

ORANGE, CONN
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Board of Finance Special Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Town Hall –7:00 p.m.

Approved

Attendance

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Kevin Houlihan, Vice Chairman James Leahy, Dr. Ajeet Jain, Joseph Nuzzo, Kevin McNabola, Dr. Anna Mahon, and alternate Chad Lombardi

Staff: John Cifarelli, Finance Director; Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

Guests: Dr. Jennifer Byars, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Terry Lumas, Amity Finance Director; and Amity Board members

1. Call to Order & Introduction

- Chairman Houlihan called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and asked members to introduce themselves.

2. Public Dialogue

- There was no public dialogue at this time.

3. Amity Budget Presentation – Dr. Byars & Ms. Lumas

- Dr. Byars made use of a slide presentation as well as distributed handbooks to Board members in an effort to make a complete and thorough presentation of the Amity 2026-2027 budget. She noted that contractual obligations and Federal and State mandates dictate 90%-95% of the entire budget. Dr. Byars outlined the budget process, noting that she presented the budget last week to the Amity Finance Committee.
- Dr. Byars stated that the main budget drivers include salaries, medical benefits, transportation, technology, pupil services, their strategic plan, unfunded State mandates, and department requests. Debt service has gone down by 41.6% and transportation has increased by 8.36%. Dr. Byars elaborated in more detail in each of the above categories and took questions from Board members throughout the presentation. Dr. Byars also reviewed the proposed new hires within next year's budget.
- Dr. Byars made mention of a possible bond in 2027 that would cover middle schools HVAC

replacement, roof repairs, Library Media Center renovations, gymnasium repairs, and athletic field upgrades. The proposed bond would also include improvements at the high school, such as lockdown system replacement, athletic field improvements, classroom and corridor floors, locker replacement in the locker rooms, and Brady Center lighting upgrades.

- Dr. Byars noted that 2% of their operating budget can be allocated to their Reserve Fund for educational expenditures for future capital items. The final 2026-2027 Amity budget has a 2.21% increase from last year's budget, totaling \$59,394,490. The Town of Orange has a decrease of 0.658% in average daily membership based on student enrollment, so their allocation of the 2026-2027 budget is \$27,613,956 or 0.29%.
- Dr. Byars presented a calendar of upcoming meetings in the budget process. Mr. Leahy questioned the purpose of a special joint meeting between the Amity Finance Committee and the Amity Board of Education. Dr. Byars explained that it was a collaborative decision to have a joint meeting to engage in an open discussion about the budget prior to the actual vote by the Amity Finance Committee. Mr. Leahy expressed some concerns about the budget process, specifically his concerns about the need for a joint meeting.

4. Amity Budget Discussion – Mr. Leahy

- Mr. Leahy gave a slide presentation illustrating the responsibilities of the Orange Board of Finance to the Town of Orange. He discussed the town's average Amity daily membership and how this directly correlates to the town's budget allocations. He also explained how one can use this data to estimate future student enrollments. Mr. Leahy used PowerPoint to illustrate the decrease in debt service as well as the historic Amity surpluses over the last fifteen years. He presented the data showing increases in full time Amity employees over the last ten years while student population at the same time was decreasing. To conclude, Mr. Leahy illustrated over the last twelve years how the Amity surplus has been higher than their requested budget increases.
- Dr. Byars responded to Mr. Leahy by noting that Amity must budget for Special Education, but often, the services are not utilized, creating a large surplus. Dr. Mahon noted that FDE increases as outplaced Special Education students are brought back into the district, having been previously outsourced. Lastly, Mr. McNabola noted that medical benefit component has been consistently underrun for a number of years, and this too, could have contributed to the surplus each year.

5. Discussion and Approval of the December 15, 2025 BOF Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Nuzzo made a motion to approve the December 15, 2025 minutes, seconded by Mr. McNabola. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

6. Adjournment

Mr. McNabola made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m., seconded by Dr. Mahon. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary