



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By John LePage
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CUMBERLAND -- The village of Cumberland took a major step towards fiscal transparency Thursday.

At a special meeting in the Cumberland Village Building, Mayor Shirley Rhinehart joined Dan Risko, deputy director of public affairs from Treasurer of Ohio Josh Mandel's Office to announce the Village of Cumberland's launch on the Treasurer of Ohio's online checkbook site. Risko took those present on a tour of the site, explaining different features and showing how the site could be used to answer residents' questions.

In Cumberland's case, like other villages, townships and other smaller entities, the information is taken from the UAN database in which the entities already participate. Only basic information (such as check number, date, amount, payee, fund money came out of, and reason for payment) is used. Bank account numbers, routing numbers and other sensitive information is not included. The information is taken from a flat file that is not linked to any of the participants' computers.

Risko also mentioned fiscal officers can track who visited their checkbook and from where. Many village fiscal officers were finding that those using it the most were their own council members for numerous reasons.

Mayor Rhinehart said she likes that any resident (or other interested party) can see out of which funds payments are being made. She said it will also help people understand the rules about funds being earmarked for a particular purpose and thus unavailable for other projects even though the money shows up in the general report. She also likes the way the online checkbook delivers the information much faster than the old way of someone having to submit a request and wait for a paper copy to be sent to them.

Mayor Rhinehart said, "We have always had a quick compliance record and this is another way to help get information to the public."

Cumberland is the first government entity in Guernsey County to be fully launched on OhioCheckbook.com. Guernsey County and the Village of Pleasant City have also committed to joining OhioCheckbook.com.

Cumberland's online checkbook includes over 1,800 individual transactions that represent \$4.9 million of total local spending over the past four years. Cumberland's online records go back 2013, which is pretty much the standard for information posted thorough the UAN. If the information is available, participants may post as many years as they like. Information will not be dropped as the next year's information is added on. To investigate Cumberland's site, go to cumberland.ohiocheckbook.com and take a tour of the site or just jump right in and start searching for information.

In December 2014, Treasurer Mandel launched OhioCheckbook.com. It set a new standard for government transparency and for the first time in Ohio history puts all the state spending information on the internet. Before OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio ranked



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number 46 among the 50 states in government transparency. Now Ohio has ranked number one in government transparency for two years in a row.

On April 7, 2015, Treasurer Mandel sent out a letters to local government officials and school officers representing 3,962 local governments all over Ohio to partner with OhioCheckbook.com. These local governments include cities, counties, villages, townships, school districts, library districts, and other specials districts. As of this meeting, 710 of these government entities were active on OhioCheckbook.com.

"I believe the people of Guernsey County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with my office to post the finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Treasurer Mandel (in his official press release prepared for the June 2 announcement). "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

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