



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Amherst News Times  
By Evan Goodenow  
July 29, 2016

Curious about how your tax money is being spent?

Proponents of a financial transparency website say giving taxpayers a look inside the checkbook adds up to good government.

On July 27, Amherst, Amherst Township, and New Russia Township became the first Lorain County communities to become part of [www.ohiocheckbook.com](http://www.ohiocheckbook.com).

The website provides extensive information on how cities, towns, townships, school districts, and water and sewer districts spend their money. Information includes departmental spending breakdowns, spending on various categories such as bridge and road repairs, lists of vendors receiving payments, and copies of checks.

The website was launched in December 2014 by Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel's office to show how the state's budget was spent.

Dan Risko, a spokesman for Mandel, said Ohio is the first state to launch a website tracking spending and there have been more than 575,000 searches since its launch.

"The power of it is giving Ohio taxpayers unprecedented access to how the state has been spending their hard-earned tax dollars," he said at an announcement saluting Amherst, Amherst Township and New Russia Township for joining. "We're excited people are using it. Every day we see more users of it on the state site and the local sites."

Small government entities started to be added to the website in September. With the addition of Amherst and Amherst and New Russia townships, about 750 of Ohio's 3,692 governmental entities are now online.

Amherst's online checkbook includes more than 40,000 individual transactions involving more than \$130 million between 2008 and this year, according to the treasurer's office.

"We just really want to be open with the citizens," Amherst auditor David Kukucka said, "and to make the information available on an easy-to-use platform."

New Russia Township's checkbook includes more than 3,000 transactions involving in excess of \$1.6 million over the last two years.

Wellington is considering joining next year, said Vanya Hales, village finance director.



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Hales, who was named to the post in January, said she spoke with treasurer's office officials in March about putting the village's spending information online. She said she's still adjusting to her job and the departure of village manager Steve Pyles.

"I'm going to look into it later down the road," Hales said. "They're public records and it makes it easier for the public to access."

Oberlin finance director and acting city manager Sal Talarico couldn't be reached for comment on his interest in the open checkbook initiative.

####