



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Sarah Hawley
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RACINE — The villages of Racine, Middleport and Pomeroy became the latest government entities to be part of a government transparency initiative by the Ohio Treasurer's Office.

Jamie Barker, public affairs liaison for Treasurer Josh Mandel, was on hand Wednesday morning in Racine to officially launch the OhioCheckbook.com site for the three villages.

The villages join Letart Township as the only public entities in Meigs County to be part of the program that launched in April 2015.

Barker praised Racine fiscal officer Janet Krider for her leadership in bringing the program to the village when many others in the area had not yet joined.

"I believe the people of Meigs 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. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

"The Village of Racine is happy to partner with state Treasurer Josh Mandel on the Ohio Checkbook transparency initiative," stated Krider. "This cutting-edge tool is available at no cost to the village and will allow the people of Racine to see how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent."

Racine's online checkbook includes about 3,600 individual transactions that represent more than \$1.2 million of total spending over the past three years.

"It has been a pleasure for the Villages of Pomeroy and Middleport to partner with Treasurer Mandel on the OhioCheckbook.com transparency initiative," stated Pomeroy and Middleport Fiscal Officer Susan Baker. "This 21st century tool will allow our taxpayers to see where their money is being spent and it comes at no cost to local governments."

Pomeroy's online checkbook includes about 6,200 individual transactions that represent more than \$3.9 million of total spending over the past three years.

Middleport's online checkbook includes about 14,700 individual transactions that represent more than \$8.8 million of total spending over the past three years.

Barker and Krider explained that it does not require a great deal of additional work on behalf of the village to launch and maintain the site.



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One of the biggest concerns with joining the online checkbook, according to Barker, is the concern over the additional time it would require. Barker said that the misconception of the time commitment is one of the things that comes up most often when discussing the potential program with entities.

Barker explained that OhioCheckbook.com came after the state was ranked 46th in the nation in transparency three years ago. In the latest rankings, Ohio is first in transparency.

On April 7, 2015, Mandel sent a letter to 18,062 government and school officials throughout the state calling on them to place their checkbook level data on OhioCheckbook.com and extending an invitation to partner with his office at no cost. These local governments include cities, counties, townships, schools, library districts and other special districts.

A large coalition of statewide and local government organizations have expressed support for OhioCheckbook.com and local government transparency, including: Ohio Municipal League, Ohio Township Association, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Buckeye Association of School Administrators, County Commissioner Association of Ohio, County Auditor Association of Ohio, Ohio Newspaper Association, Ohio Society of CPAs, Buckeye Institute and Common Cause Ohio.

OhioCheckbook.com was launched Dec. 2, 2014, marking the first time in Ohio history that citizens could actually see every expenditure in state government. Since its launch, OhioCheckbook.com has received overwhelming support from newspapers and groups across the state and, as of Sept. 26, 2016, there have been more than 633,000 total searches on the site.

The treasurer's office is partnering with OpenGov, a leading Silicon Valley government technology company, to provide residents of Ohio the ability to view and search local government expenditures in a user-friendly, digital format.

"Ohio is setting the standard for financial transparency on an unprecedented scale. We are excited to partner with the treasurer's office to bring world-class technology to communities large and small across the state," said Zachary Bookman, CEO of OpenGov.

For more information or to view the local government website, visit the local government option on OhioCheckbook.com.

The websites for Racine, Pomeroy and Middleport can be accessed directly at Racine.OhioCheckbook.com, Pomeroy.OhioCheckbook.com and Middleport.OhioCheckbook.com, respectively.

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