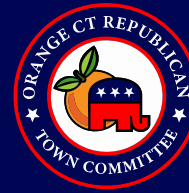




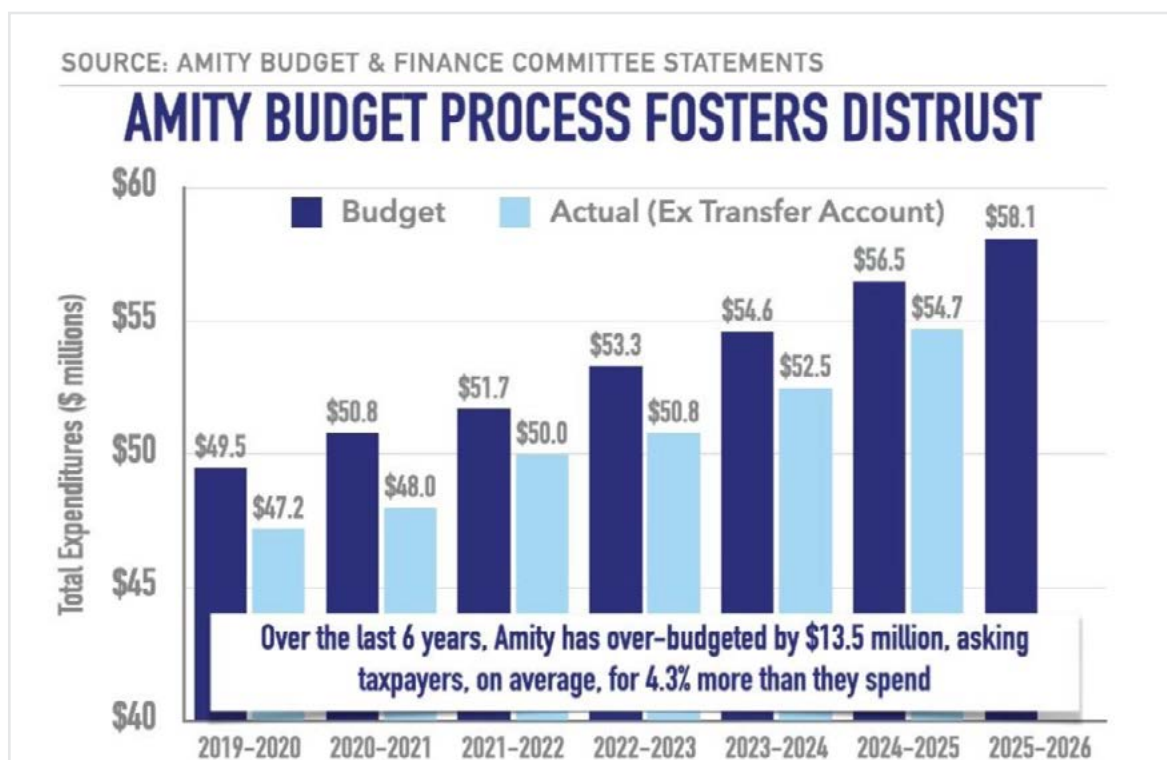
A PERSPECTIVE FROM
MEGHAN RABUSE
Amity Board of Education
Candidate



Thought Leadership Series

I first became actively involved with the Orange Board of Finance in 2022 when Amity presented yet another budget with a substantial increase, despite multiple years of \$2+ million surpluses.

In short, since Superintendent Byars' appointment in 2018, the budgets she has presented have on average, asked for 4.3% more than the district actually ends up spending.



Each year, the budgeting process goes something like this. It begins nearly a full year before in October and is built in reference to the current year's budget. We can look at last year's data as an example. The 2025-2026 budget was approved back in May and was marketed to taxpayers as a "2.93% increase" relative to the 2024-2025 budget. However, just a few months later, with the actual financial data for the 2024-2025 now reported, the actual budgeted increase in operating expenses is over 9%!



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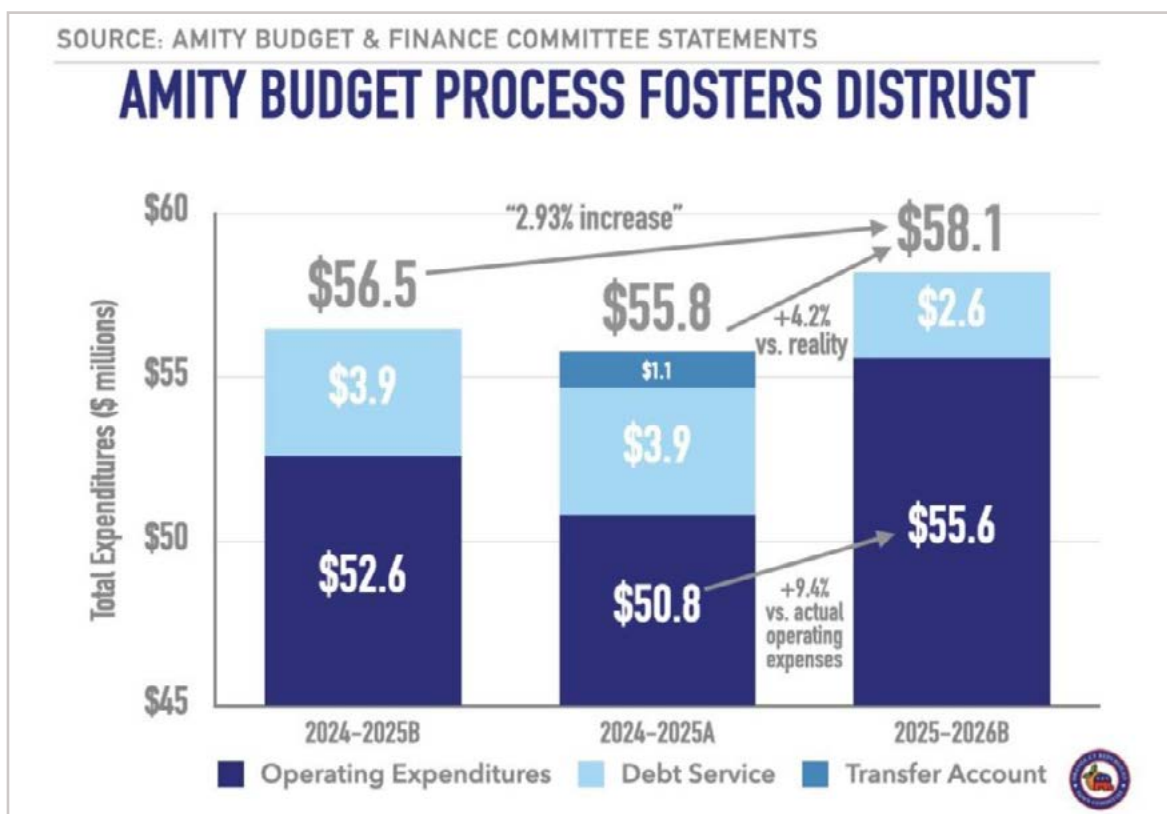


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This budget to budget process perpetuates an excessive surplus. Recent changes to state statutes now permit regional boards to keep up to 2% of the annual budget from these surpluses for use at their discretion, which the Amity Board just approved for the 5th year in a row (i.e. the Transfer Account).

While these funds are then used to fund capital improvements and educational reserve accounts, the excessive surpluses take more money than is needed from taxpayers each year and fosters distrust.

If there are capital projects that need funding, present them as part of the budget process and designate funds for them. If there are many projects, now may be the perfect time to consider bonding to complete them all as current debt obligations are rapidly falling off and interest rates are starting to fall.





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When I look at the 2025-2026 budget as an Orange taxpayer, I'm assuming there is likely \$2 million in surplus hidden in there, as there has consistently been for years, plus another \$1.1 million the board just voted to keep from last year's surplus.

The substantial stepdown in debt service payments (\$1.3 million reduction) in the current year and going forward (another \$1 million reduction in 2027, and further \$0.8 million reduction in 2028), will further add to Amity's financial flexibility in the coming years.

I am not asking that we defund our schools, as our opponents would like to claim. I am merely asking for improved transparency in the process - not just making it look pretty as presented online - so taxpayers can clearly understand how their money is being spent.

Meghan Rabuse
Amity Board of Education Candidate