




Peter Crewe
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

FROM: Peter Crewe, Director

CC: Shawn Machado, Conor Baldwin, Doreen Burgess, Melissa Desroches

SUBJECT: **MOTION RESPONSE: 11/1/22 – 2/28/2023 - C. Yem Req City Mgr Have appropriate department update The City Council on the plan to celebrate the City's Bicentennial Anniversary**

Just prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events convened a committee to begin initial planning for Lowell's Bicentennial. This committee met several times before ultimately entering a hiatus due to the pandemic and extended staff shortages at CASE. Notes from the original committee still exist. Members from the original have been contact and representatives from the The National Park, Historic Board, Tsongas Industrial History Center, The Lowell Plan and Greater Lowell Community Foundation and Mosaic Lowell have come onboard with the new committee. The goal is to convene a meeting in the next couple of weeks. A first priority of the new committee will be identifying groups that are not represented and ensuring that Bicentennial plans are inclusive and representative of Lowell's whole history from the contributions of Native Peoples through the latest round of immigrants and refugees. The committee will resume meeting regularly with increased frequency as the bicentennial approaches.

When should we recognize Lowell's Bicentennial?

This is a valid question. The **Town** of Lowell was incorporated as an independent entity on March 1st, 1826, however Lowell did not receive its **City** charter from the State of Massachusetts until April 1st, 1836. A case can be made for recognizing both dates however the consensus is that 1826 should be the primary focus. 2026 will also mark the 250th anniversary of United States Independence, Lowell paired its 150 year celebrations with national bicentennial celebrations in 1976.

Funding

There is a statute in Massachusetts General Law (MGL c.40 s.SH) that allows for municipalities to establish revolving funds for the reorganization of large anniversaries or similar celebrations. These funds can be established up to five years preceding the event and can be



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carried over year to year. It is CASE's recommendation that the Council vote to establish such a fund with the goal of having \$100,000.00 in the "bank" by December 31st, 2025. CASE will also work with the Mill City Festival Fund to establish a special Bicentennial Fundraising committee to secure additional sponsorships.

Bicentennial Celebrations

CASE will be looking to the committee, the City Council and the community on what they want to see as part of Lowell's bicentennial celebrations. There are several potential areas to focus on:

- **Existing events:** Existing events like Winterfest, Lowell 4th of July, The Folk Festival and City of Lights will all be excellent opportunities to highlight the bicentennial year for Lowell. CASE can also work with other festival producers to encourage them to plan special events related to the bicentennial.
- **Special event:** A special event on March 1, 2026 can be arranged. CASE would certainly want input for the community on what form this event should take.
 - Canadian singer/songwriter Gordon Lightfoot was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Company to write a song celebrating the Canadian Centennial in 1967. The result was the "Canadian Railroad Trilogy", now widely known. Commissioning a contest to write a Lowell song that debuts at the bicentennial might be a fun lead up over the next three years.
- **Neighborhoods:** The bicentennial year will be an important opportunity to elevate the neighborhoods and their histories and contributions to the City's rich cultural diversity.
- **Public Art:** At the February 28th City Council meeting Councilor Yem put forward two motions related to public art: LOWELL as a tourist attraction and "love lock bridge". CASE will provide separate detailed responses to these, but planning several larger scale public art projects that can be unveiled during the bicentennial year will be an excellent way to mark the bicentennial. CASE would also recommend the City Council establish a Public Art line item in the City budget now to begin preparing for projects.

Over the coming months CASE will work with the bicentennial committee and City Council to draft an outline for bicentennial celebrations that mark Lowell's history and look forward to the next two hundred and fifty years.