

Sanders Wants Rebirth of Spirit

By DEBBIE BOOKCHIN

BURLINGTON — Outgoing Burlington Mayor Gordon Paquette looked drawn and tired Wednesday, while across town Mayor-elect Bernard Sanders was calling for a "rebirth of human spirit."

Such was the contrasting mood here Wednesday as Paquette's political machine, well-oiled for 10 years, was ground to swift gear-grinding halt by a Sanders, a political maverick who has dominated Vermont's political left for nearly a decade.

An air disbelief hovered over Burlington City Hall as Paquette's lawyer scrambled to file paperwork asking for a recount of the ballots which denied the Democratic mayor his sixth term in office.

Sanders' 12-vote victory over Paquette Tuesday night was officially increased to a 22-vote margin after final tabulations were completed in City Hall Wednesday morning.

The final tallies showed Paquette with 4,013 votes, Sanders with 4,035 votes, Independent Richard Bove with 1,090 votes and Independent Joseph McGrath Jr. with 138 votes.

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Sanders

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The ballots were being held in the Chittenden County Sheriff's office following a restraining order issued by Superior Court Judge Edwin Amidon early Wednesday morning.

Attorneys John Franco and Michael Coopersmith who were working for Sanders, obtained the restraining order in the middle of the night after learning that the city clerk's vault, in which the ballots are stored, is left open during the day and is accessible to City Hall staff and the public.

The ballots will remain in the sheriff's custody until a recount occurs.

According to City Attorneys Joseph McNeil and Richard Wittlesey, Paquette has ten days from the day of the election to file a petition for a recount. The recount would occur no less than two days and no later than five days after the petition is filed with the city clerk.

Paquette spent much of the day cloistered in his City Hall office in the company of Democratic friends.

Paquette continued to refuse to discuss the election outcome with reporters. The mayor looked drawn and tired as reporters tried to get him to comment on his apparent defeat.

At a press conference held across town at the Franklin Square low-income housing project, Sanders was confident of his victory, and promised "the door to City Hall will be open to Franklin Square and all low-income people. This is their government."

Sanders said tenants "in public housing will be given far more respect than they have been given before."

In his first press conference as mayor-elect, Sanders said he plans to establish a Mayor's Advisory Council to bring "southend people, unions and other local groups" together in one room to "thrash out ideas."

Every city project will be "re-evaluated and re-analyzed," he said.

Sanders restated his opposition to high-rise condominiums on the waterfront and to the unpopular southern connector highway.

The 39-year-old progressive said he is "extending the olive branch" to the Board of Aldermen. "If they fight us," he said, "that's in bad faith." Sanders said he thinks he may have some friends on the Board of Aldermen. He cited Maurice Mahoney, D-Ward 1, Robert Sweeney, D-Ward 4, newly-elected Citizens Party candidate Terrill Bouricus, Ward 2, and Sadie White who could be the aldermanic representative from Ward 3 if she wins a runoff election with Paul Trepanier, the Democratic candidate from that ward, who denied her 40 percent of the vote.

"The success or failure of my administration will rest on the kind of support that we can get from the people of Burlington," Sanders said.

In a special message to the media, he requested "time to explain" new policies and said upcoming public meetings will "make good television." He asked for a "more active role for radio and TV," and noted that once he takes office the WJOY radio station public affairs show "The Mayor Speaks" will become "The People Speak."