



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Peter Greer
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HICKSVILLE — The village of Hicksville and the Ayersville Water and Sewer District have joined the village of Ney as the second and third entities in Defiance County to become a part of OhioCheckbook.com, a product of the Ohio Treasurer's Office which is meant to set new standards for government transparency.

Andrew Coutts of the Ohio Treasurer's Office met with representatives of Hicksville and Ayersville Thursday morning in Hicksville Village Council chambers to explain the program.

For the first time in Ohio history, OhioCheckbook.com puts all state spending information on the Internet, enabling users to see every expenditure in state government. The site has earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second consecutive year.

According to the website, Hicksville's online checkbook includes more than 17,700 transactions, representing more than \$18 million in total spending since 2011, while Ayersville's features more than 3,300 transactions representing over \$3.5 million of total spending since 2014.

Coutts noted 531 live sites in the state, with 930 committed entries building or reviewing their sites. OhioCheckbook.com kicked off on Dec. 2, 2014.

Negotiations are underway in the hopes that the city of Defiance and Defiance City Schools will join Ney, Hicksville and Ayersville on the site.

Hicksville fiscal officer Cheryl Smith said the idea of joining the site was initiated by Mayor Diane Collins, a proponent of government transparency.

Smith explained that Council-man Mick Pocratsky was the one to help bring Hicksville's joining to fruition after attending a Defiance County commissioner's meeting regarding OhioCheckbook.com.

"Mick came back all excited and... said 'we need this,'" Smith said.

David Wright, the new district manager of the Ayersville Water and Sewer District, issued a formal statement praising those involved with getting the district involved with the site. "I congratulate the Ayersville Water and Sewer District Board members and the Highland Township trustees for recognizing the importance of fiscal responsibility," he said. "I feel our customers will now have a better understanding of the financial responsibility practiced by the individuals operating our district."



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After logging into the website, those needing to know the desired information can click on any one of hundreds of blue dots representing participating entities in the state. There are bar charts, pie charts and other ways of measuring data available.

The site includes information on monthly pay breakouts; how much individual entities spent month by month; and top vendors paid by each individual entity, among other data.

"You can download one year or all years," Coutts noted.

One thing OhioCheckbook.com does not do is provide personal information such as bank account numbers, routing numbers or other personal data. Only general information is released to the public.

Frequency of updates occur at the entities' discretion.

As the site continues its growth, the state treasurer's office wants to keep it as user-friendly as possible and that anyone wanting to contribute ideas on how to increase the ease of use should contact the office. "We hope it's extremely helpful," Coutts said. "We want to show people how to use it."

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