



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Katie Wedell
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SPRINGFIELD — Three municipalities became the first in Clark County to join the Ohio Online Checkbook Wednesday, putting all their purchases on Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel’s website for the public to view.

Springfield Township, Madison Township and the village of Catawba officially launched their online checkbooks along with Tecumseh Local School District, the sixth school district in Clark County to join.

Mandel launched the project in 2014 to increase transparency by putting the state’s checkbook online in an interactive, searchable format. He then began encouraging municipalities, school districts and other government entities around the state to join in.

“By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable,” Mandel said in a statement announcing the new additions.

For the local entities, the website is a way to increase transparency without adding work and expense by creating individual portals, leaders said.

“I’m just excited to be a part of it because it offers so much to the public and to the township,” said Springfield Township Fiscal Officer Mike Hively.

He estimates it will take about 10 minutes a month for him to upload the township’s expenses into the system and will allow any member of the public to see exactly what the trustees are spending tax money on.

“Everything the township does is a public record,” Hively said. “We work for (the public).”

Tecumseh Treasurer Debra Schock agreed the system is easy to use and allows smaller entities to put information out to the public in a way they couldn’t afford to on their own.

“The board of education and administration, we felt it was important to improve transparency,” Schock said.

Tecumseh, Springfield Township and Catawba have all had financial issues in the past that increased transparency of their books may have shed light on, leaders said.

A former Springfield Township fiscal officer was asked to step down back in 2009 and came under fire again in 2011 for errors discovered during a state audit and for payments that were made late.

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Catawba had a similar situation in early 2015 when it was discovered that its former fiscal officer had failed to pay bills and submit state paperwork on time, costing the village late fees.

And former Tecumseh Superintendent Brad Martin is currently serving a six-month jail sentence for theft in office, forgery and tampering with records after deceiving the district out of more than \$40,000. That included forging signatures on checks that would now be readily available for public scrutiny.

Schock said that was not the reason the district wanted to join the checkbook, but rather a general desire to increase public participation and transparency. She also plans to update the checkbook site on a monthly basis.

Northeastern, Northwestern, Southeastern, Greenon and Clark-Shawnee school districts are already using OhioCheckbook.com. In Champaign County, the villages of St. Paris and Mechanicsburg, as well as Mad River Township, are using the site.

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