



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Katie White  
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EAST PALESTINE - On Wednesday the village became the 257th local government in the state to upload its finances to Ohiocheckbook.com, the government transparency initiative launched by state Treasurer Josh Mandel in 2014.

That means that anyone with access to the Internet can now see all of the village's finances online.

Mandel organized the website to not only make government more accountable to taxpayers, but to also improve the state's transparency ranking, which was at 46 before the website.

Ohio is now number one in the nation as a result and taxpayers can track government spending through the website.

Beginning with his own office, the site later added the financial information of other state departments, like the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Users can also look up the salaries of elected leaders and other office holders.

The local government portion of the site was added in September of last year, with each local government and public school system given their own online "checkbook."

"What we really wanted to do was empower citizens to hold elected officials accountable. Josh believes in leading by example before we asked local governments to do the same," Jared Borg of the treasurer's office said.

Borg told East Palestine Village Manager Pete Monteleone and Finance Director Traci Thompson that the village should be applauded for joining the initiative.

"As of today, this is available to the public. People in Lisbon, East Palestine and throughout the country will be able to see your website. For you to be 257th to go online, that is a mark on your leadership. We want to applaud you for that and thank you for your leadership," he said.

Of the 3,962 local governments in the state, 606 have committed to uploading their finances to the website, he added.

The treasurer's office hopes to have all local government spending uploaded eventually.

To date, all financial information uploaded is from 2008 through 2014, with subsequent years added as they become available.



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The initiative is available to participants at no cost, since the treasurer's office was able to save \$4.5 million dollars during Mandel's first four years in office, Borg said.

During a virtual tour of East Palestine's finances on the website, he pointed out that there are 12,825 individual checks representing just under \$15.3 million worth of the village's spending from 2008 to 2014.

Specifically, he pointed out a check written for \$1,100 dollars for fuel to Leake Oil Co., which the company cashed in December.

Leake Oil is a local family company currently owned by William Leake.

Monteleone said he would like to see a comparative analysis tool on the local government site in the future.

Borg said that isn't available yet, but there is a compare feature on the state side. The village is able, however, to communicate with other participating local governments through the [opengov.com](http://opengov.com) website.

"We are glad to be part of the pioneering venture with you," Monteleone said. "We appreciate that it is at no cost to East Palestine. We are pleased to be transparent. We want to be as transparent as possible. This is just another tool for everybody, council, administrative, everybody, to look at what we are doing. We are trying to be as fiscally responsible as we can."

Other local governments in Columbiana County that have already uploaded their finances are Salem, Salineville, Columbiana, Leetonia Schools and the Salem Public Library.

The treasurer's office also has partnerships with East Liverpool and Beaver Local Schools, and Borg said those should be available online in the near future.

"We are working closely with Unity Township as well," he said.

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