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Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo and Brindisi in Talks with Governor's Office Over Regional Concerns

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO February 16, 2012

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Griffo and Brindisi Advance Talks With Administration Over Pressing Regional Development Concerns

Capping several days of high-level meetings with state leaders, Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-Rome) and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi (D-Utica) said they have established a new, strong level of dialogue with top state officials and brought to those officials' attentions strong community concerns related to economic development, state agency decisions, and

the upcoming Base Realignment and Closure process.

“Although we still have some concerns, we believe that the dialogue we had with Lt. Governor Duffy and the top members of the Governor’s staff has allowed us to bring the concerns we have directly from the people of our community to the top policymakers of the state, so that they have a fuller, more informed view about the impact of state actions on Oneida County,” Griffo and Brindisi said. “The meetings we have had were a reflection that Governor Cuomo is sensitive to the concerns that have come from us as well as local officials, and that he is engaged in the issues that are of utmost importance to our constituents. We believe the solutions begin with an open, candid dialogue, and the sessions we had were the first step that was necessary for us to serve the people of our communities.”

Brindisi and Griffo said that discussions centered around three major topics:

- State support for regional economic development priorities
- The need for strong state leadership to protect defense-related assets
- State agency actions, such as plans announced that impact mental health facilities in West Utica.

"The greatest need we have in this region is to move forward to implement our economic development plans so that we can create jobs for the people of our region," Griffo said. "I believe that it was important as we begin another year in which state agencies will be providing millions of dollars to support economic development that the people at the top fully understand the region's needs and its potential for growth.

Brindisi said that the legislators repeated past calls for support in coping with the expected BRAC process. “Leadership to protect Rome Lab, the Defense Finance Accounting Service, EADS and all the related employers begins at the top,” Brindisi said. “Our meetings were a chance to actively engage the Governor’s Office in this process and strengthen the teamwork that is going to be essential in the months ahead as we work to protect our region.”

Griffo and Brindisi said that they were pleased with the dialogue that has developed over state agency decisions, including the proposal by the Office of Mental Health that would realign services at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in West Utica, causing a reduction in jobs and shifting some current patients into outpatient settings.

“We spoke to the Commissioner of Mental Health. We spoke to the Governor’s staff. We have been able to make the community’s case face-to-face. I would characterize these sessions as both candid and ongoing,” Griffo said.

“The response we have been given is that the Commissioner of Mental Health will evaluate what we said, and at some level, there will be dialogue between the state and the community, although the details of that remain to be worked out,” Brindisi said.

Both legislators characterized the conversations as a beginning, and said they would continue to work in Albany for the region in these and other issues, including possible relocation of state Department of Transportation offices. “Decisions by individual agencies, when seen from the community perspective, can reflect a trend of taking away from a community at a time when investing in this community is the proper course of action,” said Griffo and Brindisi. “We brought that perspective to our meeting, they certainly heard our concerns, and now we will continue to monitor the situation.”

