



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Chris Bournea
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The city of Bexley is now one of five Franklin County municipalities that participate in OhioCheckbook.com, a site operated by state of Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel's office that enables the public to view government agencies' finances.

Bexley residents can log on to the OhioCheckbook site and view more than 18,000 individual checks representing more than \$25 million of the city's total spending over the past fiscal year, Mandel said.

"The mission of OhioCheckbook is to empower taxpayers to hold politicians accountable," Mandel said during a Dec. 9 press conference at Bexley City Hall. "We started this initiative about a year ago when I took \$473 billion of state money and put it on the Internet. And now over the past six months, we've begun to put ... cities, counties, school districts and other local governments (on the OhioCheckbook site) so taxpayers at the local level can follow their money as well."

Bexley chose to join Columbus, Grandview Heights, Worthington and New Albany in participating in OhioCheckbook because it promotes transparency in government, Bexley Mayor Ben Kessler said.

"Transparency, communication, accessibility for our residents is a uniform priority for the city of Bexley," Kessler said. "This is lockstep with a lot of our other efforts to get information to our residents in a way that's easily consumable."

Mandel said he sent a letter April 7 to 18,062 local government and school officials representing 3,962 local governments statewide, inviting them to participate in OhioCheckbook. Representatives from Mandel's office made a presentation to Bexley City Council last spring.

Councilman Tim Madison, chairman of the Finance Committee, said council members expressed immediate interest in joining OhioCheckbook because it enables the city to provide information about its finances to residents at no cost.

"There was no hesitation. It's pretty much a no-brainer for the city of Bexley," Madison said. "It's pure transparency, and that's the beauty of the program."

Kessler said city Auditor Bill Harvey and Finance Director Beecher Hale will perform much of the work to keep Bexley's finances updated on OhioCheckbook.

"I don't think it's going to be labor-intensive at all," Harvey said. "From what I understand, it's a simple upload."

Since OhioCheckbook launched on Dec. 2, 2014, there have been more than 401,000 total searches on the site, according to Mandel's office. Mandel said he plans to use Bexley's participation in OhioCheckbook to encourage other local governments to



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sign on.

"We're going to be leveraging the leadership of the city of Bexley and Mayor Kessler to encourage other local officials throughout the state of Ohio to put their finances online as well," Mandel said. "We'll be able to talk about Bexley as a leader, Bexley as a similar city to show them that Bexley's done it and they can as well."

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