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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KENT COUNTY CREDIT RATINGS TIE FOR BEST IN COUNTRY

County continues to receive highest ratings from credit agencies

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Kent County continues to remain financially strong, according to rating agencies Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s Investors Service. Both agencies affirmed the long-term Triple-A credit ratings – the highest possible – for the County. Only one other Michigan county reached Triple-A ratings.

Standard & Poor’s commented that the County has a history of strong financial management and moderate debt burden, resulting in the outlook of “stable” being added to the rating. Board of Commissioners Chair Sandi Frost Parrish indicated that she was pleased, but not surprised, that the rating agencies affirmed the County’s strong position. “We continue to position ourselves very well to make sure that we are fiscally responsible,” Parrish noted. “While we have had to make very difficult decisions, we believe those decisions have provided long-term benefits to the community.”

Parrish, along with County Treasurer Ken Parrish, County Administrator/Controller Daryl Delabbio, and Fiscal Services Director Stephen Duarte recently met with the rating agencies to review the County’s financial situation. “The long-term rating on the country reflect what we see as Kent County’s maintenance of a very strong financial position, coupled with strong financial management practices, diversifying manufacturing based economy with an expanded services industry, and moderate overall debt burden,” noted the report from Standard & Poor’s. The report stated that Standard & Poor’s expects “...Kent County’s financial position to remain very strong given its return to positive general fund operations in fiscal 2009 and its five-year forecast.” In its rating of Kent County, Moody’s noted that “The County continues to maintain a variety of strong credit characteristics.”

A strong credit rating is very important to the tax payers of Kent County, as it allows local units of government to borrow money at lower interest costs. “It is important for us to maintain our excellent rating in order to save on interest rates, thereby reducing costs for all of Kent County,” according to Delabbio “This is especially true as we continue to look at every way possible to continue to be financially responsible.” For example, by maintaining the current triple-A rating, taxpayers save more than \$800,000 in annual interest costs (compared to a double-A rating) for all of the County’s bonded projects (airport, jail expansion, etc.).

Kent County has held the long-term Triple-A ratings from both agencies since 1999. In addition, the highest short-term credit ratings of MIG1 (Moody’s) and SP-1+ (Standard & Poor’s) were confirmed. There are approximately 3,140 counties in the United States; only 55 counties hold a Triple-A rating for long-term debt from both Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s Investors Service.

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