

Executive Director's Message

Casting for new businesses takes cooperation and providing the right environment

It was nice to have a little vacation and the opportunity to do some fly fishing in the Black Hills with my son and oldest grandson. Fly fishing for trout has always been a family tradition, and through the years I have learned that there can be a connection between fishing and life.

This spring, the chamber has focused on marketing Hot Springs as a national "Distinctive Destination." Where tourism is an important part of economic vitality in our community, we also must keep fishing for other avenues of economic development. Just prior to going on vacation, I submitted a response to the Governors Office of Economic Development to answer an inquiry for a small technology company that is looking to relocate to South Dakota.



George Kotti
Executive Director

This company would initially employ about a dozen people and require a large 20,000 square foot facility. Once established, the business could become a lure to develop a cluster of similar related businesses in an area. Like with fly fishing, we cast our fly on the water, submitted a proposal, and now we are waiting to see if we can hook this prospect.

As experienced fishermen, both my son and I can tell if we have made a good cast in the right location where fish are holding. I think Hot Springs has the potential to land this and other new businesses. Both in Hot Springs and Maverick Junction, we have some excellent industrial lots available that are practically "shovel ready" for building plus the capability to get a new building up in a hurry. The key for us is to keep casting, because if you don't cast it is impossible for us to catch anything.

Another secret of fly fishing is to use the right fly. The other evening my son and I were having minimal success until we switched to a special fly, and it seemed we caught a fish on nearly every cast. For us to catch new businesses, cooperation between local governments, the chamber's economic development committee and private developers is essential. The ability to offer incentives to the right prospect might make the difference of landing the new business or not.

Finally, when fly fishing it is important that you don't scare the fish. Sometimes my oldest grandson runs along the bank near where we are fishing and gets too far ahead of us, and that ruins the hole. Negative community attitudes and excessive controversy can spook potential companies from looking at a community. Having the recent lawsuits over the golf course and associated properties settled is a major step in calming the waters in Hot Springs and will once again allow investors to seriously consider us for future investment.

Allow me one quick comment on tourism. It looks like we are off to a great start this season. The new Maverick Junction Visitor Center is a part of that. Just the other day I brought lunch to my wife who was volunteering there for the day. We were so busy we could hardly finish our lunches. One particular visitor from Texas already had reservations in Keystone but decided to make an unplanned stop in Hot Springs to visit the Mammoth Site once we told him about it. Then, when we mentioned the golf course, he said he had his golf clubs with him and would spend a night here on his way back home. Again, I want to give a special thank you to all of the individuals and local businesses who donated funds and materials to make our new visitor center a reality. It's working!

Fly fishing is one of my passions, and fishing for new business is a passion for our chamber. I have learned you don't catch a fish on every cast, but as we continue to cast in good water, with the right fly, and keep from scaring people away with negative attitudes, we will get a serious bite one of these days. We will keep fishing to insure that the best is yet to come for Hot Springs.