

State of the Tri-Lakes Region 2018 address, given by Terri Hayes, President of the Tri-Lakes Chamber, EDC and Visitor Center:

Thank you to everyone attending today. To our Elected officials, Community members, friends, and of course one of our most treasured assets, our members. We appreciate you attending and showing us your support.

This community, its businesses and the organizations we work with, do mean the world to us. In our line of work, it truly does take a village to be successful.

It is an honor to be joining you again for our Annual State of the Tri-Lakes Region.

I would like to first introduce my staff here today. We have Laura Easley, our first Event Planner. We do so many events, I thought it was about time!

Our newest employee, Jodi Battle, is also here. She is our Office manager and Director of Membership. She has been with us only a couple of weeks but has jumped right in and is already part of the family.

Back at the office, holding the fort down is Tara Pibel, our administrative assistant. She is a whiz at our computer-related tasks and we could not accomplish what we do without her.

I am truly lucky to have such a great staff that is committed to our organization and to all of you, our members.

2017 was a fun journey. It was a steadier journey.

I am happy to say there really was not a big change or challenge we faced in 2017. We had many changes in 2016, so last year was our time to settle down and get some work done.

Staff spent many hours going over our goals and action plans for our first Strategic Plan, at least since I have been in this position. Our board then fine tuned them at our Board Retreat, and after some additional comments, will be adapted very soon. However, through this process, we already began implementing a few important items, as they were identified, because why wait?

I am very proud of our board of directors. They are all invested, they are looking at what we do great and what we can do better, to serve our members and the Tri-Lakes community.

One of the areas we are fine tuning? Processes, systems and writing down the ways of doing things. Doesn't that sound sexy? Well, it may not be, but it is very much needed in not just our organization but in every organization and company. We are tweaking our already existing continuation plan so we can survive everything from a natural disaster to something as simple as a computer going down, which I just dealt with this weekend.

Also, should something happen to staff all at once, the board will have all the tools needed to not just hire new staff but get them trained asap. In a small organization, thinking this way is critical, if not a little gloomy.

Let's move onto a happier plan for 2018. It is the year of existing members. Our current members have always been a priority. So, we want to improve upon what we are currently doing, starting with the month someone joins.

Our ambassadors play a huge part in helping us reach out to those members who might not attend events but who support us for other great reasons.

Even if they don't attend, we like to make sure they still are up to date on our actions and our goals....and our Ambassadors are there for us in that respect. Would all the Ambassadors in the room please stand? Let's give them a round of applause.

Our Membership team will be working on how we can show our value to not only our existing members, but future members and to the community as a whole. We will be looking to educate and inform them on how we help, but also, we will be looking to them to let us know what they might want. What are we missing? What should we be doing more or less of? We want to listen and listen, implement some things, then listen some more. This is an ongoing endeavor and truly the best way I can see to support our members.

There is actually a plethora of things we are involved in, but mostly behind the scenes. You will be hearing more about those things, because if we don't tell you, how would you ever know?

One thing we did a lot of last year and plan on doing even more this year, is speaking up on matters of development, as to whether a project will be an asset to our community or not. We have a responsibility to support and protect local business, while preserving a wonderful quality of life.

About a week ago, I spoke at the Lewis Palmer Business Advisory Group meeting. I am actually going to steal from my own words, because they are very applicable

here also. So I apologize up front to those who were in that meeting and will be hearing a few familiar comments.

First, our growth is overall a good thing. Communities simply cannot stay the same. They either grow or they shrink, and I think growing is the preferable path.

To many, our growth seems like it is all at once. I promise they did not all get together and decide to pull the trigger at the same time...the economy is just finally better. Some have been sitting on land for decades, are now are feeling it is the right time to sell.

We are a hot commodity! Our communities are close to I-25 and within commuting distance to Denver and Colorado Springs. We have wonderful views of the mountains. We have choices! Do you have small kids and want to live in a close neighborhood setting? We have that. Want to be a little further out with a little land and a larger house? We have that. There are a few areas with multi-family developments, but not nearly enough for our younger families and the elderly, who may need a more affordable option to live in. Luckily some additional townhomes and attached homes were just approved, which will help in those demographics.

What comes after, or during in our case, a housing boom? Commercial development, as anyone living in the Tri-Lakes area can attest to. This development has given us convenience so that we really do not have to go outside of our area to run our errands any more. This is a positive, creating a sense of neighborhood but also a positive in terms of keeping your sales tax dollars in the community.

With a growing population, more local jobs are needed and appreciated. Not everyone is happy to commute...or, they tire of it, after a few years. It is also good for businesses to have a large enough population to fill their open positions as they move into the area.

You met Jodi a few minutes ago. When I was looking for a new office manager, I received 120 resumes in just 6 days. Luckily, there were many well qualified candidates and I hired someone great.

However, the amount of people who submitted resumes who *really* were not qualified, and, were already working was amazing. They didn't need a job to pay their bills. They already had that. However, through their cover letters, it was

clear many really wanted to work in the community where they lived, and not in their current positions 30, 40, 60 minutes away.

Parents with kids getting into sports and other activities after school find it tougher to get away from work with a great distance to drive. Others just want to simplify life.

I am a perfect example. I have a house in SE black forest and my drive into the chamber was about 30min. But on a snowy, icy day, that drive can turn into 90min. After 4 years of making the drive, I said enough and moved to downtown Monument. I now walk to work. And I am not alone in what I wanted.

For these individuals, we need to have jobs they can go to, here, or we will lose them because they could end up moving, to be closer to work.

This was a long-winded way of explaining we support what the area needs and are speaking up about it. For the first time this last fall, we hosted a community meeting for a developer looking to bring some of those jobs to our community. It was a successful event and we hope to host more of those types of meetings because it is a win-win. The community gets to share their opinions on a project in an open forum and the developer gets to explain their project, then listen and take that information forward to the final plan.

Growth cannot be stopped, but it can be guided where the end result is something everyone can be proud of.

The EDC committee is also working with Madeline with the Town of Monument to help identify what businesses are we lacking here. Going forward, our goal is to get more involved in bringing those businesses that people both need and want.

How many dry cleaners does an area need, how many clothing stores can a community support? What service industries are we missing. And off course, we would love to attract more primary businesses who have those jobs I was talking about.

We cannot get everything here, nor should we. Part of this process will be eliminating options because we don't meet their demographic requirements.

What this all looks like yet, I don't know. It is a 2018 goal to start the process, so stay tuned!

Whether you are an emerging small business, experiencing growing pains, or a larger organization, we want you to think of us as your proactive business partner. You can look to the chamber to provide business development opportunities, solid business strategies and effective advocacy, all geared towards your success. Engaging with us, dramatically expands your connections.

We get invited to the table for most topics that come up for discussion locally and regionally. When it makes sense, we consider it our job to educate decision makers, in a manner that helps our businesses. Our community role is growing every year and I know we have a positive and influential impact on those around us.

We provided, at your seats, a brief look at some statistics and some highlights from 2017. We had a great year last year and know we will have an even better one this year.

My door is always open. I, along with my great staff, want to do nothing but support. Support our members, support the towns and county we represent, support the community and help keep it the best darn place to live and work.

At this time, I want to say a heartfelt thanks to everyone who continues to support us year after year.

Thank you for being a part of our Chamber & EDC family.

We look forward to providing an even better partnership for our members and community in 2018.