



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel visits city to celebrate transparency of financial records

Streetsboro Gateway News

By Mike Lesko and Bob Gaetjens

August 2, 2015

State Treasurer Josh Mandel journeyed to Streetsboro July 29 to announce the city's participation in "OhioCheckbook.com," a program launched by his office that will allow residents to view the expenses of cities, villages, townships, pension funds, School Boards and other public entities.

Streetsboro is the seventh city in Ohio and first in Portage County to take part in Ohiocheckbook.com, Mandel said.

Mayor Glenn Broska is enthused about the program.

"We're almost ready to go live," Broska told City Council July 27. "It's a great idea. Transparency is good. It's just a matter of the implementation of it."

Ohiocheckbook.com went live last February, listing state's "checkbook-level" spending. It will cost no money for communities to implement, Mandel said.

The Streetsboro data will likely go live on OhioCheckbook.com in several weeks, said Streetsboro Finance Director Jenny Esarey.

Council President Jeff Allen, who pushed for the city to move forward with it, said he is a big supporter of the program, repeatedly adding it to City Council meeting agendas during the past several months.

"I believe in transparency," Allen told Council July 27. "I'm glad to see we're moving forward with it. It's a great program. I researched it very extensively."

Mandel said he's planning to use Streetsboro to show similar communities that his transparency initiative works.

"In this process there are going to be leaders, and there are going to be followers," he told a gathering of about 15 to 20 at Streetsboro City Hall July 29. "And I'm proud to be standing here with the mayor and Council president and others really recognizing that the city of Streetsboro is going to be a leader in the process."

The transparency initiative improved the state's ranking in government transparency from No. 46 to No. 1, according to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's "Following the Money 2015" report.

"I really want to recognize that this is much larger than the city of Streetsboro," said Mandel. "The leadership that you are exhibiting today will keep this transparency movement rolling throughout the state."

Esarey said the site is secure and the information is easy to submit. She told Council July 27 that detailed city expense reports will appear online. She said she ran an expense report and the state treasurer's office uploaded it.

"They were able to create a mock website," she said. "I've been checking all the numbers. Everything looks great. It really does demonstrate all the expenses for the city."

Once the system was set up, Esarey said reporting the monthly spending to the state is a matter of exporting an Excel spreadsheet and sending it to the Treasurer's office.

When Streetsboro data goes live, it will include expenditures only, said Esarey.

Mandel said it's free for agencies to post their expenditures; however, at the moment there's a cost to add revenue to the site.

Esarey said the city is currently investigating options to include the revenue numbers, as well. She's planning to meet with state officials in the coming days to discuss details of adding revenue, including what the cost would be.



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

If a citizen wants revenue records, they can still request them by contacting Esarey at jesarey@cityofstreetsboro.com or 330-626-4942 ext. 4110.

Allen said obtaining the information may just be the first step for people who really are curious about the city's expenditures. "People are going to have to do their research and due diligence to understand it," he said. "My suggestion is that if you don't understand it, don't be afraid to call your Council members or finance director to understand it, as city finances are quite complex."

Schools may join soon

Streetsboro School Board President Brian Violi said the administration is in the process of investigating Ohiocheckbook.com. If there's not a large time financial or time commitment, he said the district will probably participate.

School Treasurer Cathy Rouse said Mandel's office has been working on a software solution to make delivery of monthly financial data easy. Last week, she said she heard the system enabling her to export and send a spreadsheet -- much like the city's system -- has been created, so it's likely the district will join the program.

"I certainly don't have any issue with doing that, so we'll most likely be moving with that in the near future," she said, adding the School Board would need to approve joining Ohiocheckbook.com.

####