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HIGHLIGHTS OF 2001

WINDHAM VISITS THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, DC: On June 12 and 13, 2001, Barbara Coish, Chairman of the Windham/Suzdal Sister City Committee and Rex Norman, representing the Town of Windham were guests of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Washington, DC. The occasion was the meeting of the conference of the Days of Russia's Small Towns in the US. The Small Towns of Russia program is a new program which began in 1999 under the direction of the Open Society Institute founded by American millionaire, George Soros. One hundred and sixty eight (168) Russian small towns applied to be accepted into the program. Of these thirty five (35) were selected to receive grants over a ten year period. Eight of the selected towns were present at the embassy from June 11-16, 2001 to participate in the conference. Windham's Sister City of Suzdal is a participant and Mayor Alexander Illarionov, Head of the Administration was present at the embassy conference. Since Suzdal was the only small town with a United States Sister City, Mayor Illarionov felt it was important to have Mrs. Coish, Chairman of the Sister City Committee and the Town Administration of Windham invited to participate. Rex Norman, Town Assessor was designated by the town to attend representing Windham Administration.



L-R: Rex Norman, Barbara Coish, Mayor Alexander Illarionov, Unknown

On the evening of June 12th, Windham's representatives were guests at the embassy in celebration of the Russian Federation Independence Day. There were several thousand other guests in attendance that evening as well. The evening featured musical entertainment by a group from Suzdal called Vischenka. The musicians and dancers performed non stop through the evening. Displays of crafts and products from the eight participating towns were featured and everyone enjoyed the buffet of Russian foods. On the morning of June 13th, Mrs Coish joined Mayor Illarionov as a participant in a round table discussion to share ideas and offer assistance. After welcoming remarks by H.E.Yuri Ushakov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation and an explanation of the program by Program Director, Ms. Elena Rozanova, the round table began under the direction of Dr. Alexandr Surikov, Head of the Economic Section, Embassy of the Russian Federation. The round table which was divided into two sections featured representation by other mayors of Russian participating towns, some US small town mayors, economic leaders, government bureaus and volunteer groups. Mr. Illarionov spoke briefly on the history of Suzdal, the tourism industry and the plan for the use of grant money. It was stated by Ms. Rozanova that over 10 years time Suzdal will receive a portion of 13 million dollars in grant money to assist in the tourism industry. Mrs. Coish spoke about the origin of the relationships with Suzdal, about some of the special groups the committee supports and about Windham's' special connection with the orphanage because of the Norman family adopting siblings from Suzdal. Mrs Coish also mentioned the ambitious project initiated by Bruce Flanders to build an American style house in Suzdal to be used for education and a conference center for sister cities and others.

The local delegation was pleased and honored to participate in this program. It is understood that this on going program will be sponsoring similar conferences in the future.

SISTER CITY UPDATE, JANUARY: There are several things upcoming that the committee would like to bring to the attention of the community. The first is the progress of the Windham/Suzdal house in Suzdal. Bruce Flanders has recently returned from Suzdal where the contract has been finalized with the contractor for the house. There will be a ground breaking ceremony in spring probably in April. The house which will be an American style construction will serve as an education site providing advanced English instruction and computer education. The house will also hold a conference room where meetings can be held. This will be especially useful for meetings between members of Suzdal's other sister cities as well. The other sister cities are Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany, Evora, Portugal and Klec, Italy. The committee is accepting donations toward the house and additional information about the house can be acquired on the Windham town website.

The mention of all of the sister cities brings to mind the fact that Suzdal will host an international festival in August 2001. Suzdal has invited all of the sister cities and two additional sister cities of Evora to participate in this festival. Surrounding towns of Suzdal will also be participating. Windham will send a delegation. In addition to officials from Windham, Suzdal would like crafts people, folks artists and a chef to attend. The committee is taking names of those interested in going on the trip. Interested folks may contact Barbara Coish at 898-9520 or email at bacrdh@aol.com. Planning will take some advanced knowledge of numbers who wish to travel on the trip so please alert the committee soon if you are at all interested.

The third item of interest is regarding a fund raising event which will probably take place in May on a date to be announced. Donna Lombardo, Windham's well known soprano has offered to present a concert of Russian music at Searles School as a fund raiser for the Sister City Committee. As soon as dates are firmed up for this event the committee will advertise to the general public. It should be a wonderful cultural evening. The committee is expecting a visit from two Suzdal university students this winter. The dates of their visit are not sure at this time. Also Anatoly Arkhipov from the Suzdal Building Department who will be overseeing the house building project may visit Windham in March.

Watch the Windham Independent and your email for further updates.