Abilene for our current and future residents is important, because we compete with other communities for jobs. Job creation leads to the broadening of our tax base. A broader and more diverse tax base will allow city revenues to grow. Growth in revenue will enable our community to do the things necessary to provide good government, solid infrastructure, and a sound economy for our city. My history is tied with job creation. In my view, it all starts with jobs.

Alex Russell: I have or am currently serving on boards or planning committees for the Business Expo, the Chamber's Annual Membership Celebration, the Center for Contemporary Arts, the Texas Tech Alumni Association, Frontier Texas, and Abilene Young Professionals. All of these groups and events aim to increase the quality of life in Abilene through art, networking, fellowship, connection, and more. Without these groups, without these investments in quality of life, Abilene will not be able to compete in the work-force across every industry. We must attract, retain and engage young police officers, fireman, professionals, and families to sustain and grow our city. The millennial generation can work from almost anywhere. It is no longer critical to move to find a job, millennials can live anywhere they want and do almost any work they want from that place. We have got to ensure Abilene is providing and maintaining a quality of life that these young police officers, fireman, professionals, and families are demanding.

4 How can we integrate the arts to help diversify audiences, improve quality of life, and continue to draw tourists and benefit economically?

Shane Price: While the arts benefit from public funding, I believe they are most successful when private individuals are engaged in developing and implementing a vision that supports the values of the community.

Bruce Kreitler: While I'm certainly open to suggestions here, one thing that I can't help wondering about is what the capabilities of the

new Taylor County Expo Center will be. Often, we think of the “arts” as being things that are permanently in place here, most specifically in the downtown area. That kind of thing works well, but I remember years ago, when many different kinds of events, concerts for instance, used to come to the Taylor County Expo Center, with some “bleed-over” to the Civic Center, and occasionally to private venues. With the right mind-set, and good marketing, there are a lot of possibilities.

Jack Rentz: Again, I will work with and support our local professionals to provide the level of quality of place that all Abilenians deserve. I fully understand the importance of this and understand that when you have professionals in a field you should support them as needed and not try to tell them in detail how to do their job. Abilene has some of the best and longest-tenured professionals in the field. We should equip them with the support, encouragement, and resources necessary to accomplish the task while also ensuring transparency and accountability as it relates to progress.

Alex Russell: Abilene has great history, and there are many organizations that do incredible work protecting and celebrating this history. However, there is also a great art boom trying to break through in Abilene, and we are allowing areas with very little historical value to be “protected” from art, and murals, in the name of tax reductions. We have also got to shift our mind-set that art is one thing. Art is not only statues, art is not only murals. Art is many different mediums, with many different colors and styles. If we truly wish to “integrate the arts to help diversify audiences, improve quality of life, and continue to draw tourists and benefit economically”, then we must realize art is not something we control. I’ve heard many business owners that wish to update their buildings, and include art and murals into their design, but they have been told no, because it does not fit with someone else’s vision of Abilene. During my service as President of the Abilene Young Professionals last year, we introduced “Key City Keys”. A local family donated their old piano, AYP secured the funds to restore it and hired local artist, Stephanie Prosser with Palette of Purpose to turn the piano into a work of art. Our group then worked with the City of Abilene and Abilene Parks and Recreation to install this playable work of art Minter Park downtown. Key City Keys is innovative because it combines many different needs. It’s bold and eye-catching, its art makes you stop and converse, and its piano keys provide sounds of life and celebration through the streets of Downtown Abilene. I hope to put a beautiful, colorful piano, covered in art, on every street corner.

5 In what other ways other ways do you feel the arts have been of benefit to our community?

Shane Price: As a father of four that all participated in marching band at Abilene High, I interacted with many students who worked hard in class to make sure they remained eligible to continue playing. Different people have different skills and contribute to the community in different ways. I’m thankful we have avenues for the various arts to

be expressed in a positive way that benefit so many.

Bruce Kreitler: Frankly, I would be hard-pressed to quantify the human benefit of arts, or other quality of life issues. Certainly, the more abundant, and diverse, the arts are (and beyond a few easy things, such as orchestras, sculptures, and painting, I suspect the term “the arts” means different things to different people), the better for the community. However, the more developed and accessible the arts are in our community, the more we will develop a reputation as a cultural center, which, of course, is very helpful in many different ways, tourism being only one of them. Our community has intentionally set itself up as a regional distribution/receiving center for goods and services, and being able to add the arts to that is a big plus.

Jack Rentz: Aside from enhancing quality of life for our current residents, arts and cultural are an important element in the education of our children and in attracting visitors into our city with the hope of positively impacting our small businesses and overall economy. Arts and culture is defined in many ways – from fine arts to ballet to public sculpture to rodeo. We must support our local efforts to enhance the livability of Abilene and the arts play a multi-faceted role in doing so.

Alex Russell: The arts have been a benefit to Abilene in every way imaginable. For our community, the arts provide an outlet. Children need activities not solely focused around a ball. Some children won’t connect with sports the way others will. Art and art education, are crucial in displaying important events, our history, our hopes, our fears, and our conversations. Can you imagine Abilene without the Abilene Philharmonic? The Center for Contemporary Arts? The Abilene Opera Association? The CALF Festival? Western Heritage? I can’t, and don’t want to. All of this is art. All of this requires our attention and investment. Growing up, I had the privilege of being involved in all of these events, I want to make sure everyone in Abilene has these opportunities, because once you’ve experienced a night at the symphony with the Abilene Philharmonic, you appreciate its impact and importance.

6 **The Office of the Governor provides data for every Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Last year’s data showed tourism generated \$416 million into Abilene’s economy and out of town visitors contributed \$11 million in local tax revenue. Without the impact of tourism, every Taylor County household would pay an additional \$690 in taxes to sustain existing services. How would you work to increase tourism to take more burden off local taxpayers?**

Bruce Kreitler: Not being one of the big brains who spends all of their time measuring tourism and traveling dollars, I am limited to my opinion, but, my opinion is that travelers/tourism probably spend more money here than most people realize. However, it is unrealistic to think that just increasing that flow of revenue is beneficial, by itself, as far as the local tax burden goes. I think we are about to see an increase in

“tourism” dollars due to an expanding economy, the new Expo center, and increasing consumer confidence. If that takes place (and I hope it does), we will need to be careful how we spend that money, otherwise, the tax burden on the local property owners/residents, will change little at all, or even increase (as it has been doing).

Jack Rentz: I support all efforts to get a downtown convention hotel and any other event or asset that draws people to Abilene or off I-20. Again, it comes back to supporting our professionals and respecting the input and views of many people who have volunteered or otherwise participated in visioning, planning and “doing.” I also believe that leveraging the things we do every day as a community with other resources (ie. State, federal, private investment) will give Abilene a tremendous advantage in growing our regional economy. Good growth doesn’t have to come on the backs of our citizen taxpayers. Through strategic partnering, we can accomplish more with less.

Alex Russell: Other than supporting local organizations and groups that focus on tourism, I would work to increase tourism by working to dispel the negativity around it in our community. So often, so much emphasis on tourism is marketed outward of our community. Abilene needs to engage our residents and community around tourism. We need to bolster tourism dollars to not only continue bringing conferences, sport events, rodeos, exhibits to Abilene, but also to educate our citizens, our residents who live here every day, on why it is so necessary and important so that we are not all working against each other for the same goal.

7 Government regulatory restrictions, in general, are a damper on economic activity, and should be minimized at every opportunity. While public health and safety are valid concerns, they must be balanced against tax burdens, permitting, land use restrictions, and other regulatory changes which could adversely impacts business and private economic growth. How can the city deal more effectively with these regulations and create a culture that is known for encouraging job creation?

Bruce Kreidler: Excellent question. I have been all over this issue, years before I ever ran for City Council. City Government needs to work with, not against business owners and citizens. Ridiculously restrictive regulations, that people keep running into, or similar regulations which are proposed, should be done away with. I’ve personally been involved in fighting against onerous sign restrictions (successfully), helping small, and large, business owners cut through bureaucratic red tape (and then working to get those processes amended, or scrapped), and am currently working on several other issues where the city is unnecessarily restricting people’s private property rights, and/or reaching into their wallets.

Jack Rentz: It is very hard to get around federal government regulations, but Abilene must have a voice in the process. And we do through the Chamber and its efforts. Through partnerships, our

collective voice can be heard in DC, in Austin and at the local level. The Chamber does a good job of respecting the role of government while working closely with city staff to overcome barriers that negatively impact business. It has been my experience that as long as I knew the regulations I could deal with them. Also, when everyone has the same rules it tends to level the playing field for all employers. Regulations are necessary to ensure a quality community, but they cannot break the backs of our primary job providers. I believe a balance can be reached in achieving a high-quality community with streamlined processes and easier access to city hall.

Alex Russell: First, the City of Abilene needs someone on city council with the time and energy to go through our ordinances and clean them up. One of my Place 2 opponents was able to knowingly create division and discourse among our citizens by publicly bringing up an outdated ordinance that is still on the City of Abilene’s books. The Supreme Court of the U.S., through another city’s lawsuit, struck down and invalidated two Abilene sign ordinances. So then why are these ordinances still stated as law on our City’s books? My husband, Justin, and I recently bought 250 Cypress St., the old Busch Jewelers building. Up until we bought the building a month ago, there was a business running in there for many years. The day after that jewelry business closed and moved out, we went to get the electricity moved to our name. We were unable to do so, because the city needed to send an inspector out to make sure that the electricity was in working order, proper “no smoking” signage was in place and there were an adequate number of fire extinguishers. This process took more than 2 weeks to complete. We had not pulled any business permits, we are not even sure what business will occupy inside. We are going to invest a lot of time and money into revitalizing this space for our community, but our city would not transfer the electricity into our name until we bought and secured outside signage that has not been necessary for the 35+ years the building has been in existence and operation.

8 To grow our city, we must have a vibrant workforce. What do you see as the role of the city to help develop that workforce?

Shane Price: I was a member of Phase I of the Team Workforce initiative of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce. It was enlightening to learn about workforce needs in our community and see the efforts being done to not just “add more”, but communicate better so we aren’t duplicating efforts in some areas and not giving enough attention to others. My youngest son participated in the dual-credit HVAC program hosted by Cisco College while he was a junior and senior at Abilene High. We were part of the genesis of this program, and I tried to provide specific actionable feedback to the DCOA on successes and challenges we encountered. We need to recognize and continue to support the ongoing conversation between businesses needing specific skills in the workforce and educational institutions that provide the needed training.

Bruce Kreidler: While the City of Abilene could certainly have some influence on workforce development, the better vehicle for that is the Development Corporation of Abilene, and the Abilene Industrial Foundation. As an employer myself, and someone who has always been “working class”, this is something I’m very interested in. I have had plenty of discussions with the DCOA, AIF, and others, on this subject, even to asking if we can do programs outside of Abilene, but still in the Big Country, so that we can then draw those workers into the Abilene workforce. I consider the area of workforce retention/quality, to be where current community-to-community economic competition is going to be won . . . , or lost. I think drawing companies to communities is going to start slipping away from economic incentives, or at least depend less on them, and move toward what community has the best labor pool to hire from. How this works out in our community is going to depend on who does the best workforce development, and I don’t think it’s all about dollars. There’s a lot more to who does the best job of training the next generation of workers than just who’s spending the most money on it.

Jack Rentz: Abilene needs to continue to make strides in quality of life so that businesses will be inclined to locate or expand here. It takes a combination of public and private sector money, working together with a unified voice and independently to make good things happen. Today’s workforce chooses a community in which to live first and then find employment. This is different than previous generations when a job determined the city we chose to live in. We’re competing for workers to supporting a dwindling workforce, and we must take it seriously. Focusing on job training through support of our education and training partners is tremendously important as well.

Alex Russell: The role of the city is to understand the inter-connection between workforce, tax revenue, development, and sustainability, and plan a long-term vision accordingly. Abilene cannot have a vibrant workforce without adequate roads and infrastructure, quality of life, and room for new opportunities. It is the city’s role to not limit access to the things, to promote and environment where these areas are celebrated, and to provide these opportunities where possible.

In the old economy, workers followed the jobs. In the new economy workers can choose to live anywhere. It is becoming more about a sense of place than about the specific job. What are your dreams and/or visions to improve Abilene’s quality of life and make Abilene the place to live, play, and work?

Shane Price: A quick gauge of the vitality of a city is what is happening downtown. I am excited about the new downtown hotel project that is getting closer to becoming a reality. I believe this will be a new catalyst for growth in the heart of the city. In addition, there are individuals that want to be active in restoring downtown. We need to do what we can to minimize obstacles to renovating older buildings in the downtown, while recognizing we cannot ignore public safety

concerns.

Bruce Kreidler: In a depressed economy, workers follow the jobs, in a bustling economy, workers can pick-and-choose, and jobs chase workers. We are currently in an “up” cycle (which I hope lasts a very long time), so finding quality workers is a real problem for businesses (hence my comments on competing for new businesses). Quality of life is important, but just as in “the arts” in a question above, that phrase means different things to different people. Water parks, concert venues, amusement parks, etc. are all quality of life topics, but so are decent streets, adequate city services (and if you don’t think sewer service and trash collection are quality of life issues, try going without them for a few days), good schools, public safety, security, and competent leadership. It’s all a package. Too much concentration on just one facet, to the detriment of other parts of the bigger picture, makes a community less, not more, attractive to potential citizens.

Jack Rentz: I believe we are on a good path. It is progress, not perfection. I think some things that are happening in the major cities are working in our favor. Things like the sports facility in the funding stage for Nelson Park area will really help young families whose kids are heavily involved in sports and it will draw a lot of visitors who will be spending their incomes around town. I believe we must engage with those who are “in the know” and seek out every opportunity to compete on any level and in any way that is reasonable and necessary. Downtown revitalization, improving the safety and cleanliness of our city, actively listening, and responding to those with opinions will be key to our ultimate success. Finally, we must look at the long term and work with the end in sight. Knee jerk reactions to opportunities isn’t always the best approach for building a first-rate city.

Alex Russell: That is exactly correct. Millennials, or the “new” economy in this context, can live, work and play anywhere, and the three don’t have to be the same place. In Abilene, we have got to open the opportunities for the new and growing population to seize here. The greatest obstacle to this is building revitalization. 62% of our buildings in Abilene are non-taxable. To create infill development, expand access to opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, and to increase our city’s revenue, I have written an ordinance that I hope to see on the first council meeting I attend as an Abilene City Councilwoman. My Building Revitalization Initiative states that, with certain parameters, if a property owner invests at least 10% of the property value back into the property in the first 1-5 years of ownership, the property owner could be eligible for up to 50% property tax reduction for a maximum of ten years. My business partner and I recently tried to purchase a property at N. 8th and Orange. The listing was \$185,000, the asbestos testing and abatement, \$122,000. This property went from almost being a renovated and revitalized area of town, to completely impossible, because the cost of the asbestos testing and abatement was going to eat up have of the renovation budget. We have got to find creative and innovative solutions to offset these costs and allow for opportunity among these old, sometimes dangerous buildings.

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What role do you see the city playing in connecting itself with education to improve the workforce?

Shane Price: This seems to be a restatement of question #8. Please read my answer to that question for this one.

Bruce Kreitler: Again, the best mechanism the city has for workforce improvement is through, and by supporting, the DCOA in this area. The DCOA board, while unelected, is appointed by the City Council, and direction to that board, from the City Council, would be the most efficient way to go about this. Certainly, local school districts should be involved, but again, the better way to do that would be for the DCOA, and the AIF, to work directly with the schools, not by the City Council trying to work directly with the School Boards (that would definitely be an awkward, and probably unwelcome, arrangement).

Jack Rentz: We need more technically trained young people willing to work in a trade. We need to have a cultural change to make it acceptable to start down this path in high school followed by trade school as opposed to sending "little Johnnie" off to a university to incur debt for something he really does not want to do in the first place. We lose too many of our kids to other communities and we must make it compelling to stay in Abilene. Collaboration between business and education is key and promoting job pathways for our young population is critical.

Alex Russell: It is our city's, and our city council's, job to have to over all, big picture, as well as the nuanced details that make this big picture. It is our city's and council's job to work daily to ensure all of the threads are connected and working together. A vibrant workforce is crucial to development and sustainability, quality of life is crucial to a vibrant workforce, and education is crucial to a solid quality of life, a vibrant workforce, developments and sustainability. The definition of education is also evolving. It is our city's responsibility to not only stay on top of these trends, but to be on the forefront. Education is constantly innovating. The City of Abilene must work with the school boards and education professionals to ensure we are supporting and furthering education quality and opportunity around our city, because educating our youth and future leaders should always be a priority.

to try and get the Chamber membership involved. I have repeatedly called on the current President of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce in City Council meetings to find out what the Chamber membership thought about issues under consideration. I have also called the current Chamber President to let him know about important issues coming up, so that he could be present for them, if he would like.

Jack Rentz: Yes, I have watched the public/private partnership work over the years and we are a much better city because of it. The two foundations have supported so many things and have lead the way for philanthropy by others. We have a real good formula for success and should not abandon it. No one knows job creation better than the private sector (business). The city should focus on core, essential services and allow the private sector to do what it does best – create opportunity. The city's role is to set the stage with sound policy that encourages economic growth. Together with the private sector we can build upon the solid foundation that exists here and employ the expertise of our job creators to build upon success.

Alex Russell: Since returning to Abilene after graduating from college, I have made my life work investing in public/private partnerships. One cannot work without the other, but it is not enough to only say that. Those of us that believe wholeheartedly in the viability of public/private partnerships must work to not only further, but to educate our community on these initiatives. Too often in Abilene, political tactics dilute public/private partnerships to untrue phrases such as- wasting tax-payers' money and underutilizing public resources, when nothing is further from the truth. We must fight for public/private partnerships in the voting booth, and increase these opportunities where ever possible. I would like to see increased transparency, as well as increased marketing and education in our current public/private partnerships to bolster their public relations. Then, I would like to see these opportunities expanded. What great work could public/private partnerships do for our Fire, Police, Downtown? California's Fire Safe Council is a great example of a public/private partnership working for its community. I would like to see Abilene on the cutting edge of public/private working together partnerships like this.

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Abilene is known across the state as a strong example of public/private partnerships. Do you support the private sector's role, through the Chamber, in economic development, tourism development, military affairs, industrial marketing and arts and cultural affairs? Please explain your answer.

Bruce Kreitler: I definitely support private enterprise being involved in all of the above. I was reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce even back when Mike McMahan was the president of the Chamber, and I was working against (along with many other members of the business community) a very draconian proposed ordinance. I was a member of the Chamber at that time, and worked with Mr. McMahan



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