March 30, 2010

News Release

For Immediate Release

State of the Parks Summary, Resources

In its first-ever State of the Parks address today, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board released findings from a number of studies conducted over the last year, including a Staffing, Budgeting and Related Issues survey, comparing 13 other national agencies with similar sizes; a Visitor Spending/Direct Economic Impact study for selected athletic events utilizing departmental facilities; and Program/Event Totals.

Program Totals & 2009 Annual Report

The Park Board continued to see growing numbers throughout its parks system, with 2,237,835 county residents and visitors passing through its gates and doors, through family center usage, School-Park usage, pools and a number of programs – 21 areas in total recording events in 2009. An estimated 4,000,000 passive park users are not included in the figure, which include passive or walk-up use of departmental parks, facilities or other related park system amenities.

Visitor Spending/Direct Economic Impact for Key Athletic Events

In 2009, 20 major athletic events were studied. Economic impact information was calculated for those participants and/or attendees who do not reside within the Springfield-Greene County area.

Through just the 20 athletic events analyzed utilizing Park Board facilities, $4,059,600 was conservatively estimated to have been spent within the community on hotels, meals, shopping and more.

Benchmarking Report

Ron Vine with Leisure Vision ETC Institute presented results from a national study which looked at topics including: number of parks; personnel; fee policies; operating budget; capital budgets; environmental issues; and historical information. Cities included in the study averaged a local population of 264,000 citizens. The Park Board serves approximately 280,000 citizens.

The study showed that the Park Board manages fewer parks per 1,000 residents and had a higher number of undeveloped acres than the average benchmarked agency. Its acreage of 10.87 acres per 1,000 residents is significantly lower than the benchmarking average of 19.52. The study also showed the Park Board employs a fewer number of full-time employees, a higher number of seasonal and part-time employees and benefits from a higher level of volunteers.

The Park Board far surpassed others surveyed who indicated they have a written policy for fees for programs and facilities. The Park Board has a written policy for all major programs and
facilities. Other agencies also had a significantly higher amount of money budgeted for various operating divisions/services for the last fiscal year per 1,000 residents.

Over the past five years, the average benchmarked agency has funded more capital projects than the Park Board. The Park Board’s capital improvement program is significantly longer (20 years) than the average benchmarked agency, and has significantly less funds to allocate over the length of its program.

When it comes to green building/construction policy, the Park Board is significantly ahead of the other benchmarked cities, which do not have such a plan.

Resource materials for the announcement today are available at www.parkboard.org/news10/state_of_parks10.htm. A video of the announcement will be available at the same link by the end of the week.

“The information released today has been a long time coming,” said Director of Parks Jodie Adams. “These studies and reports have been suggested for years from community members and organizations as we’ve continued to grow as a city-county system.”

Adams demonstrated how parks directly impact health, environment, conservation, transportation and economic development decisions. “We were pleased the national benchmark study confirmed we were doing things right and appreciated the additional suggestions, which we’ll take back to the citizens for our continued development plans within the metropolitan parks system.”

For more information, media contact: Jodie Adams, Director of Parks, 417-864-1049; Ron Vine, Leisure Vision ETC Institute, 913-908-6146.