



# Onondaga County Legislature

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## **CONSENSUS REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE** **June 22, 2017** **Kevin H. Holmquist, Chairman**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Sgromo, Mr. Whorrall, Ms. Hudson, Mr. Ulatowski, Mr. Kinne**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Boyle**

**ADVISORY MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Carni, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Knapp**

**ALSO PRESENT: see attached list**

Chairman Holmquist called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. He stated that this could be the last meeting of the committee. Everybody has had a chance to read through the recommendations. It was noted at the first meeting and every meeting since, that the purpose of the committee was to identify areas of what to look and who should look at it, but definitely not get into the "how's" because that is up to the elected officials in charge of those areas. The recommendations are truly a priority list and he thinks everyone contributed a great amount. These are the low hanging fruit areas where we feel we can make strides. As has been noted multiple times, this is nothing new – local governments have been doing cooperation, consolidation, and collaboration for decades. This is nothing more than a continuation of what we have been doing. The last recommendation refers to no. 50, which is something that nobody supports. He said that if it were up to him, he would refer to that recommendation as reckless, and irresponsible.

### **REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION:**

### **CONSENSUS REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE** **FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS** **JUNE 22, 2017**

In February of 2017, the Consensus Commission released their final report recommending various actions to modernize governance in Onondaga County. The Onondaga County Legislature immediately established a Review Committee to study the Commission's recommendations and advise the Legislature on the development and implementation of specific proposals stemming from the Commission's recommendations. The Consensus Review Advisory Committee was established by Res. 34-17 and members consisted of elected officials and members of the community.

#### Members:

10<sup>th</sup> District Legislator Kevin Holmquist – Chairman  
Supervisor Damian Ulatowski – Town of Clay  
Mayor Paul Whorrall – Village of Manlius  
Greg Sgromo – Owner, Dunn and Sgromo Engineers  
3<sup>rd</sup> District Councilor Susan Boyle – City of Syracuse  
At Large Councilor Helen Hudson – City of Syracuse  
William Kinne – Minority Floor Leader Appointee

#### Advisory Members:

12<sup>th</sup> District Legislator & Chairman of Ways and Means Committee - David Knapp  
14<sup>th</sup> District Legislator & Vice Chairman of Ways and Means Committee - Casey Jordan  
1<sup>st</sup> District Councilor & Chairman of Inter-Governmental Service Consolidation Committee - Joseph Carni

The Consensus Review Advisory Committee (C.R.A.C.) began meeting on a bi-weekly basis and agreed to make a recommendation to the County Legislature, no later than July 1, 2017. It was agreed by members that the Advisory Committee would only make recommendations for further exploration, and they would not be involved in the implementation. It would be up to the governing bodies directly affected as to the "how". In order to comply with the aggressive timeframe, members reviewed the report, eliminated topics that were not of interest and submitted recommendations to the Chair that they felt were the most appropriate to delve into further. Once a

short list was established, those parties involved were invited to attend meetings to address concerns and answer questions as to how recommendations could affect them.

Based upon dialogue with meeting attendees, as well as the elected entities that would need to adopt any of the changes, following are specific recommendations for further review.

1. Solid Waste – Expand the Southern Onondaga Trash System into contiguous towns that already have contracts with private haulers *In discussions with elected officials, it was discovered that other municipalities are currently in the process of exploring this option. The Committee members agreed that this is an area that could prove as a cost-savings measure and they recommend others to explore the possibility of intermunicipal coordination including bulk bidding of hauler services.*

2. Emergency Medical Services – Group specifications and purchasing of equipment *Bulk purchasing and intermunicipal coordination is already in place in several municipalities and Committee members recommend discussions to continue and expand.*

3. Purchasing *Throughout the Consensus final report there was a general theme to explore and expand bulk purchasing. The City, several school districts, some fire districts, 15 of the 19 towns and 3 of the 12 villages are already participating in a consolidated purchasing program and members encourage other entities to join. It was agreed by members that there should be continued exploration into other areas, including health care.*

4. Water – Combine OCWA and City Water Departments *Committee members agreed that this is not feasible at this time. Members do encourage discussions to continue with the Town of DeWitt as their infrastructure continues to age. Members endorse the idea of a community-wide comprehensive water plan done by a third party (not OCWA or the City) with input community-wide.*

5. Economic Development – Combine the City and County Industrial Development Agency and Economic Development Offices *The Commission's final report included several areas of economic development, including the above listed. Committee members recommend continued discussions on one IDA and agreed that the structure of the combined Authority must include voting representatives of the City and the County. Members agreed that combination of the County and the City Economic Development Office should also be discussed.*

6. Libraries – Create a statewide library card system *Committee members recommend continued discussion into implementing a statewide library card system.*

7. Libraries – Waive library fines for children *Committee members recommend that all libraries within Onondaga County waive library fines for children.*

8. Corrections – Single organizational structure, placed under the Sheriff's Office *Sheriff Conway is aware of the recommendation and is willing to discuss it. Committee members agreed that it is an issue worth pursuing and recommend exploration.*

9. Combine County and City Governments *The Consensus Commission's final report included a recommendation calling for the combination of County and City Governments, commonly referred to as "Recommendation #50". The Consensus Review Advisory Committee does not endorse this recommendation.*

In closing, the Consensus Review Advisory Committee recognizes the hard work of the Consensus Commission and appreciates their efforts. Although not every area results in cost-savings, our Committee encourages open dialogue among municipalities and districts to continue.

Chairman Holmquist said that the committee will vote on the report today; this advisory board would be completed, and it would go to all of the affected boards, city council, and county legislature for consideration. The other boards that are getting together can also take the recommendations.

Mr. Kinne asked if each item would be voted on separately; Chairman Holmquist said that they can be. Mr. Kinne referred to Mr. Holmquist's comments regarding item no. 9 on the report. He doesn't think you can say that no one is in favor of it. He understands that Mr. Holmquist may not be. Chairman Holmquist said that of the elected officials, there are two. Mr. Kinne said there might be a lot of people against it the way it came out from Consensus, but they said it was just a starting point. There were 23 parts of that recommendation that we didn't talk about, except purchasing. It is disingenuous to say that no one is in favor of it. Mr. Ulatowski said that it doesn't say that. Mr. Kinne said that is what Mr. Holmquist said. Mr. Ulatowski said that is not what it says in the report, which is what we would be voting on. Chairman Holmquist clarified that he said *if it were entirely up to me, recommendation no. 50 was reckless and irresponsible – and nobody supports it*, and he

stands by that. Mr. Jordan said that the report says that this committee does not endorse it. Mr. Ulatowski said that he can support that.

Mr. Sgromo said that he is in the middle – doesn't think that anything should be in the report that wasn't actually discussed. He said it's not that he's in favor of it or quite understands it, but doesn't think it was really discussed as a group. He referred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on page 1... *eliminated topics that were not of interest* – doesn't think we did that. We prioritized low hanging fruit. The process was condensed by our county executive to a point where we were not able to address all of the items that are in the Consensus report. He said that in his opinion, members were not asked to eliminate any items – the initial intention was that all items would be studied. It was prioritization, not what was most appropriate. Feels the paragraph is inaccurate relating to what the initial charge was to the committee. Regarding the combined City and County governments; this committee didn't discuss it – doesn't know that we have a good basis for making any kind of recommendation on it. Everything the committee has discussed here, with the exception of the library system, wasn't really vetted enough. He said that even with the library system, when he left the meeting, not only was there no good reason to combine it, it was detrimental. He had some questions with the water as it related to grants – an estimate of \$200-\$400 million of improvements the city may need to do to their system – OCWA never studied the impacts on their grants, or how it would affect the city, in merging the systems. At first glance it makes sense to merge OCWA and the City, but when you start getting deeper into it, maybe not. One of the things disheartening was that the committee started into these things and wasn't able to get deep enough into them. His recommendation on any of these things is *continue to be studied*; maybe the library shouldn't even be part of this. She (Ms. Mitchell) was very genuine; sounds like they work fantastically and maybe the statewide registry makes a lot of sense, but merging them all seems to be counterproductive.

Chairman Holmquist agreed with Mr. Sgromo that this is a contrived, short, ridiculously abbreviated process that was forced upon us. He agreed that the committee was not able to get into a lot of details because there were only six meetings in a very short amount of time. The elected officials that are involved in these issues all of the time are very well versed and understand most everything presented to this committee plus more. Because of the artificial, short time frame, he feels the committee's role is to come up with a priority list. These are areas that the experts, the local elected officials that deliver these services and are responsible for, get into the details. They don't have a short, contrived, abbreviated time frame, which was forced upon us from up above from people that don't know what is happening. He said that the elected officials can make those decisions, so he is very comfortable with these recommendations having said what the atmosphere is that the committee is working under.

Chairman Holmquist referenced item no. 9 on the report, and said it was discussed at the first meeting. Mr. Sgromo apologized, noting that he was not at that meeting. Chairman Holmquist said that that he believes the whole county legislature has announced that no. 50 is "dead on arrival", and has no support; no elected officials support it. There is a small band of well-intentioned people that are excited about it, but those of us that have looked into it for a long time know that it doesn't work. He noted that Mr. Jordan referenced a lot of detail about it at the first meeting – that it doesn't work and is terrible idea for Onondaga County. People will continue to advocate for it and will force the process upon us again next year. He said that we will go through the whole charade and everybody will do what we are all doing. The positive side is that people are all talking about it; the 99.5% that can get together and work well together, will continue to do so. This has helped sharpen the point to work well together and make progress. It is interesting that the Mayor of the City of Syracuse has a similar list as to what we have. He has total confidence that the elected officials in the local governments will do an outstanding job of making progress and address the issues the Mr. Sgromo brought up.

Mr. Jordan said that this is a list from the Consensus review items that everybody had on their list of items they thought were worth pursuing. It was the process of boiling it down to these 8 or 9 items. Chairman Holmquist agreed and added for someone reading it for the first time, it seems awfully general. That is by design; it is a priority list; it is not our role to dictate to the elected officials. He said that all of us have our own personal opinions about specific items; we can go through and make changes to words here and there, and say that we are against this or that, which is totally fine, but overall we are trying to make progress. These are low hanging fruit, and we are moving forward on the recommendations from the original Consensus report that we all truly have consensus on; this is a great priority list.

Mr. Carni said that coming from the City, the whole process was a little bit frustrating because there wasn't enough input from City departments. We tried to get certain department head to get involved in the process, and there were either scheduling issues, or were told they wouldn't participate for whatever reason. We had folks from different County departments come in, and we didn't have any city departments come in. Chairman Holmquist suggested that maybe something could be worked out with the City Council and County Legislature, where it could be done at committee meetings; thinks all would be open to that. Mr. Carni said that he is willing, but will be curious to see what would change with some of the departments. Ms. Hudson said that when OCWA came in, they knew it, they studied it, they had a cost analysis, but the City side wasn't given that opportunity – what it saves, what it would cost, etc. Chairman Holmquist agreed, and said that on the positive side he is happy for the progress made in getting people together. From last night's meeting, to this committee, at least people are sitting down and working on things together. It's amazing what you can do when you actually talk to each other and work together, but you need two parties to be able to do that, and sometimes that is not possible.

**1. \*SOLID WASTE – Expand the Southern Onondaga Trash System into contiguous towns that already have contracts with private haulers**

*In discussions with elected officials, it was discovered that other municipalities are currently in the process of exploring this option. The Committee members agreed that this is an area that could prove as a cost-savings measure and they recommend others to explore the possibility of intermunicipal coordination including bulk bidding of hauler services.*

Chairman Holmquist said that the committee had great conversations on this. There is a trash service district in Manlius, and similar to what we are doing here, Manlius didn't dictate to the Villages of Minoa, Fayetteville, or Manlius that they must be in the contract service district. All three villages were included, but to this date they have not opted to join, because it is not best for their villages. It is totally up to the elected officials there. At any point in the future, if they chose to join the trash district or the brush district, they can. SOTS is a very outstanding organization that has worked out the bugs and knows how to do this. Other towns in the county have also successfully done it. It was pointed out that there are some other towns currently looking at this.

Ms. Hudson said that this basically pertains to towns and villages, and she doesn't believe it is OK for her to vote on that. Mr. Carni said that he feels the same way – coming from the City, he wouldn't feel comfortable voting on it. He would abstain – it's not a City issue and probably not appropriate for an elected official in the city to say anything about how towns and villages operate.

Mr. Jordan said that it doesn't say *towns and villages*, it says *municipalities*. In theory the city could enter into an agreement with a contiguous town to include them with the city's district. It is not limited to just towns or villages.

Ms. Hudson referred to *bulk bidding*, and added that the City has a structure already in place on how its trash is bid out.

Mr. Ulatowski said that he thinks we are making it to parochial by opting out of voting on this. He said that we are a committee that is trying to come up with ideas that can save both the city and county and they don't all have to pertain to each of us. Some of them are not particularly town items, but he is on this committee to try to come up with recommendations that can be put forward, and is going to vote as a committee member, not as a town board representative.

Mr. Jordan said that *bulk bidding* is saying that you are bidding it out to include, i.e. more than the City of Syracuse - it could include trash pick up in the City of Syracuse as well as the Town of Salina or Town of Geddes. It is including more municipalities within that bid, and by virtue of that presumably getting a much lower price. It's bidding for a much larger area than you may have been bidding otherwise.

Mr. Carni said that he is willing to vote on it based on the fact that he is part of the committee, and agrees with it from the standpoint of it being cost effective for the City, towns, or villages outside to enter into an agreement. With what currently exists with the City, he couldn't possibly see it being economically feasible and responsible.

Chairman Holmquist pointed out that the advisory members are not allowed to vote, which includes Mr. Knapp, Mr. Carni, Mr. Jordan (per opinion of Mrs. Berger, Senior Deputy County Attorney).

Mr. Kinne said that there is nothing that excludes the towns from approaching the city. He referenced Nedrow being within the Town of Onondaga, right next to the city, as is part of Geddes.

***A motion was made by Mr. Ulatowski, seconded by Mr. Whorrall, to approve item 1. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

***\*\*see also page 5***

**2. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES – Group specifications and purchasing of equipment**

*Bulk purchasing and intermunicipal coordination is already in place in several municipalities and Committee members recommend discussions to continue and expand.*

***A motion was made by Ms. Hudson, seconded by Mr. Whorrall, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**3. PURCHASING**

*Throughout the Consensus final report there was a general theme to explore and expand bulk purchasing. The City, several school districts, some fire districts, 15 of the 19 towns and 3 of the 15 villages are already participating in a consolidated purchasing program and members encourage other entities to join. It was agreed by members that there should be continued exploration into other areas, including health care.*

\*Mr. Knapp arrived at the meeting.

***A motion was made by Mr. Ulatowski, seconded by Mr. Sgromo, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**4. WATER - Combine OCWA and City Water Departments**

*Committee members agreed that this is not feasible at this time. Members do encourage discussions to continue with the Town of DeWitt as their infrastructure continues to age. Members endorse the idea of a community-wide comprehensive water plan done by a third party (not OCWA or the City) with input community-wide.*

Mr. Sgromo said that he doesn't think we heard enough about the Town of Dewitt and the reasons for them having their own system; may not necessarily want to single them out. There are other towns that have certain districts that they manage, i.e. Clay. He thinks there are reasons for it; it's not necessarily that someone doesn't want to play ball. It's more of that for whatever reasons, economic reasons, it doesn't make sense. He suggested changing it to "various town districts."

Chairman Holmquist said that the Town of Dewitt was used as the prime example. There are others, but the people that were talking about this thought this is something we really should be doing. He noted that we are not dictating or mandating; we are encouraging discussions. Mr. Sgromo agreed, and added that what he heard was that there are other districts, and suggested not limiting it to Dewitt; an state "as these districts age, they should be merged into an overall, OCWA." Mr. Ulatowski suggested striking "Dewitt" from the motion and have it more generic.

***A motion was made by Mr. Sgromo to amend item no. 4 to strike "Dewitt" and add "affected towns and various districts" and approve the amend to item as amended. Mr. Ulatowski seconded the motion.***

Mr. Kinne asked what the 3<sup>rd</sup> party is. Mr. Sgromo said that one of the questions that came up was that OCWA did not have a good handle on how a merger with the City would not only impact procurement of possible grants, but also where the real cost savings might end up falling in, and the needs that the city might have. A lot of times when they do a district, OCWA comes in and assesses the shape of the district. They decide if they really want it and how they want it. He said that at the meeting it was discussed if any type of city/county merger of water systems would necessitate a 3<sup>rd</sup> party coming in to do a full assessment of the implications of that -- not an assessment done by OCWA or the City, but an independent party.

Mr. Andrews, OCWA, said that he agrees on every issue related to that because of the size and scope of it. He said there is more that they don't know than they do know.

***A vote was taken on the motion to amend item 4 and approve the item as amended. AYES: 5 (Holmquist, Sgromo, Whorrall, Hudson, Ulatowski); NOES: 0; ABSTENTIONS: 1 (Kinne). MOTION CARRIED.***

Mr. Kinne said that this is the first time hearing about the concerns that Mr. Sgromo mentioned. He feels OCWA does a great job, and it seems this should be a no brainer – have one water department.

\*Mr. Knapp referred to item no. 1 – SOTS and clarified that the language refers to contiguous towns, but they don't have to be. The four towns there are contiguous, but the only requirement is that they be part of the OCRRA service area – basically the county.

***A motion was made by Mr. Whorrall to amend item no. 1 to remove “contiguous” and add “towns within the OCRRA service area”, seconded by Mr. Sgromo. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Combine the City and County Industrial Development Agency and Economic Development Offices**

*The Commission's final report included several areas of economic development, including the above listed. Committee members recommend continued discussions on one IDA and agreed that the structure of the combined Authority must include voting representatives of the City and the County. Members agreed that combination of the County and the City Economic Development Office should also be discussed.*

***A motion was made by Mr. Kinne, seconded by Mr. Whorrall, to approve this item. AYES: 5 (Kinne, Whorrall, Holmquist, Sgromo, Ulatowski); NOES: 0; ABSTENTIONS: 1 (Hudson). MOTION CARRIED.***

Ms. Hudson said that in looking at how the dynamics are working now between the City and County, she wants to be sure that if the economic departments are combined that the City will be provided for. That has not been happening in the last couple of rounds of development.

**6. LIBRARIES – Create a statewide library card system**

*Committee members recommend continued discussion into implementing a statewide library card system.*

In answer to Mr. Ulatowski, Chairman Holmquist said that there is a litany of library districts across the state in all different types of structures; there are four different types of categories. Mr. Sgromo said that there are regions. A statewide card system would allow people to check out or return books in all areas of the state. Mr. Sgromo said that the library gave a great presentation, they are a great organization and seem to have their system in place. Mr. Ulatowski said that he sees this a being very positive, especially since we are pioneering this in Onondaga County; it shows our efforts are far reaching.

Mr. Jordan said that there hasn't been much debate at the meetings of all of the various library associations. Everybody seems to be on board with it; they all want it; it just hasn't happened yet. Chairman Holmquist said that we are adding our voice to the chorus of supporters and hopefully it will get done soon.

***A motion was made by Mr. Whorrall, seconded by Mr. Sgromo, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**7. LIBRARIES – Waive library fines for children**

*Committee members recommend that all libraries within Onondaga County waive library fines for children.*

Chairman Holmquist said that the committee had a good debate on this. At first blush a lot of people, parents would say that you want to teach the kids responsibility. In the ideal world that would be great, and parents should teach that. However, frequently there aren't parents, or that doesn't happen for a variety of reasons. It has been determined by the professionals that are involved in this day to day that we should be encouraging kids to read under all conditions and the bit of fines out there aren't going to be collected from kids. Typically

they don't have families in many of the library districts. This was viewed as a good step forward to continue with literacy, and support encouraging children to read, and making the atmosphere of a library something the children can view as positive to go do, even if they are in tough personal circumstances. They can go and know that the library is a place that welcomes them, wants them to learn, and help them read.

Mr. Ulatowski asked if "children" can be defined. Chairman Holmquist asked Mr. Fisher if the library has a definition for minors. Mr. Fisher said that he didn't know if the state library law does, but doesn't believe the OCPL Board has any definition of children. In answer to Chairman Holmquist, Mr. Fisher said that he doesn't believe that the Consensus report refers to ages or has a specific age defined.

Mr. Sgromo and Mr. Ulatowski believe it should be defined. Mr. Sgromo said that cases were brought up where kids get moved around a lot, books get lost in all of the moves, and you don't want to hinder those kids from being able to check out books, but questioned how it can be defined. He gave the example of a kid deciding not to bring back \$100 worth of books because he is too lazy, and you don't fine him for it. He agrees with the need, but is unsure how to limit it.

Chairman Holmquist said that he hasn't interviewed every library, but believes everyone thinks it's a good idea even in the areas where they may not be experiencing the same level of infractions. He believes it was generally accepted by the library community as a positive thing, but agrees with Mr. Sgromo.

Mr. Sgromo suggested that the committee recommend in all areas of Onondaga County, assess a method of waiving fees for children under justifiable circumstances; let them figure out a way to make it happen.

Mr. Jordan suggested that we don't say we'll waive the fines and just say that the policy will change. He understands that the hang-up is that if there are outstanding fines that you can't take out a book. It could be a changed so that you can take out a book, and then it's up to the library on whether they want to ensue a payment. For the family that has all kinds of money, but just decides they aren't going to bring the books back, the library could still pursue collection of the fines from the parents.

Mr. Sgromo said that maybe it needs more discuss and detail, and questions what authority the library has legally to forgive the fines. They may not be allowed to; a mechanism may need to be put in place. He feels the recommendation should be that it should be looked at hard, to make sure a library fine of \$3 doesn't impede a child for being able to borrow a book for the rest of his life.

Mr. Ulatowski said that he has two children – one 36, one 37 – supposes if you get the right attorney, who would say "that's his child" – the definition of child is too board; feels it should be defined with an age.

Mr. Fisher said that the problem with waiving fees is that it impacts other things. Some library's say that if you owe, you can take out books, but you can't take out CDs or DVDs, etc. It gets complex. He suggested an amendment: *all libraries within Onondaga County waive library fines for children below an age determined by each library.*

Ms. Hudson suggested adding language: *up to \$50.* Maybe that way it wouldn't get enormous.

**A motion was made by Mr. Kinne, seconded by Mr. Ulatowski to amend the item to read...*all libraries within Onondaga County waive library fines for children below an age determined by each library up to a maximum of \$50, and approve the item 7 as amended. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

## **8. CORRECTIONS – Single organizational structure, placed under the Sheriff's Office**

*Sheriff Conway is aware of the recommendation and is willing to discuss it. Committee members agreed that it is an issue worth pursuing and recommend exploration.*

Chairman Holmquist said that this would be one that would be determined entirely by the County. He noted that we have heard arguments, are well versed in the unions involved, etc. that would make this not as seamless or easy as it might appear at first blush. The Sheriff is willing to talk about it and the County Legislature is well

aware of the issues at hand, and feels the wording is good. Mr. Jordan agreed that the wording is good. Mr. Knapp also agreed, and added that Buffalo has the template. They had separate unions and worked it out.

**Mr. Kinne made a motion to approve this item, seconded by Ms. Hudson. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.**

## **9. Combine County and City Governments**

*The Consensus Commission's final report included a recommendation calling for the combination of County and City Governments, commonly referred to as "Recommendation #50". The Consensus Review Advisory Committee does not endorse this recommendation.*

**A motion was made by Mr. Ulatowski, seconded by Mr. Whorrall, to approve this item. AYES: 4 (Ulatowski, Whorrall, Holmquist, Hudson); NOES: 2: (Kinne, Sgromo). MOTION CARRIED.**

Mr. Kinne said that everyone at the table loves Central New York or they wouldn't be here. What we have been doing for years is obviously not working. We need to look outside the box, explore different things. He said that he doesn't have the answers, but thinks we need to re-adjusts and get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This committee didn't have the time or will to discuss the 23 recommendations that should have been discussed.

Mr. Sgromo said that he would have stated it as *the recommendation at this time*. His frustration was with just about everything we have been able to do here – not our fault – the time is so short; there is not sufficient time to study it. The committee discussed more about libraries than option no. 50, and option 50 is huge. He said that it's not that I don't endorse it or endorse, but is not ready to make any kind of a comment on it from the amount of discussion we have had. It has been frustrating; these are enormous changes, vast amounts of changes that the echelon is trying to force in one fell swoop. "From having worked in private sector in business, if I were to revamp my company and tried to make this drastic of changes, I can assure you it would fail." He said that you cannot stir the pot this much and expect everything to fall into place. It should be taken in increments that are calculated – like what the committee did – the smaller, easier ones first to get our feet wet to see how it falls into place. Then as issues got harder and harder, there would be a basis for how to solve those problems. Start with the easier ones, which have been started in towns and villages, and county working together – i.e. Purchasing, IT, Libraries. Get them worked out, then start getting into bigger issues. In the end decide if there are any government structure changes that need to take place. It's so far down the road, that it's premature, and that is the only reason that he can't vote for no. 9.

Mr. Ulatowski definitely supports this motion, but read something yesterday that convinced him that the leadership at the top is asking us to do things they are incapable of doing. He referenced an article in the yesterday's newspapers regarding volunteer fire departments being able to access disability benefits up to \$1,500/month and life insurance benefits up to \$50,000. He said not to take it that as if he's against it – billions of dollars are saved by New York State taxpayers because of them, and he supports them 100%. We are being asked to save money for our taxpayers, but the bottom of that bill says that the cost of that coverage it going to fall on to municipalities and districts. "We are made to look the bad guys here because we are over taxing our residents by not combining the services." He said that mandates like this come down from the State all of the time. They are pushed aside or not recognized as being big impacts of the tax liabilities that our constituents have to shoulder. He said that he enthusiastically supports this item – we are doing the shared services that we have been asked to do and have been doing it for decades.

Mr. Jordan said that while this group may not have studied this option completely, it has been studied many times by economists where actual consolidations have occurred. He said he has yet to find a single one that concludes that actually accomplished its goals. Every one of them that he has seen say that it didn't reduce costs, didn't increase efficiency, and didn't approve the local economy. The people that say they have done that are the people that were behind it in the first place. He said it's always that "Louisville is the poster child for successful mergers; they say Louisville is so much better than it was before." He said that a University of Louisville economist said that Louisville was doing better before the merge. If you look at how Louisville did compared to other cities in Kentucky, they did worse than the other cities. Louisville has had businesses come there, and have also had businesses that were established that left there. Any improvements that it did see were attributed to moves that were irrespective of the merger. It is some of the things we have been talking about –



consolidating services, etc. – things that could have been done without the merger. Mr. Jordan said that he has looked into this; has spent months looking at economic studies, and have yet to find a single one that said it was a good idea, or that it was a good move economically, financially or efficiency wise.

Mr. Sgromo said that he studied the Louisville consolidation and knows planning quite well. Louisville and Syracuse are two totally different entities. He agrees with Mr. Jordan – the structure of the community, the density of the population, and the make up is different. When there is a county with the population as dense as ours, it is much more difficult to consolidate some of these things and don't make as much sense. They should be treaded on very carefully. There is everything from a Fabius to a Clay to a City of Syracuse to a Spafford. It is all over the place – servicing their needs and their infrastructure are totally different; their whole cost structures are totally different. He said that it's not that he doesn't think no. 50 should or shouldn't happen, it just wasn't discussed enough, or in a manner at this point in time, to make a recommendation.

Mr. Carni agreed with Mr. Sgromo. When we came in here, the discussion was to go after the low hanging fruit – not going to talk about recommendation no. 50. “Dead on arrival” was the term used for it. It wasn't really ever discussed, so he doesn't think it can be included in the report that no one endorses it. He said that it's not to say that he endorses recommendation no. 50. In the short timeframe we are working with, we are just looking to see what the easy things are that we ought to be talking about right off the bat--thinks that everyone from their different positions can say that it makes sense to them. He said that he thinks the local electeds should be discussing them and bringing them forward. He said that he doesn't know how no. 9 could or should be included.

Chairman Holmquist said that it has been discussed in the community for two years now. Since the Consensus report came out it sucked up all of the media coverage, approximately 95% of the coverage has been fixated on no. 50. During the process, open hearings, and public information sessions, Mr. Sgromo and Mr. Jordan are not the only two people that looked into this. Citizens went out and studied and at many of the forums there were zero supporters of no. 50. Occasionally a good citizen would stand up and say that they would like more information, and that is fair. As the process went along, we experienced it all of the time, noting that he brought it up at the Erie Village Home Owners Association. It has been widely referenced, widely read, and widely known, and he views it as low hanging fruit. He said that no. 50 is dead on arrival; it has no support, and that's why he feels strongly that it should be included in this report -- to send the message and add our voice to that chorus. He said that eventually we will get the the Governor and the County Executive to “knock it off” - are stuck for two years but after that we can move on. Elections will fix some things too. If there is one low hanging fruit that we need in this report, it is no. 50 – need to make a strong statement that it is a terrible idea by all measures except from a few people that are excited about it.

Mr. Ulatowski agreed with Chairman Holmquist. He referenced an article that came out about a month ago by either a national economist or planner, entitled “Is Syracuse Necessary.” It was summed up in one simple line that said that you can't have effective savings without cutting services, and cutting services is really not an option. He said that if no. 50 moves in that direction, it should be dead on arrival.

Chairman Holmquist said that at the end of the day it should be up to the citizens that are affected to decide the services they want and what they want to do. It shouldn't be some top down dictation that you have to do this or that. If Syracuse gets swallowed up by a metropolitan government, they are not going to have the representation, let alone Fabius, or Tully. Ms. Hudson agreed.

Mr. Kinne disagreed and said that the Consensus recommendation was that if it were to be done by an independent group, it has the potential to have the city with more and better representation. It didn't exclude the towns and villages – they all would have good representation. He said that the key is independence, and that is what worries him. Chairman Holmquist asked who these independent people that are totally nonobjective but know everything and are able to make it completely fair. Mr. Kinne said that you go outside of this city, i.e. Kansas City, and hire a firm to come in and do it. Chairman Holmquist said that he feels the people here should decide.

Mr. Carni said that his point is how can we possibly comment on that, other than what we are hearing outside of this. Coming into this room, we are are coming in with what our constituents are telling us. It's not something that we have actually sat down and debated and discussed at this table; that's his issue with a recommendation.

He said that it's not that he doesn't agree with it -- thinks that there are issues with who is going to be represented, how will they be represented, who the independent group is that is going to come in and be that voice. He said that he does not want someone from outside coming in, but in essence the committee hasn't had any of those talks. As a committee, he does not know how we come out with a formal statement like that.

**Final comments:**

***In closing, the Consensus Review Advisory Committee recognizes the hard work of the Consensus Commission and appreciates their efforts. Although not every area results in cost-savings, our Committee encourages open dialogue among municipalities and districts to continue.***

Chairman Holmquist asked for any final comments:

Mr. Sgromo said it was a pleasure and honor working with this group, has enjoyed the discourse, hearing different opinions and getting more into what Consensus is all about; would love to see a more detailed study on different items. A lot of good things have come out, if taken one step at a time with a sufficient amount of time necessary for each item to be addressed, there is a lot of good things that can happen. No. 50 is not a necessity at this point, maybe ever, but it definitely isn't the first thing to be put on the table. There are a lot of other things that can take place, and that could be years down the road; it may never need to take place. The process getting to this point has been extremely rushed, it is ripe for error. We have heard about it with some of the department heads that come in that they haven't studied it, don't have enough time to study it between now and November. Those are just honest comments from department heads that have to deal with it every single day; to not give them the proper analysis before decisions are made, i.e. merging city and county water, is unfair to them.

Chairman Holmquist referred to the paragraph in the report prior to recommendation no. 1 and asked the committee to consider amending it.

***The Consensus Review Advisory Committee (C.R.A.C.) began meeting on a bi-weekly basis and agreed to make a recommendation to the County Legislature, no later than July 1, 2017. It was agreed by members that the Advisory Committee would only make recommendations for further exploration, and they would not be involved in the implementation. It would be up to the governing bodies directly affected as to the "how". In order to comply with the aggressive timeframe, members reviewed the report, eliminated topics that were not of interest and submitted recommendations to the Chair that they felt were the most appropriate to delve into further. Once a short list was established, those parties involved were invited to attend meetings to address concerns and answer questions as to how recommendations could affect them.***

In the spirit of Mr. Sgromo's points, he suggested a change to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last sentence: remove the word ***eliminated*** and change to ***prioritized***, and to remove the words ***that were not of interest***.

Mr. Sgromo and all other members agreed to the change. Chairman Holmquist noted the the amended report as a whole will be voted on.

Mr. Whorrall said he was thankful to be able to sit at the table; it was an education. In hearing everyone's comments, it made it easier for him to go back and talk to people in the community and to sit at the Mayors' meetings and discuss it with them.

Mr. Knapp thanked Chairman Holmquist for leading the effort. He said that the great thing about this process, and the on that the County Executive is having, is making us sit down and take a look at real life and all of the things we are already doing. There is a lot of stuff already being doing; this forum highlighted that; this is not reinventing the wheel. We are already doing this to a large degree; tweaks opposed to revolutionary changes to things, i.e. adding towns to SOTS, are a big benefit that have come out of this committee.

Mr. Carni said that he appreciated being a part of the committee; there was good discussion; hopes it continues and hopes it doesn't end here or with the discussions going on with supervisors and mayors. He hopes it gets down to each individual board or council – examined by each governing body.

Mr. Kinne said that he was glad to be here and thanked members for their time.

Mr. Jordan said that he was thankful for being allowed to be here and for members listening to his comments on all of this. It was a good exercise. As pointed out, these are things that we are already doing. Unfortunately, all of this is premised on a false assumption that the problem that exists is at a local level, when the reality of the problems are at the state level. As it seems like every day there are new unfunded mandates passed in Albany and the burden is shifted to us. Mr. Knapp's comments are a perfect of example of all of that - all of these things we have been talking about, we have already been doing and have been for years – should continue on these efforts and finding ways of economizing. We are the worst economic climate in the country. All of this helps on a small level, and certainly on a localized level, but the problem is in Albany and statewide – we need to make this state more business friendly. That is the bottom line, and all of this isn't going to do that. The number one thing that big corporation site locators look at is if the state is business friendly. He said that he wishes this would work its way up to the state level and they would find ways of cutting spending and improving their efficiencies, trimming down state budgets, and have Albany pick up the unfunded mandates. If it wasn't for that, we would have no local property tax, and maybe not even the extra 1% sales tax.

Mr. Ulatowski thanked Chair Holmquist and the committee for letting him be part of this. He said that it was great counterbalance to the Consensus Commission, who initiated this effort. It shows that the system of government that we have in this country, Democracy, works because the dialogue continues. It has been going on for 250 years. The answers are still not there; the arguments are still not settled. With us being part of this process shows exactly how the country grew to what it is and how this county, and perhaps state, can grow as a result of these continued efforts.

Ms. Hudson thanked Chair Holmquist for pulling members together and leading the way. She was honored to be here; has learned from different perspectives, heard from different towns and villages, and hopefully understands a little bit more of their issues. She hopes we can find a way to work through it and all be more productive in what we are doing. Right now she said that she is staunchly against the merger, but does think that at some point we will look at doing things differently; we can't stay the way we are and continue to be a strong community. Hopefully down the road we will be able to get out of our own little fiefdoms and understand it a community of the whole.

Chairman Holmquist thanked the staff for their outstanding work. He said that it was a privilege to be here with them and the committee. We have unbelievable local government and appreciates it more and more, even more so after this process. He said that he has served as a village elected official for 10 years in Manlius, served on the town board for four years, and has been on the County Legislature for 12 years, and appreciates every elected official. The school boards, local elected officials in the City, towns, and villages are all unbelievable. They do it for a lot of grief and a little bit of money. Most everybody at the local level wants to do the right thing. He said that he agrees with Mr. Jordan – all problems go back to Albany. Eventually we will get somebody locally that can speak out against the Governor rather than endorsing every single thing he does.

***A motion as made by Mr. Sgromo, seconded by Mr. Whorrall, to approve the report as amended. AYES: 5 (Sgromo, Whorrall, Ulatowski, Hudson, Holmquist); NOES: 1 (Kinne); ABSENT: 1 (Boyle). MOTION CARRIED.***

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBORAH L. MATURO, Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature