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Comptroller Jack Schnirman Launches Nassau County Open Checkbook

More than a billion dollars in annual expenses now displayed online through new cloud-based application

MINEOLA, NY – Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman today announced the launch of *Nassau County Open Checkbook*, a new cloud-based web portal that creates for the first time an easy-to-read online checkbook that details more than a billion dollars of annual County outside expenditures.

“I laid out four priorities when I took office and the first was to open and modernize the County’s finances. In just one year, we’ve created a way residents can transparently see the county’s finances just like they can with their own. We are putting the county’s checkbook onto people’s phones and into their living rooms in an easy-to-understand format,” Schnirman said. “Opening up and modernizing the County’s finances is key to a government that uses data to find efficiencies to ask and answer questions. That’s why we’ve invited residents, students, reporters, and researchers to join us in looking at this data for opportunities to improve.”

Nassau County Open Checkbook is the first stage of the County’s new cloud-based transparency and open-records web platform. The technology and support for the program is provided by Tyler Technologies through its Socrata Open Expenditures platform. It provides easy access to all county spending on vendors and outside contractors dating back to 2016, with automatically generated charts and graphs. The platform tracks spending by department, vendor and expense category.

“We need real transparency in order to restore trust in government in Nassau County,” County Executive Laura Curran said. “The Open Checkbook is an innovative effort that will help us follow through on our promise of fiscal integrity.”

The Open Checkbook program is the first chapter in a holistic transparency and data sharing program the County Executive’s Office and the Comptroller’s Office is undertaking.

“Never before have Nassau County residents been able to simply type in a vendor name or a department and see how their money is being spent in such an easy to understand way. This is a big deal for anyone interested in government transparency and accessibility,” Schnirman said. “But this is just the first step. There is a lot more data out there for us to put online and a lot more work that can be done in studying how effective and efficient government is operating.”

The County expenses will be updated on a monthly basis and the platform will be updated later in the year to include payroll data.

“The Nassau County Open Checkbook will offer taxpayers a precise accounting of their money. All New Yorkers deserve this level of transparency, and other counties should follow suit,” said Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause New York.

Making use of data and tracking government results has been a major goal of Schnirman’s first year in office. In 2018, Schnirman formed a Policy and Research Unit in the Comptroller’s Office, which has been analyzing data to create innovative reports and policy proposals. They have released studies on Veterans affairs in Nassau County, local issues surrounding food insecurity and most recently released a groundbreaking demographic study that for the first time provided hyperlocal looks at the changing face of our local communities.

“As advocates for clean and effective government, we thank Comptroller Schnirman for taking a crucial first step towards using open data to make Nassau County government more accountable and transparent to the public,” said John Kaehny, the Executive Director of Reinvent Albany. “We’re excited by “Open Checkbook” and the Comptroller’s plans to go even further with open data, and we look forward to seeing Nassau as one of New York State’s leading localities for spending and fiscal transparency. “

Schnirman and his Policy and Research Unit alongside the team from Tyler Technologies, also led the County’s first analytics accelerator workshop in December to further jumpstart the process of developing data-based solutions as part of government’s everyday operations.

“The first step to building a data-driven government is making data discoverable, usable, and actionable,” said Kevin Merritt, president of the Data & Insights Division of Tyler Technologies. “By approaching problem solving with the use of data — whether for resource allocation, staffing, or engaging with the public — Nassau County is demonstrating impressive leadership in the government data sphere.”

Throughout the years, several county departments had begun the process of collecting data on government performance, but it had not been put to use.

“We are pushing Nassau County forward, and we are using data-driven solutions to lead the way,” Schnirman said. “One of the most surprising things we found when we got into office last year is that the county has spent years collecting all of this data related to government operations and hasn’t been making use of it.”

There is no cost or registration requirements to use *Nassau County Open Checkbook*. Under prior administrations, County expenses were provided on separate excel spreadsheets put together on a monthly basis.

“We applaud Nassau County for prioritizing open, transparent government,” said National Association of Counties Executive Director Matthew Chase. “This new tool helps taxpayers better understand county government and encourages community participation in the county’s decision-making process.”

The Office of the Nassau County Comptroller will be presenting the *Open Checkbook* directly to local civic and chamber of commerce organizations to demonstrate its functionality and encourage more engagement with the platform.

“We want everyone to join us in using this data to help develop useful analysis and policy proposals,” Schnirman said. “Our new Policy and Data Unit will be getting right to work putting together reports that we can bring to the people who are in a position to make changes.”