

# Chamber Happenings

Greater Paterson Chamber of Commerce

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## PATERSON DELEGATION VISITS LOWELL MASSACHUSETTS ON FACT FINDING MISSION

Paterson Mayor, Jeff Jones, recently arranged for city officials, members of the Paterson Restoration Corporation (PRC), and the Paterson business community to travel on a fact finding mission to Lowell Massachusetts. Founded in the 1820s as a planned manufacturing center for textiles, Lowell is positioned along the rapids of the Merrimack River, 30 miles northwest of Boston. In many ways Lowell is a sister city to Paterson, the first planned industrial city, which was founded by the Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufacturers in 1831. Like Lowell, Paterson's manufacturers harnessed the power of water, from the Passaic River and The Great Falls, to become the cradle of the industrial revolution in America.

Today, Lowell and Paterson are both National Parks. Although Lowell's 141-acre park was designated on June 5, 1978 and received \$70 million in funding, Paterson's 109-acre Great Falls National Park has a budget of zero dollars today. In 2007, while Congressman Pascrell was campaigning to have the Great Falls designated a National Park, the Congressional budget office estimated that it would require a cost of \$22 million combined from the years 2008 through 2012 and only \$1 million per year thereafter.

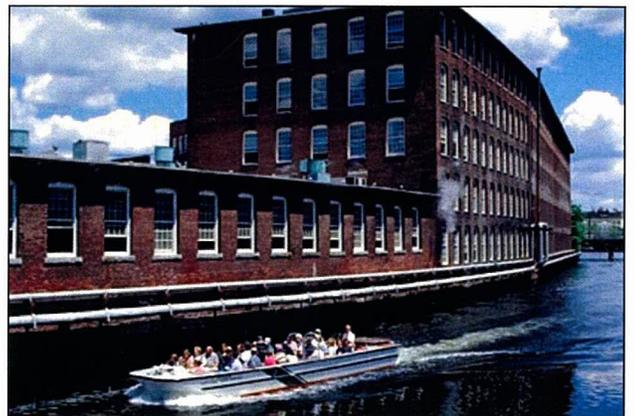
Funding for the National Park aside, Mayor Jones recognizes the potential tourism to the Great Falls National Park as an economic development tool for the City of Paterson and so he traveled with a team of pertinent officials and business leaders to Lowell to witness the success and discuss with Lowell City officials, how it was made possible.

Paterson's Acting Economic Development Director Brian Sweeny, who had the opportunity to meet with his counterpart in Lowell, said the success of Lowell was in the hands of its own community and it's a lesson we can learn in Paterson.

"Development plans come and go," said Sweeny. "Lowell did not trust high-paid consultants. They hired a research development group to compile questions and then they asked their own residents what they wanted. They trusted their own instincts and the City leadership."



*In Lowell, Massachusetts, former mills have been transformed into residential buildings, artist gathering and exhibit locations, museums, and educational centers.*



*One of the attractions in Lowell, which Paterson delegates enjoyed was the Canal tours. With funding for repairs and maintenance of Paterson's Raceway System, this could also be an attraction in Paterson.*

In addition to developing the National Park and neighboring areas, the entire City can benefit from its own people stepping up to

*continued... pg 2*

### Inside this Issue...

*St. Joseph's Unveils New Lobby - pg 3*



*Paterson Rotary Inducts Mayor Jones as Honorary Member - pg 4*



*Under the Tent with Berkeley Networking Event... pg. 5*



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## Chamber Happenings

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## PATERSONIANS EXPERIENCE LOWELL

from COVER

the plate, as in Lowell.

Sweeny remarked, "We have to help ourselves. The residents, our business people, our children. Report crime, work with the business owners, create partnerships. Citizens count. If you're a business owner you can improve your store. If you're a resident you can help police improve crime reporting. You can improve your properties."

Chamber President Jamie Dykes attributed cleanliness as a big part of the success of Lowell as a tourist attraction. "My first impression of Lowell was that everything was extremely clean. Sidewalks, streets. By and large, properties were well maintained. I saw no weeds, nice landscaping, buildings were painted. This led to an immediate sense of security and a feeling of welcome"

The group toured parts of the historic park, which included museums, guided canal tours and trolley rides of the City of Lowell.

When asked if Lowell's National Park success could be re-created in Paterson, Dykes indicated that it could, however different times will call for different funding sources.

"When the Lowell Historical National Park was created, it was a very different National Park service. They used to be able to throw all sorts of dollars into a project. In our current economy it would be a miracle if Paterson got the same level of funding," said Dykes.

One of the specific things the Paterson delegation was looking forward to experiencing was the nightlife and social activities happening in Lowell. They were also given, by the City of Lowell,



Today, one can tour the historic sites near the Great Falls National Park, by calling the Paterson Historic Preservation Commission. Above, Joshua Castano, a Commission guide discusses historic architecture with the GPCC 2010-11 Leadership Paterson class.



By touring the historic district near the Great Falls, one can view bridges such as this one pictured above, which are parallel to the Paterson Raceway System.

a list of night-time attractions, and entertainment venues.

"There is no reason for Paterson to shut down at 6:00 PM," Jones said recently. "I am looking to create two Patersons. There will be Paterson AM, and Paterson PM. Paterson PM will be a program of activities, shopping, and entertainment at night-time to bring people into the City and more residents to our Downtown."

Dwayne Cox, Chairman of the Paterson Parking Authority, participated in the Lowell trip to learn more about the way Lowell provides parking.

"I enjoyed the night life," he said. "I would love to see it replicated in Paterson so people are able to go out around 9 or 10 PM to experience restaurants and music. I think it would be a major step toward bringing

**LOWELL... from pg. 2**

ratables and businesses to Paterson."

Regarding parking, Cox indicated that the Paterson Parking Authority could look more toward green parking facilities and he indicated they could even do it better than Lowell.

Jamie Dykes, didn't see enough of Lowell's nightlife to form a strong opinion on the success of Lowell after dark.

"I was surprised that car and pedestrian traffic was very light

both during the day time and evening in Lowell," remarked Dykes. "However, nightlife in Lowell was difficult to judge because we were there mid-week. Some of the restaurants didn't list entertainment until weekends."

However, he did indicate that City officials were touting the success of their Lowell Summer Music Festival, while the The B52s, were set to take stage that weekend at the Boarding House Park, in Lowell.

"One of the things I took from Lowell, that I think everyone in Paterson should understand, is

that your land and properties fit into a larger picture when we are trying to create a destination out our of the National Park," explained Sweeny.

The trip to Lowell for City officials and Paterson business leaders was funded by the Paterson Restoration Corporation (PRC), a non-city entity, that administers programs and loans to stimulate private investment in the City of Paterson.

For more information about Lowell log onto <http://www.nps.gov/lowe/>

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