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Two school districts post checks online

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By Mitch Hotts, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Elected officials in Clinton Township and two of the town's school districts are taking steps to post their bills or check registers online to allow taxpayers the opportunity to monitor government spending.

Township leaders, along with officials in Chippewa Valley and Clintondale Community Schools, say the move is aimed at providing greater transparency in local government.

"Like I've always said we are in a service industry and anything we can do to make it easier for people to understand and participate in their government can only be good," said Dean Reynolds, a

township trustee.

The Board of Trustees recently approved placing the bills on their Web site. It's a relatively inexpensive move that should be completed in the next few months, according to Trustee Ken Pearl.

Pearl, who formerly served as a trustee on the Chippewa Valley school board, said the move to place bills online was not a response to any great demand from residents or business owners, but rather a matter of principle.

"There's no reason not to do it," Pearl said. "It's important to let people see where their tax dollars are going. I haven't had any residents asking for it, we just felt it was the right thing to do."

Township Treasurer Bill Sowerby said Clinton Township has already made use of the Internet by placing an interactive property tax program online as well as the parks and recreation activities program.

Eventually, the township board wants to make the information packets trustees receive for their meetings also posted online. That likely will happen sometime this year, said township Clerk George

Fitzgerald.

Board members also ordered the information technology department to install equipment that allows the trustees to check and receive their e-mail on the township system at home. Currently, the trustees must go to the Civic Center to access their e-mail or have an aide forward the messages.

Two of the town's school districts are taking similar steps on the postings of the bill.

In Chippewa Valley Schools, the school board recently authorized placing its check register online. The public will be able to review the checks, who was paid and how much money was spent.

"We're working on the system right now," said board member Frank Bednard. "We'll see how the public reacts. If there are some problems, we can make changes but we feel people who want to review the information will be able to do so."

Chippewa Valley's move to post the bills follows criticism from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy and school board candidate Grace Caporuscio about the need for more transparency.

Caporuscio, who has criticized the board's spending, said the move was overdue.

"We are seeing the first wave in the public's quest for transparency in government spending," she said in a statement. "We have a right to see how our money is being spent."

In Clintondale Community Schools, board members expect to study the issue at an upcoming workshop, said board member Mark Titus.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a Midland-based conservative think tank and public policy analysis group, urged school districts to post their check registers online as part of the center's "Show Michigan the Money" project.

Romeo Community Schools also voted recently to post its checks online.

"Fiscal accountability is a key to gaining our community's trust," Jennifer White, secretary of the Romeo Board of Education said in a news release distributed by the Mackinac Center. "Bottom line here is making sure the taxpayers' dollars are getting to the classroom; our kids future depends on it, and our community can help us achieve this."

Kenneth Braun, director of the Mackinac Center's "Show Michigan the Money" project, challenged other Macomb County districts to follow the lead of Romeo and Chippewa Valley.

"These two districts showed that 21st century transparency is easily attainable if officials care about that goal," he said. "Every other Macomb school district can and should follow their example."

Frank DeFrank contributed to this story.

Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of macombdaily.com.

Get on the good-foot East Detroit wrote on Mar 10, 2009 8:27 AM:

" East Detroit Public Schools should do this as well. Mr. Kefgen from EDPS stated in a another paper recently that he did not know any other Macomb County school district that did this.... HERE YOU GO EAST DETROIT! Please follow suite.

Show the public what you have.... "

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Get on the good-foot MISD wrote on Mar 10, 2009 8:29 AM:

" The Macomb Intermediate School District should also do the same. "

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Romeo Resident wrote on Mar 10, 2009 8:55 AM:

" Way to go Romeo!!! This has been an endeavor for Ms. White and others on the board for a long while now. She deserves praise for stepping up in making the tough decisions that a couple members on that board would never make. "

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its funny..... wrote on Mar 10, 2009 9:59 AM:

" It's funny that Reynolds and Fitzgerald think that spending should be transparent but their wives who are Chippewa Valley school board members are against it. Must make for some interesting dinner conversation at their houses. "

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to its funny wrote on Mar 10, 2009 11:12 AM:

" Empty sacks will never stand upright! "

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Michael wrote on Mar 10, 2009 11:30 AM:

" Why don't you start with how many years people had their wives on payroll and they did nothing to receive a check but, got one anyway.....Ya Cannon it's directed at you "

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To its funny wrote on Mar 10, 2009 11:45 AM:

" GET YOUR FACTS RIGHT! YES, Mrs Reynolds sits on the CVSB and she got there on her OWN merits and does support transparency. She also takes her postion seriously, makes her OWN decisions and has done an excellant job. The Reynolds family are very active in this community. Mr & Mrs Reynolds get many calls from the residents of this community and truly listen, follow thru to the best of their ability and help when called upon. "

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Congrats to Romeo wrote on Mar 10, 2009 12:10 PM:

" Way to go Romeo district! Congratulations on being the FIRST and ONLY district in Macomb to post online! I went to your website and surfed around for a while. VERY nice job on the details of where the money is going. Keep up the good work!
Kudos to Ms. White! "

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twitter wrote on Mar 10, 2009 12:14 PM:

" I have heard and read nothing but negative comments about the Clinton Twp board of trustees. People asking for permits and variances are hollered at and usually told "no" by this board. Maybe this is just an attempt to make themselves look good. "

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to duhwitter wrote on Mar 10, 2009 12:49 PM:

" That's the zoning board of appeals where permits & variances go to- Get a clue and watch the meetings! The Clinton Township Board is very respectful to their residents and professional. I commend Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Pearl for this. Good job guys! "

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to Ken Braun wrote on Mar 10, 2009 2:36 PM:

" Great Job to you and your Mackinac Center! Let's hope the rest of the school districts follow Romeo's lead.
Maybe you can push the cities and townships to do the same. Or the counties, especially Macomb. Or better yet, all those agencies in Lansing. I bet they've got LOTS to hide. "

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ND wrote on Mar 10, 2009 3:04 PM:

" Now we need the rest of the school districts to do the same as well as our Michigan government. I for one want to see where my tax dollars go in an itemized list not grouped together under a catch all category.
Great going to Clintondale and Chippewa Valley Community schools! "

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Neppolian wrote on Mar 10, 2009 3:18 PM:

" Macomb County should also show the tax payers where the money is going. "

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East detroit wrote on Mar 10, 2009 5:18 PM:

" Also had fraud going on years ago. They should be eager to regain the trust. Wonder if they are eating out or buying gifts too? "

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riddle me this... wrote on Mar 10, 2009 7:24 PM:

" Isn't Mr. Bednard the one who just 2 years ago said to a parent at a board meeting "Don't ask to look in our checkbook, we don't ask to look in yours"? Quite a change there Mr. Bednard. But then again, you are running for re-election; and are willing to say anything to get voted back into the fold. "

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Is it me wrote on Mar 10, 2009 7:34 PM:

" Has anyone noticed the significant reduction in hateful blog posts since the self named watchdog announced her candidacy for school board? Comparing the inactivity on here and the absence of her distasteful website has everyone in the community wondering why she is attempting an extreme makeover of her personality? The damage is done! I wouldn't trust her in the care for my child's education especially after she recently revealed her true self to some parents at one of the schools.

We are who we are, nothing can change that, not even our vote. Stop fooling yourself and others. it is not working. "

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Go Ken wrote on Mar 10, 2009 8:48 PM:

" Mr Braun; I will be sending you 5 bucks!
Thanks for your work for the taxpayers. "

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to East Detroit wrote on Mar 10, 2009 9:15 PM:

" I heard the people in New Haven have something to hide. Let's get them posting their checkbook online. "

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to Mr Pearl wrote on Mar 10, 2009 9:23 PM:

" Are you feeling pressure from your previous group over at Chippewa Valley? Why did you leave there? Afraid of what was going to turn up? Saw you were at the last school board meeting. Were you called there by the district lawyers for the executive session portion of the meeting? "

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Transparency wrote on Mar 10, 2009 9:29 PM:

" Transparency in government is a MUST. How many of Obama's appointees were found to owe back taxes?

Is Obama even a US citizen? He refuses to show us his original birth certificate proving he is eligible to be running our country. That right there is an excellent example of why transparency is so important. How can this person legally be in charge of the strongest country in the world? Show us the proof! "

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to it is me from Eastpointe wrote on Mar 10, 2009 10:17 PM:

" You know, I think Grace and John should get a medal for their efforts. It takes a whole lot of courage to go up against narrow-minded, shallow individuals.

You GO Girl! I hope you win your seat on the school board. Shake it up!!!! "

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To East Detroit wrote on Mar 10, 2009 10:20 PM:

" They should ALL go online. "

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what about Pontiac wrote on Mar 11, 2009 5:34 AM:

" I read where Pontiac just laid off over 700 teachers. Maybe they should put their checkbook out there too. And most definitely Detroit. They've got to be the worst. The schools should also make available the number of school of choice students and what district they are coming from. How many are from Mt. Clemens? or Detroit? "

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Truth Hurts wrote on Mar 11, 2009 4:12 PM:

" It's about time Chippewa Valley and all school districts start posting how they are spending our tax money intended for the education of our young.

Kudos to Team Grace! She has our vote!

Afterall, it is time for a change on the CVS Board. Obviously, they have been there too long to really watch what has been going on right under their noses or forks. "

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She just cant stop wrote on Mar 11, 2009 6:06 PM:

" G,
Stop the hateful blogs and let the community decide what and who they want come election day. have you no respect for anyone? Your mean spirited fingerprints are all over the blogs and YOU are the only one crazy enough to know the amount of detail about chippewa schools since you have made it your only mission in life the last few years. speaking of life, get one!

Go run a board campaign based on your best strategy and with some integrity. Anyone as mean as

you are toward people must have had a terrible upbringing because you are one frustrated, insecure person. It must make you feel good to tear others down? talk to me? "

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to she just cant stop wrote on Mar 11, 2009 7:50 PM:

" Have you looked in the mirror lately? And you have the nerve to call her "mean spirited"? "

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Parents have a responsibility wrote on Mar 11, 2009 9:53 PM:

" It is unfortunate that there are mean spirited people in our communities who only want to complain and dream up false stories about others who volunteer their time to help our children and improve our schools. What is even more concerning, is they are parents. Perhaps they could change their negative energies into positive ones and spend quality time with their children. Parents are responsible to take care of their children, teach them right from wrong, instill values of treating people with respect and help them to get a quality education. Parents need to lead by example. These people (one in particular) need to get a life. I agree with "she just can't stop" because people remember how you treated them. "

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Breaking news wrote on Mar 11, 2009 10:25 PM:

" Recall the dynamic duo who led the charge hounding newspapers (including this one) to cover a story about Chippewas illegal activities, property purchase, etc? Well a little bird told me this evening that the state of michigan has found NO illegal activity with what they do and they have it in writing by the state. The property purchase was appropriate and the files are closed! If anyone attended last months Macomb Trustees meeting you would have witnessed the family telling the township not to approve the purchase because what the school was doing was against the law. NOT! according the the Treasury Department. Sounds like bro and sis just received word today? They must be hopping mad (again). LOLLOL

There goes thousands of dollars more that the school district had to spend defending their position by getting attorneys. I heard they have spent around 50,000 dollars to defend against these people.

Verify this for yourself because I hear it will be in the papers soon. Read on!!

Thank you Chippewa School board for hanging in their under some stressful times. All the very involved parents I know support you 100% and will prove it to you on the day we vote. "

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ms goodhue wrote on Mar 11, 2009 10:42 PM:

" why dont you keep on eye on your own school district? i see you never filed election papers with the macomb county clerks office before you ran for school board.
your little bird is going to be fried soon!
you're an idiot. the township has nothing to do with approving the purchase anyways. the district bought the land last august. i guess you're not so informed. anyone can go online and see when the

purchase occurred.

hope the cvs school district enjoys their swampland that is now totally under water. i feel sorry for the people who buy the houses that are going to be built in the middle of the chippewa valley swamp. "

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LOLOL wrote on Mar 11, 2009 10:56 PM:

" I guess you are hopping mad like breaking news said you would be!

Who is Mrs. Goodhue?

Chill out. "

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Breaking News Pt 2 wrote on Mar 11, 2009 11:09 PM:

" Looks like one of the school board candidates is about to LOSE some endorsements. In the works as I write. Well, it took some longer to figure this person out then most people but at least they have the persons number.

The birds are busy tonight!! "

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Birds in Plain View wrote on Mar 12, 2009 7:25 AM:

" Which school board race and candidate(s) are you referring too?

Stick to the issues of this blog i.e.

wasteful spending on behalf of the current CVS Board to stop and posting of check registers district wide.

Take your hateful and obviously worried selves somewhere else! "

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roflmao wrote on Mar 12, 2009 7:45 AM:

" Great times at the Macomb Township board meeting last night! "

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wheres henry wrote on Mar 12, 2009 7:52 AM:

" I thought Henry Chiodini was the CVS board president. Why doesn't he have a quote in this article? After seeing him on the "Dancing with the Stars" video on cable, I can see why they didn't ask him any questions about finances! I seriously question his ability to lead a school board that is in charge of over \$130 MILLION per year! "

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Romeo parent wrote on Mar 12, 2009 9:15 AM:

" What about land? "

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ghetto wrote on Mar 12, 2009 9:27 AM:

" I thought I moved out of the ghetto so my children could go to better schools. While attending conferences at Dakota last night, I saw that we didn't move far enough north. How many of the over 300 "new" students (school of choice)are from Detroit or Mt. Clemens? I saw several in their ghetto attire (pants hanging down to their knees, skull caps, underwear hanging out) wandering around the school last night. Was it really worth it to get the extra \$7000/student funding from Lansing to bring this type of student into our schools? I don't think so. School of choice must end now. It will only get worse when Mt. Clemens schools close their doors. "

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fortune cookie wrote on Mar 12, 2009 11:07 AM:

" Worry not about your reputation but your character. (Character is what what you do or don't do when you think no one is looking) "

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Romeo Rocks wrote on Mar 12, 2009 11:37 AM:

" Way to go Romeo Schools! Great Job on being the first in Macomb County! "

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extra extra wrote on Mar 12, 2009 2:03 PM:

" Someone at Dakota is being investigated for stealing money from the school. I heard it was amember of the CAC. Could it be the woman who practically ran out of the door after the meeting this past week? I wonder..... "

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All Tax Dollars wrote on Mar 12, 2009 2:05 PM:

" Why aren't all Tax dollars spending shown on-line - all communities - and school districts.

Macomb Township New Supervisor not full time works at Dupont. Is that double dipping? Claimed he'd be full time but not in the office. Where is he? "

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Romeo Resident wrote on Mar 12, 2009 2:31 PM:

" Just finished watching the School Board Meeting. Ms. Hier and Ms. Murray, what have you proposed that the school district do for budget cuts? Perhaps I missed it, but for the last four meetings

I watched, you have recommended none? Is this true? If that is the case then what you are doing is 100% politics!!! We all know you are both highly rated in the teacher's union. Nothing wrong with that but have some comments, get involved, make remarks about cuts, do something other than sit there saying nothing to get votes!!! "

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MEA wrote on Mar 12, 2009 3:00 PM:

" The MEA has no place in donating funds to or supporting school board members in elections. It is a definite conflict of interest. You could call it a bribe for when the teachers' contracts come up for renewal. You know, "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours". "

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News Flash wrote on Mar 12, 2009 9:23 PM:

" I assume everyone heard by now that one of the school board candidates for Chippewa went postal on a parent after the high school booster meeting this week? It is all the talk...

Way to garner votes candidate! LMAO!!!!!! "

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candid camera wrote on Mar 12, 2009 10:15 PM:

" It must have been caught on the new million dollar surveillance cameras! "

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Tell the truth Mary Ann Couto wrote on Mar 13, 2009 6:19 AM:

" Now now Mary Ann. You know that's not what happened. You were so sure that you would never be confronted by said candidate (especially after you've been running around the district bad-mouthing this person) that you were taken by surprise when they called you on it. I saw you run out of the atrium before you even put your coat on because you couldn't handle the truth. Karma's a beotch isn't it. Just you wait. "

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to news flash wrote on Mar 13, 2009 6:21 AM:

" Henry, you haven't got a chance of winning. Heard the Macomb Township board of trustees turned you down flat when you were looking for endorsements on Wednesday night. Maybe they saw your "performance" on tv. "

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Dakota Parent wrote on Mar 13, 2009 1:38 PM:

" It is about time that this Dakota CAC/PTO parent was confronted for her actions of bad mouthing another parent through the Dakota Boosters.

Parent organizations like the Dakota Boosters and PTO is no place to publicly bash the parents that provide your support.

Way to go Watchdog Parent! You have our vote! "

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To Watchdogs wrote on Mar 13, 2009 6:24 PM:

" Have you told the community that the schools purchase of land was perfectly legal? If not, why not? Tell all you have been on a mission to bring everyone down, including the parents just so you look big?

Give our tax dollars a break and stop creating frivolous lawsuits just to get your name in the paper.

I heard your endorsers are dropping off one by one. Way to go MacTwp Trustees!! You finally figured her out.

You both infuriate me. "

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CV Board candidates wrote on Mar 13, 2009 6:49 PM:

" " Can you explain why some prominent people in the community have withdrawn their support of you (Grace and Terry)? That is very unusual and since you blog on here I we would be interested in knowing why you are losing more and more endorsements? I heard the state rep is next. "

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- 3) Don't hate.
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