


Henri B. Marchand
Director
Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

DATE: May 10, 2018

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager 

FROM: Henri B. Marchand

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 3/23/18 by C. Cirillo: C. Req. City Mgr. provide a report regarding rejuvenation of the Tour de Lowell; report to include information from prior races in the City.

Returning a Tour de Lowell type bicycle racing event to downtown Lowell could be an exciting and unique addition to Lowell's events calendar. It would, however, require substantial planning, time and resources to execute.

The Tour de Lowell began in 1981 and ran for at least 13 years on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. The main sponsor and organizer was *The Sun* newspaper and co-sponsors included The Lowell Five Bank, The Lowell Plan and Bud Light as well as other supporters. Co-sponsor fees were \$2,500 in 1991 the prize money was \$1,400.

The Tour was a one day event that included children's trike and bike races, a 26 mile amateur road race and a professional 40K Criterion race with cash prizes. The children's races ran along Merrimack Street in the morning while the pro race circled through downtown (Merrimack, Bridge, French and Kirk Street lap) and the amateur race left and returned downtown via an out and back New Hampshire route. Downtown streets were closed to accommodate these races. The City provided logistical support such as police details, padding obstacles with hay bales, street closures and event cleanup however it is unclear whether these services were reimbursed or covered by the City's budget. The pro race was sanctioned by the US Cycling Federation (now USA Cycling).

In discussing how a similar event might be staged today, we spoke with several individuals and groups who are familiar with cycling events. The Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) is interested in the possibility of bringing a cycling event to Lowell and playing a role in support. Rachel Brown (avid cyclist and city attorney) has participated in races and reached out to the New England Bicycle Racing Association (NEBRA) and set up a conference call with officials to gather additional information and gauge their interest in participating. NEBRA is the New England arm of USA Cycling, and any officially sanctioned racing event would be run through NEBRA. We spoke with the current president (John Laupheimer) and Administrator (JD Bilodeau) of NEBRA. Both were very excited about the possibility of returning an event to Lowell.

From these early discussions, it appears that a Criterium type race with amateur events could be organized for 2019. A criterium is a multi-lap fast-paced race around a circuit of approximately 1 km, as opposed to a road race, which is generally one or two loops of much longer circuit. The event would

likely be on a Sunday so as to minimize impact on traffic and businesses within the downtown as a hard street closure would be required to secure the race route. In order to make this a family day event, children's races might also be scheduled in addition to the men's and women's pro races and amateur races. (While a downtown criterium would not be suitable for beginner racers, bicycle road racing attracts many people who race at a high level but who are not professionals.)

Initial research suggests that several groups would be required to undertake the organizing and production of a Criterium event. Additional research is necessary; however, the following outlines possible event organizing groups and their roles and responsibilities:

- Race organizing group and race promoter ("Promoter")—an experienced individual or a USA Cycling sanctioned club with cycling event production experience (manage cycling planning, sanctioning, registration, mapping, volunteers, race officials, permitting, timing and day of execution; work with sponsors)
- Local sponsor group—CVB (work with the Promoter to create event committee, fundraise, act as fiscal agency, contract for services as required by organizing group, port-a-johns, etc.)
- City—as it is with the Bay State Marathon, Lowell Folk Festival and other major events, the City's role would be to work with the Promoter/Sponsor to plan and provide public safety and logistical services, including hard closure of the event area; staging and power access; trash management; and other event related services as needed

Additional research will be conducted and discussions held to identify specific race requirements including budget and Promoter selection, develop logistical details, quantify overall and city-side costs and assess scheduling and community support. CASE will schedule a meeting with NEBRA officials and CVB and City reps as a next step to explore the feasibility of producing a new Tour de Lowell Criterium event.

Our expectation and NEBRA's is that this event could be organized to take place in the summer of 2019, with the hope that it could become an annual event on the regional, and perhaps national, calendar.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this matter.