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NEWS RELEASE

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Picente Launches City-County Consolidation Committee

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente today announced that he will create a City-County Consolidation Committee to increase efficiency and save taxpayers money.

“Many discussions about consolidation have taken place, but there is a need for action that will reduce the cost of government. We must work together to increase efficiency and provide even better services than are currently available,” Picente said.

Picente, who in his 2009 budget proposal called for a landmark effort to take a new look at law enforcement structure at the county level, said that the main focus of his meetings with city officials will be to create savings or realignments in areas other than the direct delivery of services to the residents. This group will explore ways that sharing services or merging of efforts will eliminate duplication and overlapping and would result in increased efficiency and ultimately savings in total costs.

Picente said that the committee will be composed of the chief local elected official of each of Oneida County’s three cities – Rome, Sherrill and Utica. “We need a leadership group that is small enough that we can have some real decisions about the direction we want to take. Once we have that direction, we will bring in our staff to pull together the details and then all of our elected members of the legislature or city council to review,” Picente said. “I’ve been at meetings where 50 people in a room wanted to go 50 different ways and nothing happened. I think we need to try a different approach, and I believe that at a time when cities are facing major fiscal concerns as their aid is being reduced, it is the right time to take action.”

Picente said all issues will be on the table, but that his list of topics to move forward on now includes technology, personnel, purchasing, and other support services such as printing and mail rooms. “We need to make changes that will help our cities in their 2009 budget year, so we need to look at practical ways that we can work together,” Picente said. “Consolidation can work in several forms. Change does not mean that one layer of government has to grow; it means we need to see what works, and adapt our structure to fit that reality,” Picente said.

Picente said that other communities could become part of the process. “If we can achieve success in one area and one of our towns identify there is a savings for them in being part of the project, then that’s great,” Picente said. “I think right now that our city governments, because of the similarities in the support services they must provide, are in the best position to benefit from an effort to centralize and consolidate those efforts with each other and the County, so I want to start there.”