



JYM WILSON, Free Press

OFF FOR THE U.S.S.R.: Burlington assistant attorney John Franco, left, Youth Programs Director Jane Driscoll Sanders and her husband, Mayor Bernard Sanders, speak with the media before embarking on a 10-day trip to the Soviet Union with nine Vermonters to attempt to establish a sister-city program with Yaroslavl.

Group from Burlington departs for Soviet Union

By Enrique Corredera
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In the midst of a superpower summit in the Soviet Union, a Burlington delegation departed Tuesday in hopes of establishing a sister-city relationship with Yaroslavl.

"Clearly, Reagan and Gorbachev's meeting is a wonderful step forward (toward peace) but this delegation and the concept of a sister-city relationship is also an important part of that process," said Mayor Bernard Sanders, who is leading the group.

The 12-member delegation, made up mostly of city officials, is scheduled to arrive in Moscow today. The group will spend three days in Moscow, three days in Leningrad and three days in Yaroslavl.

Yaroslavl is an ancient community

on the Volga River located about 150 miles northeast of Moscow with a population of 500,000.

Sanders said the sister-city relationship could result in a steady exchange of programs between the two cities.

"It seems to me that at a time when we're spending \$1 trillion on weaponry and in which we have the capability now of destroying each other a dozen times over, it's absolutely imperative that people from different countries with different ideologies begin the process of sitting down and communicating face to face," Sanders said.

The city officials in the delegation are spending an estimated \$1,500 each to pay their way for the trip, but they will be paid their salaries and the time

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away will not count as vacation, Sanders said.

The list includes Community and Economic Development Director Peter Clavelle, Assistant City Attorney John Franco, Assistant City Clerk Michelle Weiss and Beth Phillips from the library.

While the Board of Aldermen unanimously agreed with the effort to establish the relationship, some aldermen expressed criticism Tuesday about the fact city officials will get paid.

"My opinion is that it should be considered vacation time," said Alderman James Hildebrand, R-Ward 4. "Yes, it's a delegation we're sending over there to establish a sister-city relationship, but I don't look at it as something that should be paid out of taxpayers' funds."

The salaries of city employees going on the trip, not including two officials who work under contract and are not considered employees, amount to almost \$7,000 for nine days of work.

Sanders defended the decision to pay the employees saying, "The establishment of a sister-city program which is supported by unanimous resolution of the Board

of Aldermen is certainly important for the city of Burlington."

Alderman Allen Gear, R-Ward 4, said, "I don't look at a delegation that big as city business. I think you could do the same thing with one or two people. This fits in with the mayor's international agenda."

Sanders said having the employees pay for their trip and receive salary was the proper way to draw the line. "The fair middle ground is to have people pay their own way but have this time be included as city time," he said.

City Treasurer Jonathan Leopold supported Sanders' decision. "I'd much rather see the city sending city employees (to the Soviet Union) who are working for world peace and to prevent nuclear war than sending city employees to airport conferences, snow-plowing conferences and parks and management conferences which are relatively less important than the question of world peace," Leopold said.

Aldermanic President Nancy Chioffi, D-Ward 5, said she did not object to paying the salaries, but she would expect a thorough report when they return. "If it's city business, it has to benefit the city," Chioffi said.