



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Program promotes fiscal transparency  
Bowling Green Sentinel Tribune  
By Bill Ryan  
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ROSSFORD &mdash; Officials from the state treasurer's office and the city of Rossford gathered at the city offices Thursday afternoon to launch the city's online checkbook on OhioCheckbook.com.

Rossford is the first city fully located in Wood County to participate in the program, which promotes transparency for government entities in Ohio. Fostoria is also participating, but is situated in three counties.

In addition to the two cities at opposite ends of the county, the North Baltimore Schools are also fully operational online along with the villages of Haskins, Luckey, Risingsun, West Millgrove and Weston. Beyond those fully active, the treasurer's office has commitments from the villages of North Baltimore, Bradner and Custar along with Otsego Schools and Webster Township.

The program makes all financial information from the participating entities available with a few clicks online. The system promotes transparency with residents and taxpayers.

The state's records debuted online in December 2014 and Ohio's treasurer, Josh Mandel, has made the state program available to all other government entities. Rossford was the 370th entity to go live. A total of 739 entities to date are partnering with the state.

Rossford's online checkbook includes more than 20,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$22 million of total spending over the past four years.

Seth Unger, senior policy adviser for publications with Mandel's office, made the announcement in Rossford council chambers.

"There are 3,962 government entities who can participate and our goal is to get all of them involved. We are trying to keep the train rolling," Unger said.

"The online checkbook empowers an army of citizen auditors to monitor the spending and hold officials accountable," he added.

Another benefit is that most places that are using the system have found a sharp decline, if not elimination, of public records requests.

"Everything on the site is a matter of public record and can be searched without the hassle," Unger said. "The city of Rossford is on the cutting edge."



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With the website's search engine, people can generally find all the answers they are seeking regarding spending.

Facts and figures are available by date, departments and other categories.

"I believe the people of Wood County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with my office to post the finances on OhioCheckbook.com," Mandel stated in a news release after the event. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

"Rossford is all about the business," Mayor Neil MacKinnon III said. "We do a lot with very little. This is very exciting. Transparency is a big deal and a big deal for us."

"I really think this is going to help us with all the residents and taxpayers," said Karen Freeman, the city's finance director. "This will strengthen those links to the people."

Mike Scott, the city's administrator, gave all the credit to Freeman. "I commend Karen for all the effort and commitment to this project."

As of July 5,, there have been more than 566,000 total searches on OhioCheckbook.com.

The site displays more than \$529 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 146 million transactions.

To view local government information, visit the Local Government option on OhioCheckbook.com or click on Rossford.OhioCheckbook.com.

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