



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Sarah Hawley
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The villages of Hamden and McArthur, along with Harrison Twp., have become the first government agencies in Vinton County to join the transparency efforts organized by Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel.

OhioCheckbook.com allows for residents to see the finances of villages, townships, school districts and others who have signed up for the program. The website was launched by the Ohio Treasurer's Office in December 2014, with local governments receiving letters asking them to join in April 2015.

Recently on March 1, officials with the Ohio Treasurer's Office joined with the local officials to formally launch the Ohio Checkbook sites for Hamden, McArthur and Harrison Twp.

"We are extremely proud to partner with the State Treasurer's office to share our public records online," said McArthur Mayor Kim Wortman in a news release. "This effort provides a high degree of transparency between our local governments and the citizens of our village."

Eric Ochmanek, Deputy Chief of Staff for Mandel, said that it is up to the individual agencies or offices how often they update the information on the website.

"I believe the people of Vinton 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," Treasurer Mandel stated in a release provided by his office. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

The state treasurer's office currently updates its information monthly to the site.

McArthur fiscal officer Janie Fannin said it is very easy for her to put in information to the website.

The website can be accessed remotely, meaning residents of the village can gather information on the town's finances without having to visit the village office.

Wortman said the website could also be utilized at future Village Council meetings. The website can also be utilized by officials to assist with forecasts and budgeting.

Hamden Fiscal Officer Susan Neri said that the website will be utilized by residents who would not normally request to view the information.



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"We are thankful to the Treasurer's office for offering us the capability to post our financial records online," Neri said.

Currently, McArthur's online checkbook includes more than 10,000 individual transactions totaling more than \$3 million in spending over a three-year span.

Hamden has currently inputted financial information for the 2013 fiscal year, while Harrison Twp. has listed three years of information so far.

Currently, 560 local governments throughout Ohio are committed to taking part in the program.

Since its launch, OhioCheckbook.com has received overwhelming support from news outlets and groups across the state and, as of Feb. 28, 2016, there have been more than 472,000 total searches on the site.

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