



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Dean Wright  
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RIO GRANDE &mdash; Representatives of the Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel's office visited Rio Grande's Municipal Building on Wednesday to announce that both Rio Grande and Centerville have placed their financial information and transactions online as part of a website called OhioCheckbook.com

Rio Grande Mayor Matt Easter, Fiscal Officer Jennifer Harrison and Councilman Tom Weaver appeared for the discussion. Both Centerville and Rio Grande are the first governments in Gallia County to join the OhioCheckbook project. According to Mandel's office representatives, the movement is voluntary on the part of local governments and Ohio is likely the first state to endorse such a project in attempts of furthering the goal of government spending transparency.

Rio Grande's online checkbook lists more than 9,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$3 million of total spending over the last four years. Centerville's checkbook includes more than 500 transactions that represent more than \$119,000 of total spending.

Eric Ochmanek, the Ohio treasurer's deputy chief of staff, displayed how the online checkbook displays the costs of government employees, individual checks and their numbers, dates, and graphs and pie charts used to detail the financial history of a particular government organization.

Easter said he felt this was a move headed in the right direction as he felt taxpayers deserve to know what their money was being spent on as well as making it easier for the individual person to answer financial governmental questions. Harrison said she felt much the same. Rio Grande officials said the "checkbook" phenomena is likely something that will become more widespread across the country and that joining the initiative early saves time and effort.

The project was originally launched in early December 2014 and allows citizens to see expenditures at the state government level as well. Since the program launch, there have been more than 507,000 searches on the site. State government updates their information monthly. Harrison said she would likely update the village's spending information yearly for the time being.

"It's volunteer. It's no cost and it's all public record, anyway," Ochmanek said. "We are offering public records information in a way that's making it easier for viewers. You already are required to give public records. This is showing the information in a new and interactive way."

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