

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

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## East Rockers Decry Mayor's Tax Hike

BY **Thomas MacMillan** | MAR 31, 2010 9:04 AM  
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Posted to: [City Hall](#), [East Rock](#), [City Budget](#)



A shouting match erupted, and a schoolteacher's eyes brimmed with tears, as the mayor pitched his new spending plan to taxpayers at the Celentano School.

Mayor John DeStefano faced a spirited group of neighbors when he showed up at the Canner Street school on Tuesday night to present his budget for fiscal year 2010-11. With a \$472.5 million budget that's 2.6 percent larger than last year's, the mayor proposes raising property taxes. Homeowners would see an average increase of 8.8 percent in their tax bills.

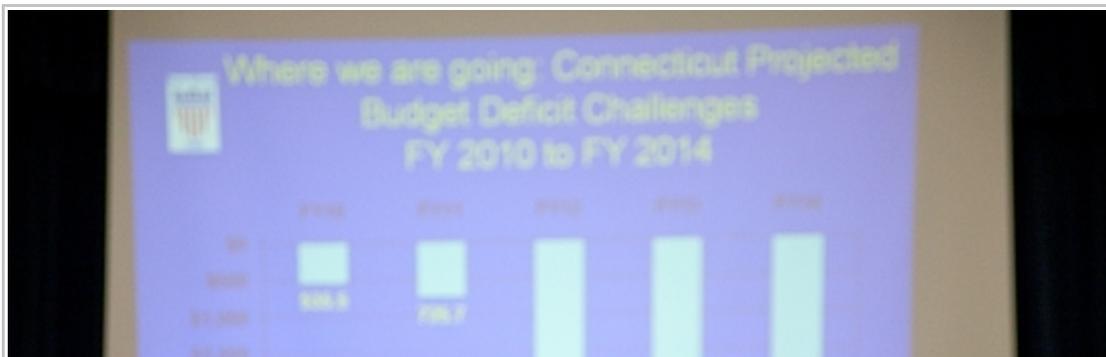
The proposed increase did not sit well with many of the

neighbors who attended Tuesday' night's community meeting. Several people asked the mayor to look harder for places to cut costs, rather than raise taxes. Budget watchdog Gary Doyens had a heated exchange with the mayor on the subject (click play to watch), and Diane Casella began to well up as she said that a tax increase could cause her to leave town.

"Do you really want to see me leave the city?" Casella asked.

The mayor said the budget calls for tough decisions and the city needs to increase spending on education and ensure that public safety is adequately funded.

Tuesday night's was the latest of several [community meetings](#) that Mayor DeStefano has been holding to present his budget to the city.





THOMAS MACMILLAN PHOTO

The mayor was peppered with questions throughout a PowerPoint presentation that gives a long-term overview of city spending. The questions and comments grew more pointed as the mayor moved into his discussion of next year's budget.

DeStefano said he's proposing spending increases of 1.7 percent in education and 2.3 percent in public safety, which includes the police and fire departments, for a total of \$5.4 million. There will be 17 new firefighters and 34 new cops next year, he said.

Those increases pale in comparison to employment-related expenses. The mayor's budget calls for increases of 5.2 percent for pensions, 15.5 percent for medical benefits, 17.3 percent for workers compensation, and 32.6 percent for self insurance, a total of \$12.1 million

Faced with escalating costs and a revenue gap created by declining state aid, the mayor is proposing a [monetization of parking meter revenue](#), a new system called [Innovation Based Budgeting](#) (IBB), and an [increase in property taxes](#).



"I can't afford the tax," East Rocker Diane Casella (pictured) said to the mayor. She said she and her husband both work and they are already struggling. She asked the mayor to consider the impact that a higher tax burden would have on the "family dynamic" of city households. A tax hike might even hinder school reform, despite the increased spending on education, she said: Parents will have less time to be engaged in their children's schools if they have to be out earning more money to pay their taxes.

"How can we help our children and improve our schools when we can't even be home?" Casella asked.

She also questioned the mayor's plans to hire more staff to implement IBB. "This is the time to cut, not to add," she said. The room burst into applause.

"I don't think there are cuts just to be made," DeStefano said. If the city cuts policing, the "problems on Read Street" are going to spread into East Rock, he said. Similarly, education cuts affect quality of life, he said.



THOMAS MACMILLAN PHOTO

"Wherever there can be additional scrutiny, I'm for it," DeStefano said. "I don't think we can get there. There is a cost to backsliding."

East Rock resident Anna Festa sided with Casella. "We're already overtaxed and underserved," she said. Festa said her family is struggling financially too, and is just beginning to see some return for their hard work.

"That light at the end of the tunnel, you just turned it off on me," she said to the mayor.

The mayor said he appreciated her remarks. He stressed the need for spending on schools—schools like Celentano, where they were sitting as he spoke. "This school is performing so far below the state average."

Budget watchdog Gary Doyens said the mayor needs to look at cuts in the police and fire departments and the Board of Education, where the majority of city jobs are. "Our message to you is there are no sacred cows," he said.

"Your vision is less public safety," DeStefano said. The two men began to shout over each other as the mayor urged Doyens to "Let go of your anger!"

The mayor accused Doyens of following him around to budget meetings. They got into an argument about the total number of employees in the police department.

"Oh come on, Gary!" DeStefano said. "You know, you can lie about this stuff but you can't get your facts right. We're going to have kids that do achieve in this city! We're going to have a safe city! And that's the vision for this city."

"Fine, and you won't have any middle class!" Doyens responded.

"Won't have you maybe, but you can't let go of this," DeStefano said.

"I'm not going to let go of a budget that's bloated," Doyens said.

Later, Casella raised her hand again. "I'm a teacher. I helped start my neighborhood block watch," she said with emotion. "Do you really want to see me leave the city?"

Her eyes grew red and moist as she spoke.

The mayor said he does not want her to leave the city, but there are "tough decisions" to be made in city spending.

After the meeting, Casella explained her tears. "I am emotional around [the subject of] New Haven," she said. "I love this city."

Casella, who lives on Orange Street in the SoHu sector of East Rock, grew up in New Haven. She works at the Cedarhurst School, just over the border in Hamden.

She said the mayor needs to look harder for places to cut the budget, to avoid raising taxes. "You need to find the cuts," she said. "Look at the sacred cows."

After the meeting, DeStefano said he understands that budget discussions can get very emotional, even drawing tears. "It's personal. They're afraid."

DeStefano said after the meeting that since Doyens lives in a nice neighborhood in Westville, he doesn't see the pressing need for things like more police in Newhallville.

Doyens later elaborated on the point he said he'd been trying to make to the mayor. Police, fire, and education comprise the majority of the budget, he said. When the mayor talks about layoffs he's made in other departments, he's talking about only a fraction of the budget, Doyens said. "That's what he gets so defensive about."

Doyens dismissed any claim that as a Westville resident he is unsympathetic to the needs of the other parts of the city. "He's trying to create some kind of class warfare," Doyens said of the mayor. "I've got friends who live in Newhallville. ... He always divides and conquers."

Doyens said the high emotions at the Celentano School were typical of recent budget meetings. "The raw emotion from people who are begging for relief ... is palpable."

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## Comments

**posted by: Outa here on March 31, 2010 9:19am**

I'm soooo glad that I'm out of here in June. Enough of New Haven and its problems. Good luck folks...you'll need it. BTW you keep on re-electing this guy...why??

**posted by: Mike on March 31, 2010 9:22am**

Raise my taxes and see me leave. I tried to live here, too bad this city cant budget a thing right. Yes, raise my taxes and I will leave very very soon.

**posted by: former cedar hilller on March 31, 2010 9:23am**

Are there any statistics on the number of illegal aliens residing in New Haven and the corresponding economic burden? Because let's face it, when you increase the number of English as a second language students, the test score averages are going to go down.

**posted by: School Reform? on March 31, 2010 9:30am**

The school reform effort will fail if middle class and wealthy families flee for the suburbs rather than pay these ridiculously high property taxes. It's no secret that schools like Edgewood and Hooker and Nathan Hale succeed because of the high concentrations of middle class families who send their kids to those schools. We need more, not fewer, of those families in the public school system. The Mayor's got it backwards—it's not about spending more, it's about spending less.

**posted by: Threefifths on March 31, 2010 9:30am**

As I said before.Keep dealing with this two party system.What has it got you.High Taxes!!!!  
You should also thank those who also are pushing school reform.School reform is were most of the tax money

will be going. Let me tell something you think you are going to pay a lot of money now, Wait until that corporatist health care bill kicks in.

<http://fdlaction.firedoglake.com/2010/03/19/fact-sheet-the-truth-about-the-health-care-bill/>

Keep on voting King John in and this is what you get.

**posted by: Steve on March 31, 2010 9:45am**

Im just got it!!

Each of these non fire and police personnel have been contributing and voting for this Mayor. To cut their positions would be a threat to his reign!

The Power of a Political manipulator at it's best!

Of course he can't lay them off. It is the ultimate "Quid Pro Quo". "I promise continuous employment with the City in trade for your votes and contributions."

Just take a look at his contributions.

**posted by: Jeffrey Kerekes on March 31, 2010 9:57am**

The above video was an exchange between the Mayor And Doyens. The mayor called him a liar and that he didn't have his facts straight. On page 2-62 of the budget ([http://www.nhcan.org/docs/other/FY\\_2010-11summarypositions.pdf](http://www.nhcan.org/docs/other/FY_2010-11summarypositions.pdf)), is the Summary of Positions in the budget. Either Gary Doyens was right, or the budget is wrong or the Mayor is lying. The mayor said there were approx 450 positions in that exchange. Are there 100 positions of padding in this budget? How are we to understand/reconcile the 551 positions and the funding for the NHPD?

**posted by: robn on March 31, 2010 10:12am**

There are two central questions here:

- 1) In a city where taxes are already high, is it reasonable to raise taxes in some neighborhoods up to 80% in a five year period?
- 2) Do our city stewards understand the difference between "want" and "need"?

**posted by: cinzia on March 31, 2010 10:12am**

IT HAS BECOME OBVIOUS TO ME AFTER ATTENDING MANY OPEN MEETINGS WITH THE MAYOR THAT HE IS NOT OPEN TO ANY IDEAS FROM THE TAX PAYERS TO REDUCE THE TAX INCREASES ON PROPERTY OWNERS. THE 8% IS MENTIONED BUT NOT THE 15% ON CONDO OWNERS MANY OF WHOM ARE SENIORS ON FIXED INCOMES. THE MINUTE SOMEONE CHALLENGES HIM HE ALL BUT HAS A TANTRUM. THERE IS NO OPEN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION, NATURALLY THE TAX PAYERS ARE ANGRY. I AM TIRED OF DESTEFANO USING THE CHILDREN OF NEW HAVEN AS AN EXCUSE FOR HIS TAX INCREASES. THE MONIES FOR THE NEW SCHOOLS CAME FROM THE STATE. THE TEACHERS ARE PAID BY THE CITY BUT SOME OF THE TOP STAFF COULD BE TRIMMED.

**posted by: Jeffrey Kerekes on March 31, 2010 10:13am**

If you care about rising taxes, please do at least these 3 things:

- 1) please sign our petition to cut the budget by 10%.  
<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/NewHaven/petition.html>
- 2) Call your alderperson: <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/Aldermen/>
- 3) Come to the final public hearing on the budget, Wednesday, April 28, 2010 at 6:30 pm at City Hall in the Board of Aldermen Chambers, 2nd floor, 165 Church Street

**posted by: Brian V on March 31, 2010 10:21am**

I was at the meeting and what I found interesting was: residents from affluent St Rohnan Street, middle class East Rock, and impoverished Newhallville, and ALL OF THEM said they CAN NOT AFFORD A TAX INCREASE.

Mr Mayor did you here that too?, Alders?

So, since there is a city-wide consensus.....

What would a ZERO Tax Increase Budget Look Like?

Can we have at least have that discussion?

Lets discuss some of the cuts that might get us there.

I'll bet you have a Plan B (& maybe plan C?) drawn up already. You can't always get everything what you want, you know that. I am sure you anticipated the voters to push back on a 9% increase, and have a pared down version of the budget.

**posted by: streever on March 31, 2010 10:27am**

I'm proud of Diane Casella, Ward 9's Co-Chair, for being there and raising her voice against this. I'm sorry that I could not make it yesterday—I hate missing these, but I am so glad to see my neighbors, friends, & even people I strongly disagree with on other issues, standing up for our city & it's residents.

Yes, you can't cut some things. I'm happy they are hiring 12 more police—we're understaffed right now on police—but when it comes to things like:

-New school construction

-Hiring a dozen more firefighters

-Selling off the parking meter revenue

-Stealth raises

-The exorbitant salaries paid to administrators at schools who don't even do detention

-The exorbitant heating costs at schools like Wilbur Cross which leave their windows open 24/7, 365 days a year

I just feel like there isn't anyone with common sense operating at City Hall.

This is lunacy. Yes, Doyens is angry and presents himself in a way that lets the mayor easily dismiss him, but I have to say that his numbers seem accurate. I don't agree with every cut he proposes, but I do agree that the City has to make SOME cuts instead of continuing to heap the burden on tax payers.

**posted by: Moira on March 31, 2010 10:34am**

"The mayor accused Doyens of following him around to budget meetings."

Doyens and the rest of us have every right to attend as many budget meetings as we want. Mr. Mayor, you work for US, whether or not we personally voted for you. (I did not.) We have every right to question the mayor, his proposal, and his priorities if we feel they are not in line with what is best for New Haven.

DeStefano is defensive, dismissive, and arrogant when addressing citizens who question him on this issue. His priorities seem to be keeping his friends on the payroll and leaving some kind of educational legacy while driving New Haven into the ground. Stop blaming the casinos for being the new state industry, Mr. Mayor. Stop blaming Hartford for giving us less of an allowance. And start figuring out a new way to dig our city out of this hole. Maybe the new tax hike won't hurt your household's bottom line, but you can't ignore the impact this is going to have on the rest of us. It will devastate many families.

Take ten percent out of your budget! No new hires! If we have to cut our household budgets to stretch the dollar in this economy, you must do the same for the city.

**posted by: hhurtz on March 31, 2010 10:49am**

What I find pretty fascinating about this is that despite what JD is hearing, he's not having any of it. His attitude is if you don't like it—leave the city! It's basic politics to pay attention to the pulse of the voters. In this case, he is so assured of re-election that he's basically telling everyone to kiss his \_\_\_\_\_. City government can absorb a reduction in the bloated payroll—and you know what? We'll be fine. If the folks who are left don't want to work, there are plenty of takers for those jobs.

**posted by: Moira on March 31, 2010 11:08am**

In response to cinzia: Ditto. As a parent of two children in NHPS, I am sick of hearing him use them as an excuse to pass this tax increase. My kids will do well no matter where they are in school, because I am an involved parent. But they'll be at a disadvantage if I lose my house... or if I have to pick up another job because I can't afford my mortgage when taxes go up. The quality of life is going to sink to new lows for families in New Haven if this tax increase is pushed through, and all the new educational initiatives will be for nothing.

**posted by: Anon on March 31, 2010 11:12am**

While people are truly scared about wages and income lets call this for exactly what was going on here. How many times over the last year have we seen images just like this at town hall meetings where regular citizens

gather to get information on a topic by their elected official just to have someone blow up the meeting? Check out the links below.

<http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2009/08/tea-party-town-hall-strategy-rattle-them-stand-up-and-shout.php>

<http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/townhallactionmemo.pdf>

**posted by: ? on March 31, 2010 11:15am**

Independent: where is the link to the securitization details which the mayor promised to the Celentano attendees? I believe that you were asked to please make this available to the public and I hope you will do so.

**posted by: concernedwestvilleres on March 31, 2010 11:45am**

The city is in tough shape and I am sure there are areas where the budget can be cut. However, the state is partly to blame here. First, New Haven nonprofits (Yale, YNH Hospital, etc.) pay more in PILOT payments than the city receives as the state divides it based upon a formula instead of the amount paid by each city's nonprofits. The state should fully fund the PILOT payments back to the city or let the city collect them instead of the state.

Another issue is the free-riders in our city. Yale employs a significant number of employees and faculty that live outside the city. These employees come here and work and then basically get out town as fast as possible. They don't spend much money in the city yet the city has to pay to protect them, keep the streets paved, etc. Why shouldn't New Haven have a commuter tax to help raise money? It doesn't have to be alot. For example a \$500 per year tax on employees living outside the city (assume 5,000 live outside the city this would raise \$2.5 million).

Also, New Haven is home to a number of college students. Adding a \$500 security fee to the student bill per year assuming about 25,000 students would bring in \$12 million per year. (assuming Yale has about 11,000 students, Southern about 13,000 students and Magnus about 1,000 students- numbers could be off).

This money could be used to offset the property tax increase. The other option is to petition the state to remove the tax-exempt status of nonprofits so the cities can charge their property at a reduced rate instead of PILOT payments.

I don't know if these will be doable or not. The Mayor knows people won't leave the city if the taxes are high. The property taxes are paid by the owners of houses whether foreclosed or occupied. Moving out doesn't hurt the budget- it hurts the quality of the city and potentially property values down the line which would impact future budgets.

The Mayor needs to work on cutting especially his staff and city hall departments. Show some cutting and then people may be more willing to sacrifice.

**posted by: Who's willing to Run? on March 31, 2010 11:56am**

"It's basic politics to pay attention to the pulse of the voters. In this case, he is so assured of re-election that he's basically telling everyone to kiss his \_\_\_\_\_."

So, who's going to run against the mayor next year? We need to start talking about this NOW. Find someone the majority of us can get behind. Let DeStefano know that he cannot just coast along in this city. It's embarrassing that we cannot produce a viable candidate, he knows this and capitalizes on it year after year.

**posted by: The Professor on March 31, 2010 12:04pm**

It seems like what's being lost here is that you get what you pay for.

Here in New Haven, we live in a relatively high-tax city, and in return, we get a high level of services: we have parks and rec, we have relatively good streets, we have an animal shelter to make sure that stray dogs and cats don't roam our city streets, we have programs that work to make sure that the prisoners that the State releases onto our streets (many of whom have mental and substance abuse problems) don't turn to burglarizing our houses and committing other crimes immediately upon their release, we have programs that work to give at-risk youth positive choices. And these programs are good things for EVERYONE. New Haven is a dense city; a convict dropped off at the Whalley Jail can walk to Westville or East Rock in a relatively short amount of time, and youth violence can quite easily spill over from Newhallville into other neighborhoods.

I say all this to point out that, while a tax increase is far from ideal, there will be real consequences to real people if we start making substantial budget cuts. And I hate to break it to people who are hurting from tax increases (and believe me, I know it hurts), but there are going to be people who will hurt a lot more if we start slashing services.

One thing that gets me about all of this: eventually, the city will start to run a surplus again. It may not be for a

few years, but it'll happen. The proper response then should be to set up a "rainy day fund" to prevent something like this from happening again. Yet somehow, I get the feeling that people are going to demand tax cuts that will once again leave the city in a terrible spot when the next downturn hits.

By the way, it's worth noting that taxes today are actually LOWER than they were in 1992. Just sayin'.

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**posted by: Pay attention people on March 31, 2010 12:04pm**

People better start paying attention. I'll be the first to admit financial stuff makes my hair hurt, but if we don't start demanding that this administration be accountable to us, then we'll be in just as much turmoil as Greece. Lets make sure this does not happen. Please show up and start asking questions, even if you think they're silly questions... they're probably not.

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**posted by: Concerned Citizen on March 31, 2010 12:06pm**

Mr. Doyens and Ms. Casella are right; the mayor has his sacred cows; fifty percent of them are at 54 Meadow Street. Throughout city administration there are dozens of overpaid employees who are nothing but a drain on the budget. It is time for political patronage to be done with; the city can no longer afford it.

In education he could shift a few million dollars from administration to the classroom by getting rid of at least 12 of the overpaid, useless education administrators he has at 54 Meadow Street. The place is a rest home for a large number of highly paid former principals and other high-level, non-functioning, non-contributing education administrators. The same is true for some of his other depts.

Exactly where is the additional 8.3% in taxes supposed to come from? Would the mayor prefer to have more houses on the market for sale as people try to escape the city? The ability to pay more taxes is not an endless one. It is amazing how higher taxes is always the place to go in NH and so many other cities. For such a small city, NH has one of the highest level of maintained political patronage in CT.

To Threefifths I say, if you do not have anything sensible to say, please keep quiet. Children graduating from NH high schools need to be better prepared to build successful careers. Ignorance is VERY costly. Health care reform is an important cornerstone for a healthy society. The City of New Haven needs to be purged of all of the political dead weights; that will save us all millions!

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**posted by: Concerned Taxpayer on March 31, 2010 12:23pm**

I have heard there is also another increase slotted for 2011 too. So essentially double what you were told for 2010

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**posted by: City Budget Clarification on March 31, 2010 12:35pm**

To clarify. Page 2-62 indicates the total number of positions in the Police Budget. Page 3-56 to page 3-64 give a breakdown of those positions. The budget includes both police and support services (records clerks, mechanics, facilities, kennel workers, financial/payroll support staff). 487 police positions (including chiefs etc) and 64 non sworn. The mayor indicated that 35 officer positions would be filled in the next budget - meaning they are vacant now 487-35=452

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**posted by: Son of Eli on March 31, 2010 1:01pm**

The tax raise is considerable, but we must think of the alternative: less police on our streets, less firefighters protecting us, and less teachers educating our children. As taxpayers of this great city we have to shoulder the cost in order to insure a better future. The Mayor is right, We need to protect the citizens in Newhallville just as much as the citizens in East Rock. We're lucky to have a mayor that talks and listens to the people, I'm proud to live in a community where everyone's voice is heard.

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**posted by: pat taylor on March 31, 2010 1:02pm**

I attended the Mayors traveling road show of the wizard of oz last night at the beautiful new Celantano school where the children are performing well below the state standards and, according to a employee present, arriving every day angry and upset. We had the department head munchkins all nodding, all suited and readily answerable. Then the wizard pulling every lever to proclaim the emerald city of growth, potential, successes and possibilities....all on the backs of 55,000 homeowners. When questioned, the Wizard resorts to the buzz words of fear ..close the libraries, close the senior centers, cut garbage pickups, privatize school custodians. Nary a word of eliminating a manager, stop construction on the consistently low performing, but pretty, schools or why twelve additional firemen are needed. Admitting the low education rate with one lever and keeping the sacred education department untouched with another lever. We all know of friends and relatives who have lost their positions in areas of city government and, lo and behold, have been transferred to non-existent positions in the education stronghold downtown. The

wizard has held us captive manipulating behind the curtain, pulling levers and talking...talking us to death. Since Mr. Clark runs the education department, who needs a superintendent.

Why not publish a list of all the employees at the strong hold and let us see how many earn their salaries. The city needs to go into bankruptcy. We need to have honest information on the finances..not doctored budget requests of active policemen vs ghosts.

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on March 31, 2010 1:42pm**

The mayor needs to rethink his budget. We are in the midst of the worst recession over the last 50 years. Unemployment is running at 10 percent in the state and higher in the city. Those with jobs have either had no pay raise or experienced a pay cut this year. How can the mayor think that the city should increase spending when we the citizens have had to decrease ours. And, we have had to decrease spending not chosen to decrease it. It is unconscionable to be planning a raise in city spending under these circumstances.

I have seen my tax bill go up almost 75 percent in the last 6 years. And now the mayor wants another 8 percent from me. This is ridiculous. More importantly, if taxes continue to rise there will be flight from the city - this will lead to a further reduction in property values and a downward death spiral for the city's budget. Next year will require another tax increase - which will lead to flight - which will depress home values - which will lead to higher taxes etc.

Finally, who cares if Doyen is following the Mayor around to his meetings. The mayor is our public servant and a citizen has the right to ask him questions in any public forum. if Doyen became uncivil that is something to criticize, but not that he attends the various budget meetings.

**posted by: Anon on March 31, 2010 1:43pm**

Actually Moira people like Doyens, Karekes et al traveling to every meeting just for confrontation with the Mayor and taking up all of the time so that other residents of the neighborhood cannot ask questions is wrong and really undemocratic.

By being so confrontational, and so irrational it cretes an atmosphere where others do not want to participate. Doyens and others need to stop the grandstanding and allow other residents to ask some questions and interact. Its their budget and city too.

<http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/townhallactionmemo.pdf>

"You need to rock- the - boat early in the Rep's presentation, Watch for an opportunity to yell out and challenge the Rep's statements early."

"Don't carry on and make a scene - just short intermittent shout outs. The purpose is to make him uneasy early on and set the tone for the hall as clearly informal, and free-wheeling. It will also embolden others who agree with us to call out and challenge with tough questions."

**posted by: Jonathan Hopkins on March 31, 2010 1:46pm**

Throwing money at schools does not make students succeed. Neighborhoods with jobs, adequate housing, recreation space, commerce and public assembly space filled with a diversity of people of all ages and incomes are the determining factors in the success of children in school.

Police can address certain types of crime, but not the sort of long term cultural degradation that breeds a lifestyle of crime. The only viable solution to modern urban crime is having neighborhoods with jobs, adequate housing, recreation space, commerce and public assembly space filled with a diversity of people of all ages and incomes that serve as the everyday, self-policing, civically active and involved citizenry.

Makes the cuts, make it more attractive to live in New Haven, work with the state to redraw the town lines and adopt a logical development pattern for the county. Educate the populations, especially suburbanites, about their role in making New Haven County, as a whole, a thriving place.

Back in 1900 the town lines made sense when New Haven was surrounded by rural farmland, forests and tiny villages, but just like Westville and Fair Haven were , many surrounding towns needs to worked into the city fabric and absorbed. This is not simply a budget problem, or an urban problem, or a suburban problem, it is a combination of many things that need to be addressed simultaneously.

**posted by: James on March 31, 2010 2:05pm**

Professor, take a bit of your own medicine. Let's talk value. Your argument boils down to, "We pay high taxes because of the wonderful services we receive in New Haven." Let's leave aside, for a moment, the question of whether or not city services are good or abysmal. What is the value of those things we get and are they being

procured and provided efficiently? We have a nice city green. Great. What does it cost to maintain it? Is that a reasonable price? Could somebody do the same job for less? How about contracted services? When was the last time they went out to bid? Was the contract possibly awarded to somebody with more political connections than experience? The list of places to look for inefficiency and waste is pretty damn long. I have no confidence that there has been a legitimate attempt to suss out waste. And as long as the mayor is giving himself and other raises, I have a very hard time believing John when he says he's looked everywhere, fell short, and needs more money from me. The man has very little credibility on this front.

You speak as if no other town has parks, animal shelters, or youth programs. As if these are magical offerings that we should be thankful to have and should never dare question the need or cost.

Your argument assumes that we are getting a dollar's service for a dollar's tax revenue. Once you are willing to accept the mere possibility that we are not getting a good return on our investment, your apologist, simplistic, and condescending argument falls short. Yes, you get what you pay for. Thanks for the cliché disguised as wisdom. You also pay for what you can afford and make sure that you are getting what you pay for. Or do you not concern yourself with little things like price when you procure goods and services? DO you look at the produce in the grocery store before you buy it, or do you just grab any old piece of fruit, because the sign says it's fresh?

VALUE, so-called professor. VALUE. Do we need a city clerk, who works fewer hours and serves little more than a ceremonial function, at a cost of over \$50,000 per year? Can you defend that position, or justify a raise for it as the mayor did? What value does the city clerk provide, other than votes for the mayor? As long as that sacred cow is in place, how can any of us believe that the mayor has made an honest effort to reduce waste before coming to us with his hat in one hand and a pistol in the other?

Do we need half a dozen administrators to "administrate" a failing school? Do we need an additional 12 firemen, or could we make due with what we have? Should we be spending tens of thousands of dollars a year on a Christmas tree with 10,000 individually tied bulbs and a dozen full time caretakers while simultaneously discussing raising taxes, yet again? Maybe we do. But the mayor has never bothered to make the case, because he doesn't feel he has to.

In short, people want to ask questions and demand answers about how our money is being spent. Without answering standing questions, the mayor proposes an increase using the same snide, self-important, arrogant tone with which you are so intimately familiar. All people want is to see that our resources are being used efficiently before the mayor goes back to the well for more. Many of us continue to suspect waste and patronage on a grand scale. I, for one, would like to see justification for the current city budget, TOP TO BOTTOM before digging deeper into my family's pocket to feed this bloated political machine.

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**posted by: cedarhillresident on March 31, 2010 2:07pm**

Anon

Who are you to say that...look in the mirror you do the same with your issues. Spamming every thing with your issues.

At the most only 2 or three of its regular members ask a question! Most of the questions come from the attendees. And they wait to ask the questions till AFTER the community members that have come ask their questions... Garys question came last night in the last 4 min of the meeting when the room was half empty. so unless you are there don't make statements that are not true.

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**posted by: Jeffrey Kerekes on March 31, 2010 2:14pm**

Anon:

Actually, last night Gary had one round of questions at the very end - no one took up all the time as you report. Anyone there knows that no such grandstanding took place. I asked ZERO questions. I did raise my hand to ask a question at the end but did not get called on me (I truly think it was an oversight on the Mayor's). Trying to group us with the Tea Baggers is an interesting strategy. Keep it up, maybe you will convince yourself of this argument.

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**posted by: NewHavenDaddy on March 31, 2010 2:43pm**

DeStefano is doing a tremendous job with the New Haven public schools. He built more schools with state money before every other city figured out the math. The new contract concessions with the unions to have performance based schools is amazing. We need more inner city leadership like that across Connecticut. ...

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**posted by: Brian V on March 31, 2010 2:48pm**

To The Professor:

We had all these wonderful services when I bought my house. 6 years later and 63% MORE TAXES being paid

as of today, and now another 12-17% ?! (East Shore will be higher than the 8.8% avg)  
I have not seen the services improve to justify  
the growth.  
THE MONEY NEEDS TO BE MANAGED BETTER.  
And Oh- What department do you work in?

**posted by: Drosophila on the Wall on March 31, 2010 3:01pm**

It seems that the major dilemma here is that the city faces the choice of cutting services it sees as essential to the quality of life in New Haven, or raising taxes to a level that would make it difficult for many middle-class residents to live here. Much of this is due to budget problems on the state level, as the state is the city's main source of revenue, and they are facing one of the nation's most catastrophic budget problems. The election of a governor and state legislators who prioritize New Haven and the other cities in Connecticut will help with the problems, but they probably will not solve them entirely.

Clearly, and economic recession is a terrible time to raise taxes. It puts pressure on families that are already dealing with joblessness and a decrease in services from the private sector. Unfortunately, the alternatives to raising taxes can be very devastating—look at how long it took the city to recover from cuts to services made in the 1980s.

Three years ago, while the recession was still in its early stages, the budget was a problem, but the state of the police department was the biggest concern—many of the same people now decrying the tax increases were worried that the deteriorating police department would drive them out of the city. With the hiring of Chief Lewis and an emphasis on building a better police department, much of that has changed. We as a community are proud of the progress our department has made.

The problem here lies in the fact that the city's hands are very tied when it comes to cutting costs. Most of the city's employees are unionized, and their jobs are protected in such a way that the city can't downsize to bring down costs—the unions know that this kind of economic trouble comes along once every decade or two, and have spent the past hundred fifty years winning protection from just such action by employers. The three budgets that haven't already been cut significantly to deal with economic problems in the last few years are policing, fire, and schools.

Unfortunately, the quality of education, public safety, and available jobs are primarily what draw the middle class to a city like New Haven in the first place. New Haven is doing pretty well on the jobs front—with development at the Shartenberg site, the Yale cancer center, Science Park, and other places, we will have a relatively strong job market for the next few years, and will be in a strong position when the economic recovery begins to happen. This should help draw middle class taxpayers to the city in the long run.

Unfortunately, public safety and education are the two biggest sectors which can discourage middle class people from moving or staying here. It is hard for cities to offer better services in these areas than suburbs or small towns, so the maintenance and development of decent services by these sectors is absolutely crucial. Without them, people will not even think about moving to New Haven, no matter how attractive the tax rate is. Furthermore, it takes time for these services to be built to a level acceptable to the middle class. We are just beginning to see people who are happy with policing, and the school system is currently below the standards of what most middle class families will like.

Property taxes, on the other hand, change from year to year. For example, New Haven's property taxes actually stayed fairly level for the last two years, as the administration made keeping the tax rate down their top priority. Unfortunately, we are now broke, and don't have many other places to cut before we start doing very serious long-term damage to our school system and public safety.

My point is this: it is horrible that the tax rate in this city is so high. It is worse that many people who love this city and try so hard to make it the wonderful place that it is are having a difficult time figuring out how to pay those taxes. But when faced with a choice between service cuts that will drive away middle class taxpayers for a decade to come and a tax increase that may drive away some people for the time being, the choice seems pretty obvious. My impression is that the people who are demanding budget cuts in order to stay in the city would not want to live with the consequences of those cuts either—many of the people contemplating moving would be a lot more serious about it if street violence began to move deeper into Westville and East Rock, and that is what is going to happen if you cut the policing and school budgets. It is a sad and terrible dilemma, but demanding a 10% budget cut across the board is simply not an option given the position the city is in right now. The time has come for the administration to decide whether they are going to try to keep everyone happy at the moment and sacrifice the future of the city, or risk losing some taxpayers but maintaining the vital services that make our city worth living in in the first place. I have no problem seeing Mayor Destefano's side of the argument in this case.

**posted by: Could this be true?? on March 31, 2010 3:04pm**

Just noticed, that as a percentage of income, Housing costs are actually less in New Haven than in surrounding towns. (Exceptions include Beaver Hills, and East Rock). That says a lot if you consider that median income is also generally less here in the city compared to surrounding towns. So, moving out might not help, especially since you're cost to travel will skyrocket.

[http://htaindex.cnt.org/mapping\\_tool.php#region=New Haven—Meriden, CT&theme\\_menu=0&layer1=23&layer2=24](http://htaindex.cnt.org/mapping_tool.php#region=New%20Haven---Meriden,CT&theme_menu=0&layer1=23&layer2=24)

It will be interesting to see if that relationship stays the same after the tax increases.

**posted by: Responsible on March 31, 2010 3:22pm**

Mayor DeStefano you are doing a great job. 40% or more of the city is tax exempt no wonder the city can't make ends meet. The State of Connecticut must assume responsibility for this. And the State must allow all the people who don't live here to be help us figure this out. We give so many things back to the region. And still the ability to collect tax revenue rests solely on the property owners of the City. The State needs to get its act together and soon. Good work Mayor!

**posted by: Claudia Bosch on March 31, 2010 3:26pm**

It is no wonder that New Haven students lag behind when the top public servants are not even capable of correct comparisons/math.

DeStefano accused Doyens that his vision was "less public safety". Well, less is a comparative. What do you compare it with? The existing standard or the wishful proposal of an increased force?

What if the number of employees within the police and fire department would remain untouched? How can DeStefano claim that would represent "less public safety". Just last year a not-yet increased police force managed to lower the crime in New Haven. According to DeStefanos budget logic it should have been "less public safety".

Do not get me wrong: If the city's bank account would be full, thoughts about an increased police force and additional firefighters might be entertained. But the city's pockets are EMPTY. And if you do not have any money you should not increase a budget. This does however NOT equal saving money. Saving would mean spending less than New Haven did in 2009/2010.

In order to save the city would have to cut its costs and expenditures. What about a wage freeze or furloughs as the state of Connecticut did last year? What about questioning EVERY expenditure and every behavior such as making color printouts (which are done way too often), lowering room temperatures (no in the winter we never have it at 70), subsidizing an airport where the landing costs \$ 2.50 (it costs more to park downtown)? If a city does not have any money is an Office of Sustainability really necessary or a "nice to have" (which will add an additional pension load in the future ...).

I do not see in the proposed budget any dedication to reduce spending in the necessary amount. But DeStefano will force us citizens to tighten our belts another notch.

**posted by: James on March 31, 2010 3:56pm**

"It seems that the major dilemma here is that the city faces the choice of cutting services it sees as essential to the quality of life in New Haven, or raising taxes ..."

But is this the case? I will continue to argue that this is the straw man. A redirection. Rather than discussing looking onward for unnecessary positions, waste, and patronage, the mayor redirects the conversation to the idea of cutting city services as the alternative. And then it does become a legitimate dilemma. I contend that the mayor and his administration have done nothing to ferret out and eliminate waste. Primarily because the mayor's machine is largely constructed of city employees and groups that benefit from bloated and wasteful staffing and funding policies. Again, let's start by discussing something like the clerk's position. Let's not let the mayor redirect the conversation. This is NOT a decision between raising taxes and hiring police. We simply allow the mayor to frame the issue as such, and never wind up discussing the real issue. Patronage and waste.

By the way, the official city line on the Clerk is that the position is in the charter and that we would need to revise the charter to eliminate it. This is classic redirection. They don't answer when asked what the clerk does, why he deserves some 20 times the pay of aldermen who work harder and have a far more important job, or whether the mayor would support a change to the charter. They simply indicate that to effect change, you would have to change the charter.

How many positions do we have like this? I know there are a whole lot of people who believe that the Board of Ed is filled with positions like these. There are also common sense issues which streever has raised regarding the inefficient heating and cooling of our public spaces. But we never talk about these. We always allow the mayor to make it a matter of schools versus a tax increase. Police versus a tax increase. This is not the case.

There have got to be savings to be had elsewhere.

**posted by: cedarhillresident on March 31, 2010 4:40pm**

"could it be true"

here

<http://www.nhcan.org/archives/443>

I would love to see how many people that agree with the mayor are employees of the city, have people who are close to them that are employees or have some kind of contract or funding coming from the city. And how many of those live here! I can not see any other reason why people would try to justify this type of spending.....divide and conquer is how John rules his kingdom and yes his people spam this type of stuff...misinformation is his best asset!

NOT THIS YEAR!!!! PEOPLE ARE ON TO YOU AND THEY ARE MAD!

**posted by: robn on March 31, 2010 4:41pm**

DOTW,

Your support of city taxing and spending might make sense if the growth of the budget were comparable to inflation, but thats not the case so I ask you the question, "In a city where taxes are already high, is it reasonable to raise taxes in some neighborhoods up to 80% in a five year period?"

**posted by: Need a New Mayor on March 31, 2010 5:13pm**

DeStefano and the aldermen are machine politicians. They see the city budget is a job program to reward allies and stay in power. The Board of Ed spends on average \$14,000 a year per student, but little of the money actually affects education. We have fire houses we don't need. And city hall is full of clerks who do little more than push paper.

As long as DeStefano and the machine remain in power they'll continue to raise taxes to feed their patronage system. However, there is no realistic political alternative in New Haven - no self-respecting New Havener will admit to being a Republican. So if you don't want to fund DeStefano's job program, move out.

**posted by: Threefifths on March 31, 2010 5:25pm**

posted by: Concerned Citizen on March 31, 2010 12:06pm

To Threefifths I say, if you do not have anything sensible to say, please keep quiet. Children graduating from NH high schools need to be better prepared to build successful careers. Ignorance is VERY costly. Health care reform is an important cornerstone for a healthy society. The City of New Haven needs to be purged of all of the political dead weights; that will save us all millions!

Well if you find what I wrote is not sensible don.t Read It !!!! Second children graduating need to be better prepared to build successful careers. Careers to what, Have you seen the unemployment Rate for collage students. The only careers that the children will have is try to pay back the corporatist control student loans. Health care reform.Try health care DOA. Look at the real deal.

<http://fdlaction.firedoglake.com/2010/03/19/fact-sheet-the-truth-about-the-health-care-bill/>

No the sensible thing to do is you and others need to get out of this two party system.

**posted by: Drosophila on the Wall on March 31, 2010 5:42pm**

Robn: That is a pretty good point, but a lot of the 80% increase was due to the reval, which was a phased-in process. That accounts for most of the difference in proportional tax increases for different parts of the city— some peoples' taxes went up about 80% over five years, others had the majority of that increase years before. It would be fairly valid to argue that, in retrospect, the spending increases back in the 90's and the beginning of this decade that necessitated that increase were a mistake, which many of the people complaining today said back then. On the other hand, it is pretty duplicitous to claim that the people arguing against such an increase had a better plan than the administration. Economic predictions are pretty hard to make accurately enough to budget ten years or more into the future, and the administration was working with a prediction that turned out to be wrong. That's bad luck, not mishandling of government.

Additionally, I see this as being more of an emergency situation created not just by inflation, or by rising employment costs, or by an increase in the size of city government, or by the catastrophic collapse of the state budget, or by the erosion of New Haven's tax base due to foreclosures, but by the combined effect of all of

these things happening at the same time. An increase comparable to inflation isn't really a tax increase so much as a maintenance of the same tax with more up-to-date numbers. This is a tax increase—the New Haven budget is going to rely more heavily on property taxes to fund its expenditures than it has in the past, and therein lies the problem. My point is that, while this is clearly NOT what the middle class (or most posters on this forum) want, it may be in the long-term interest of the city as a whole. That that isn't particularly comforting to the people complaining about the problem isn't really the point—it isn't supposed to make the middle class happy, or be fair. My point was that this is somewhat of a lesser-of-two-evils situation. The drastic budgetary changes being advocated by Mr. Kerekes, Mr. Doyens and others aren't being looked at in the context of the need for the city to continue to function more than 12 months into the future. You can decide that this isn't good enough, and that the tax increases this year that might cause a fraction of the middle class to leave the city (even, perhaps, a significant fraction) are paramount, and that future problems should be fixed when we get there, but the administration clearly doesn't share that opinion. I imagine that they will take a popularity hit because of that, but it doesn't make them wrong—try setting up a model in which you drastically cut essential city services in order to provide short-term tax relief to the middle class, and you probably end up with a pretty terrible situation 2-3 years down the road. I don't envy Mayor Destefano right now—he has to construct a budget that is going to make a lot of people very, very angry no matter what he does.

To all: I would suggest this. Before launching into diatribes against the Mayor and the administration as to why they are doing a terrible job, try to compare the alternatives for the city as a whole in the long run. Mayor Destefano may be making decisions that are decidedly bad for you and your family right now, but the alternative to those decisions may be worse on balance. If you or someone else were mayor, would you honestly be able to claim that immediate 10% cuts in the budget are preferable for the city on balance? Maybe, but then again maybe not. I, for one, want to see the long-term plans being advocated as alternatives before deciding that they are better. Maybe that isn't the case for you, but clearly this situation is more complex than "Mayor Destefano hates the middle class." It is pretty absurd to suggest that the tax increases being proposed are being used to fuel the "machine."

For a more reasonable solution to the problem of the tax burden becoming too heavy, we could turn to other organizations that tax New Haveners and look to see if there are better ways to help the middle class there—say, perhaps, a branch of the government that can legally produce a deficit budget? Again, this may not be worthwhile on balance, but there HAVE to be other ways to attack this problem than saying that the administration is responsible for dealing with it in a vacuum—that simply isn't how American society works.

**posted by: working(too hard) mom on March 31, 2010 6:16pm**

Call your Aldermen and City Hall. Show up at these meetings. This budget is not acceptable! DO NOT listen to the alarmists who claim "violence will increase and spread, children will not learn if we cut this budget" It is false, and a very rehearsed tactic by City Hall.

Anyone who thinks we have quality services now in New Haven needs to go visit some other cities. Our recreation programs are a joke. Our library catalogs are lacking in comparison to other cities/towns. City Hall is run like a third world country.

I love New Haven too, but I won't let my family be robbed to satiate this Mayor's agenda. I would rather leave.

**posted by: working(too hard) mom on March 31, 2010 6:19pm**

One more thing-Right On Gary! The Mayor may not respect the citizens right to protest and question, but I sure do. Thank you, and please do not give up.

**posted by: cedarhillresident (need a flyswatter ) on March 31, 2010 6:26pm**

Drosophila on the Wall

one phrase I pose to you (city rep??) Binding Arbitration! Time to do it. Emergency situation is just a reason for it!!!!

**posted by: FACchek on March 31, 2010 6:28pm**

Consider these FACS:

Overall city Positions:> 43

Education Budget: > \$3M

Capital budget non-school construction= \$5M

Capital school construction = \$19M

Capital school construction state of CT.= \$128M

Innovation based budgeting > \$8M

Rentals and supplies = \$68M

2009/10 GF budget= \$464,550MM

2010/11 GF budget= \$476,262MM = >12MM

2010/11 general fund comparison:

Personnel \$312,339MM

Non-personnel \$163,922MM

Total-\$476,262MM

Property taxes: 2009/10 - \$206,165MM

Property taxes: 2010/11 - \$222,259MM

Diff = \$16,094MM.

General fund debt 2004 = \$39,320MM

General fund debt 20010 \$62,169MM

How much clearer do we have to be John??

**posted by: Mel on March 31, 2010 7:27pm**

If the State would fulfill their promise to fully fund pilot the city would not be in this position. The state should start helping out the towns.

**posted by: Anonmouse on March 31, 2010 7:36pm**

Anyone know where and when the other community forums on the budget will be?

**posted by: anon on March 31, 2010 7:46pm**

Safety and schools are very serious issues. However, Jonathan is correct. Just hiring more cops and teachers won't help one bit. The only way to improve education and reduce crime is to have a city with a high quality of life, where folks 1) choose to live and 2) have good jobs (which tend to follow the former). Talk as much as you want about everything else - this is the only thing that actually works.

You can start by reducing air pollution, installing lighting so people can walk outside at night, Youth at Work programs, picking up trash, enforcing housing codes, stopping speeding traffic, better bus service/stops (see what NYC has done), less noise (e.g. Putting an end to the motorcycles blowing people's eardrums on Front Street every day), adding more activities and soccer games for youth, and charging more for parking. do these and people will be more than willing to pay higher taxes and rents.

A lot of the necessary changes have to happen at a state and federal level (e.g., giving real income tax credits to working class families so they don't need to hold down 3 different jobs, not just give mortgage tax credits to the rich homeowners and funds to rich highway construction companies and corporations).

However, we can start here by focusing on these types of issues rather than the number of cops or teachers. If anything, the school, school construction, administrative and police budgets should be dramatically cut in order to allow more focus on the overall environment.

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on March 31, 2010 9:16pm**

Many are saying that a cut in the budget will decrease services or service quality. This may be true - but it is not necessarily so. Forcing agencies to work with less - often forces them to improve their performance. They must find where the fat is and eliminate it. Companies face this all the time. They begin to lose money - then make cuts - and find that their overall performance improves because of what the cuts forced managers and employees to do - find a way to do the same things with less.

It is also arguable how much value we currently receive for our tax dollars. Look at the conditions of our parks. They are generally run down, filled with litter and often do not even have working or open bathrooms. Has anyone tried to use the bath house at Light House Point Park? It is in such dreadful repair that no one would want to change their clothes in it. New Haven streets are in bad shape - drive on Sherman for instance and weave amongst the potholes. So, what are we currently getting for our taxes. And, if we are not currently getting value why will giving more money to the city suddenly get us value.

The one area we have received value recently is in police protection. Chief Lewis clearly made the department more effective and hopefully the new chief will continue the trend. But, our safety improved before the current proposal to hire more police and spend more money. So it is possible to improve quality without spending more money. The same could be said of the schools. Are we making sure that dollars are reaching the classroom where it has the most effect - or are dollars going into the thickening of the bureaucracy where it has the least effect. How many assistant and vice principals do schools need? How many administrators are needed at Meadow street etc. Who has sat down to ask these questions and come up with difficult and hard answers.

Chasing home owners out of New Haven now is not a short term issue - once chased out these folks are unlikely to come back. It will also lead to a death spiral in revenue collection, as I noted above, and this will undermine the future of the city over a very longtime. Finally, the city's budget continues to include gimmicks that undermine the long term health of its revenue streams. Selling things like parking meter income gets us cash now, but we will be paying for that cash for a long time to come. No private business is going to give the city money for nothing. If they pay millions today - they expect far more than that in the future - and that is money the city will never get back.

**posted by: Thinking about last year's Budget on March 31, 2010 9:21pm**

It is difficult to trust a man, the Mayor, who says he has the city's safety and educational needs as a top priority when last year after the budget was approved, HE DECIDED TO HAND OUT RAISES after lay-offs and concessions from various departments He did not seek the board of alderman's approval, he said he would use the extra money put in places in the budget. I say let him find some of that EXTRA money this year. He found it last year for raises, why not this year????? How can we trust him???

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on March 31, 2010 9:27pm**

Inflation is not a reason that we need a tax increase. Inflation is currently running at close to 0% in the United States and some - Paul Krugman for example, have argued that we are deflating.

**posted by: JB on March 31, 2010 9:46pm**

Living in N.H. has become more depressing each year. I didn't know what a political machine was until we moved here. I've been a lifelong Democrat, but thanks to my adopted hometown, I find myself wishing I had oppositional candidates (gasp! Republican) to vote for (not nationally, of course, I'm not a total loon). I catch myself feeling angry with the monopoly of unions and I don't understand why a broke city is spending any money on ID card programs?

I see one of the worst educational systems in the country and I have little hope that it will change significantly.

My kid is ready to start school and he's prepared for Kindy fully and he's got supportive parents. With no spot allotted to him in the lottery and a failing local school, we'll be shelling out more than 15K a year for private school.

That's something I never imagined doing. Not just because of the money, but because we come from a long line of pro-union Democrats, civil servants and teachers. Yep, just one more prepared middle class kid being pulled out of the public system.

When we moved here almost a decade ago, we deliberately chose to live in the city in which we work, despite the high taxes. But, as the years go on, it's become clear that the negative outweigh the positives.

It's sad and depressing and it pains me.

**posted by: blue dog dem on March 31, 2010 9:59pm**

DOTW aka Fruit Fly aka The Professor

James is completely correct whereas you keep trying to turn the argument as to why people like you should skate on paying taxes to live in this utopia on property owners' dimes. The schools stink, management of almost every single agency is poor and the mayor IS to blame for poor management and not bad luck. Waste and nepotism are rampant and finally the home-owning progressives are realizing that other people's money has run out and JDS is as tone deaf to voters' concerns as are the feds.

It is poor management not to put money away in fixed investments or to under fund not only the pensions but also the health benefits too. It is poor management to put your faith and our tax money into the market in risky investments rather than in fixed commercial investments so that future costs are easily identifiable and budgeted for, rather than hoping for 20% annual returns that rarely materialize.

The fact that our economy took a major downturn is unfortunate and unavoidable, but not an excuse. However, the economy is cyclical and downturns invariably happen every decade to some extent. The fact that the mayor, in 18 years, never established a rainy day fund for such an emergency, but would rather raise taxes to meet his needs, speaks to his lack of ability. The fact that he has done nothing to prepare for worse-case scenarios shows a lack of vision we have come to expect.

The only manner in which to right this ship is Chapter 9 with the leadership to make the tough cuts needed to bring our budget in line. If the leadership doesn't appear then Chapter 9 will be just a procedural waste of time. The miraculous economic turnaround you mentioned previously is not going to happen this decade, so there will be no manna from heaven to spare us in the near future. And your always free to make a contribution for your

fair share of the services you so seem to enjoy.

**posted by: Morris Cove Islander on March 31, 2010 11:11pm**

How is the new hot "Innovation Based Budgeting" supposed to be a true savings help especially in the long run and why can the city not do it without new hires? What does that tell us about our city employees and their leaders?

So we first invest and hire four new people for a total of \$254,000 in 2010/11. I assume these folks will stay on the city's payroll thereafter, get raises etc. and will need office supply, hard- and software and finally receive pensions. Thus more costs to come.

These four will help the city to save money and increase revenue by \$ 8 millions. Hmmm.

If the city knows already about the \$ 8 millions NOW why do you need four new people to accomplish what you should and could to do already TODAY better even YESTERDAY (the city's finances are since quite a while in dire straits).

And what then? Will it be a steady annually stream of \$ 8 million plus or will they run out of ideas and then find only \$ 2 millions ... Or just sit and administer their original plan which will decrease in its contributions overtime. Once the full savings potential concerning document management (using less paper) or electronic printing is reached you cannot cut them further. But we still will pay risen salaries and office supplies ...

**posted by: Agreed on April 1, 2010 1:09pm**

JB:

Couldn't agree more. We're moving on after ten years. I've watched this place deteriorate and I just can't cast my lot with New Haven any more. The ship's sinking and this rat has his lifeboat out over the side...lol.

**posted by: Tom on April 1, 2010 3:04pm**

Agreed: Have you lived in New Haven for the last 10 years?? Let's take one issue: downtown. Do you remember what it was like when the Mayor took office, and what it like today? Consider the fact that in what was previously a blighted, forsaken area we now have shops, restaurants, and are the only town in the state with nightlife. I don't know where you are living to be able to reasonably make the claim that all you have seen is deterioration.

Continuing on the issue of downtown, now consider what the City could bring in in revenue if the state would permit us an alcohol tax. Or a hotel tax. Much of the problem here comes from the City's need to raise revenue to implement some outstanding and visionary reforms (as with education), and the state's unwillingness to give us any recourse except property taxes.

I suggest to all of you who are spending hours and emotion fuming at the Mayor to redirect that energy and lobby in Hartford for alternative taxes.

**posted by: Threefifths on April 1, 2010 5:38pm**

posted by: Tom on April 1, 2010 3:04pm

Agreed: Have you lived in New Haven for the last 10 years?? Let's take one issue: downtown. Do you remember what it was like when the Mayor took office, and what it like today? Consider the fact that in what was previously a blighted, forsaken area we now have shops, restaurants, and are the only town in the state with nightlife. I don't know where you are living to be able to reasonably make the claim that all you have seen is deterioration.

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I suggest to all of you who are spending hours and emotion fuming at the Mayor to redirect that energy and lobby in Hartford for alternative taxes.

Look at downtown. Have you seen the rents? Downtown is like living on the upper west side or central park west. Who can afford to live downtown. How many stores are going under because of high rents downtown. No King John is like this king.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdDQnGtQPA0&feature=related>

**posted by: robn on April 1, 2010 6:21pm**

Anyone who thinks that financial trickery like "capitalization" of parking revenue is a good idea, should take a long hard look at Matt Taibbi's writings about this era's financial chicanery.

[http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/32906678/looting\\_main\\_street/print](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/32906678/looting_main_street/print)

**posted by: blue dog dem on April 1, 2010 7:43pm**

Tom,

"Outstanding and visionary reforms?!?!?" One of my offices is across from the Green and downtown is a pit. I'm approached by at least one panhandler a day, during working hours, and it only gets worse at night. I won't let my family come to meet me after dark. Yalies won't cross Church Street at nighttime and the only businesses that continually do well are bars & restaurants. Those businesses thrive when people have money for discretionary spending. If things tighten, or prices rise (such as via an alcohol tax) then spending decreases. Also, I have never seen an establishment raise its prices just to meet the tax, so the \$4 drink will become \$4.50 with 10-25 cents to JDS. It adds up, especially for those whose pay has lessened over the past year and a half.

I have great vision for my family, but I keep within a budget and don't waste funds or overextend just because of a "vision." The State might be partially responsible, but considering JDS has been around longer than most of the State reps, the majority of the fault lies with him.

In all of JDS' countless terms, he has had great vision in destroying public education and the fiscal budget. Now, because he has a powerpoint projector, you think he has a "vision" regarding education? The schools can't go any lower, so any change will be an improvement. My oldest went to a magnet school for 3 weeks before we pulled her out. I'd rather spend money than have her in an overcrowded classroom with children of parents who use school as babysitting and not involved with their kids' education. Where both a lunch box one week and then a denim jacket the week after were stolen. Hard to explain to a 5 year old about theft. Twice.

So raising taxes is the panacea to those with vision? It also is unfair economically because the wealthy can afford to pay it, those who aren't, cannot. The rich aren't the only ones who drink alcohol or use hotels, just the ones who can better afford the increase. Also, there really is no reason to stay in downtown New Haven when there are cheaper hotels 15 minutes away. An increase in tax will cause greater separation between affordable and luxury, thereby reducing consumption and causing more unemployment for the working class.

Its a vision we all can believe in. It's almost as bad as a renter telling a property owner that higher taxes are a good thing.

**posted by: Old Timer on April 1, 2010 9:30pm**

3/5 and Tom

Lets get our facts right. 10 years back downtown was the same as today. It was at its nadir about 1982 to 1984. Joel Schiavone was the first to revive it by developing upper Chapel Street, and the Rouse Company turned the Mall around. This was during Dieletos term as Mayor, and Johnny Boy deserves credit for being part of the city team that helped FREE MARKETEERS and REPUBLICANS get the city out of the mire.

From 1989 to around 1995 the downtown changed radically. Many of the old family businesses that had been here for generations closed up. Quality disappeared. Anyone remember Kramers on Orange. The Mall tanked and Macys, Waldenbooks and Conrans evaporated. This was during Daniels terms and in to DeStefanos. I dont think either can be blamed. It was just the way the nations econmoy was going.

Since DeStefano became Mayor the downtown has remained much the same as it was in the mid 1990s. At the Mall Yale Co-op replaced Conrans only to be replaced by Bodegas. Now Its an empty corner in the middle of downtown. As the American economy has grown 60% to 70% since then and the Dow Jones has gone from 6000 to 11000 today this can be looked on as a COMPLETE AND TOTAL FAILURE by the towns DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION.

TAXPAYERS, including me, ONLY HAVE OURSELVES TO BLAME FOR VOTING THIS MAN IN ELECTION AFTER ELECTION AFTER ELECTION.

WE NEED A MAYOR TO LOOK AFTER THE CITY. NOT A MAYOR GETTING PHOTO OPPS IN WASHINGTON AT OUR EXPENSE.

**posted by: cedarhillresident on April 2, 2010 9:14am**

Where are those paper's the mayor promised to give to the NHI???? Tom are you following up on that????

**posted by: johnrusso on April 2, 2010 9:37am**

No more tax increases...enough is enough...cut, cut, cut

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**posted by: Threefifths on April 2, 2010 11:56am**

posted by: Old Timer on April 1, 2010 9:30pm

TAXPAYERS, including me, ONLY HAVE OURSELVES TO BLAME FOR VOTING THIS MAN IN ELECTION AFTER ELECTION AFTER ELECTION.

Don't blame me I write my vote in. I didn't vote for Obama. I don't vote for the two party control corporatist system. So you are right to blame yourselves and others who keep voting for this crooked two party system. Again we need proportional representation now!!!!

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**posted by: Patrick Nealy on April 6, 2010 1:43am**

I am convinced this will be DeStefano's final term. It is over. Even those who supported him are now against him, and for good reason. He refuses to make the obvious cuts that are needed. And contrary to his thesis, "school change" doesn't require a single extra dollar. Just changes in rules regarding hiring and firing of teachers and administrators, and permitting expelling students from any magnet school for bullying. Barnard and Jepson Magnet have horrendous bullying problems and the admins do nothing about it. There are no consequences. How can students learn with such tolerated violence in their midst?

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