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The Clare Sentinel

ClareCountyOnline.com

Clare County, Michigan

Current Article



School districts, govt units should post check register, agenda info on Web site

By [By The Clare Sentinel](#) on Apr 28, 2009 in [Clare County-wide](#), [Clare News](#), [Clare Schools](#), [County Government](#), [Farwell News](#), [Farwell Schools](#), [Featured](#), [Harrison](#), [Harrison News](#)

OUR VIEW (Clare Sentinel's Opinion)

The Stephenson (Mich.) Area Public Schools recently announced that it would post its check register online for taxpayer inspection, according to Kenneth M. Braun, director of the Mackinac Center's "Show Michigan the Money" transparency project.

We think it's an idea whose time has come and one that should be adopted, embraced and implemented by all school districts, including Clare's, Farwell's and Harrison's, as well as by other governmental entities such as Clare County government, City of Clare government and township governments. It's also an idea that local attorney Ghazey Aleck II, former Clare County prosecutor, has apparently been championing, at least with one school district, as he first suggested in a letter to the Clare Public Schools administration, subsequently in person to the Clare School Board at its Monday, April 20, public meeting and finally in a letter to the editor that also appears on this page.

Aleck is calling for the Clare School Board to post its check register online and also to post its board meeting packet information online as well.

Aleck writes, in part, "As it stands now, if you go to a (Clare School) Board meeting you will not know why things are happening unless you have the foresight to request a board packet in advance."

This seems like both a reasonable and doable request since both Clare Public Schools and the Clare city manager's office both already routinely provide this newspaper with PDF formatted board packet information in advance of their meetings via email. Shouldn't be much harder and take no more than a few minutes for each entity to pop the same PDFs on their respective Web sites a few days before the actual meetings.

The Clare Sentinel has occasionally put on its own Web site (www.clarecountyonline.com) the agenda packet

info PDFs it has received for upcoming Clare City Commission meetings, and will continue to do so. Whether it's sharing agenda information online or practicing full transparency by posting check register expenses to the Web site of a public school district, it is putting information at the disposal of those individuals who fund these public endeavors, i.e. namely the taxpayer. And that's a good thing. Stephenson Area Public Schools Superintendent Roger Cole agrees, quoted in a press release from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy as saying, "When difficult decisions must be made due to the economic conditions, clarity and above-board reporting of spending are more important than ever." The Mackinac Center, headquartered in Midland, Mich., also reported the following information: The Upper Peninsula district with fewer than 740 students is the second smallest district in Michigan known to be providing an online expenditure report. The smallest known district — Chassell Township Schools — also is in the U.P., about 150 miles north of Stephenson. The Show Michigan the Money project now lists 34 public school districts, including two intermediate school districts, statewide that are providing this information on their Web sites. These include seven of the top 20 largest school districts in the state. Links to all 34 district checkbook registers are available at www.showmichiganthemoney.org/9329. While it may require an extra 10 minutes a week for a staff member to load this information on a school district's or governmental unit's Web site, it will be 10 minutes well spent.

The opinions expressed in the weekly "Our View" editorial represent the viewpoint of The Clare Sentinel. We encourage our readers to share their views, pro or con, on this or other issues of general interest. Send letters, 400 words or less, to the editor at: newsroom@claresentinel.net or via mail to: P.O. Box 237, Clare, MI 48617.

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