



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Youngstown Vindicator
By Denise Dick
December 3, 2015

YOUNGSTOWN

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel lauded city and Mathews school officials as state leaders for participating in his initiative to put public spending online.

Both school districts are the second in their respective counties to sign on to Mandel's OhioCheckbook.com. South Range was the first in Mahoning County, and Newton Falls was Trumbull's first.

Mandel also recognized Austintown and Milton townships in Mahoning County and Howland, Liberty and Bazetta townships in Trumbull County.

Of the 3,962 local governments and school districts across the state, about 10 percent, or 397, have decided to participate.

Mandel said he's pushing to have all entities participate "because I believe taxpayers have the right to know how their tax dollars are being spent."

It allows citizens to hold elected officials accountable, he said.

Youngstown City Schools Treasurer James Reinhard said the school district is proud to be part of Mandel's program.

"We agree with the concept of having transparency, that everything we do should be out there," he said.

The city school board voted last week to be part of Mandel's program.

The local entities provide their information to Mandel's office where it's put online at no charge to the entities. It's not always available right away, though, because of different software and other considerations.

"We will prioritize accuracy over speed," Mandel said.

Reinhard said the program will be useful internally, too, because it allows users to search information. While district budget information already is online, that information isn't searchable.

Brian Stidham, Mathews schools treasurer, said his district's information should be available through OhioCheckbook.com soon.



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Brenda Kimble, city school board president, said the school board puts "high value on transparency and open government."

Stephen Stohla, interim superintendent, said the district is glad to take part in Mandel's effort to make government "transparent and make sure everything we have financially is open."

Those comments indicate a bit of a departure from past practice.

On Nov. 24, The Vindicator requested a copy of a district staffing analysis that an Ohio Department of Education consultant presented at a school board meeting.

Stohla, through a district spokeswoman, said the newspaper had to complete a written public-records request to obtain a copy.

Ohio's Open Records Law, also called the Sunshine Law, says "a person need not make a public-records request in writing, or identify him or herself when making a request."

After filling out the request Monday through the district's public records officer, the newspaper received a copy of the analysis Wednesday.

####