



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Madison Press
By Audrey Ingram
May 19, 2016

West Jefferson opened its books online Wednesday through Ohio Checkbook.

The village is the second in Madison County to post their spending information online through OhioCheckbook.com, an initiative championed by the Ohio Treasurer's Office. Plain City put its books online in February.

"This is an important step in making information more readily available to the public," West Jefferson Mayor Ray Martin stated in a press release.

By posting local government spending online, leaders are "empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable," Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel added.

Somerford, Monroe and Paint Townships also put their spending information online this week.

The Ohio Checkbook program allows municipalities to increase transparency without additional expense or excessive work. Mandel launched the initiative in December 2014, pulling all state spending information — 142 million transactions accounting for \$517 billion in spending since 2008 — online for the first time.

More than 538,000 searches have been conducted through the site as of Monday. The platform has earned Ohio the country's top spot in the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's transparency rankings two years running.

West Jefferson's online checkbook shows more than 19,000 individual transactions that account for more than \$22 million in spending over the past four years.

Viewers can search Google-style for specific spending information and compare year-to-year spending. They can also peruse the data through dynamic, interactive charts.

At their meeting Monday night, West Jefferson village council members discussed taking the transparency efforts one step farther by partnering directly with OpenGov, the Silicon Valley-based tech company Mandel partnered with for Open Checkbook.

Open Checkbook provides spending data — OpenGov would also provide the revenue half of the village's budget, so residents could see where the money came from, as well as where it goes, finance director Debbie DiLeo explained.

Stats can be linked to department memos. Municipalities can also customize their own additional reports, such as water consumption or police incidents.



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

"The buzz word within the last few years is transparency," council president Steve Johnston said. "This is ultimate transparency."

OpenGov is not coordinated through the Ohio Treasurer's Office. It would cost the village \$7,600 per year to keep its records on the platform. There is also a one-time \$2,700 fee to get started.

To see village spending, visit WestJefferson.OhioCheckbook.com.

####