

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

IT'S YOUR TOWN. READ ALL ABOUT IT.

## Read Their Lips

BY **Thomas MacMillan** | MAY 5, 2010 7:20 AM

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Posted to: [City Hall](#), [City Budget](#)



THOMAS MACMILLAN PHOTO

As the mayor prepared for a rare appearance at an aldermanic budget meeting, aldermen gathered on the steps of City Hall to issue a “no tax hike” call.

Meanwhile, budget watchdog [Jeffrey Kerekes](#) announced his organization has gathered 1,000 signatures for a petition to trim the city budget and avoid increasing taxes.

The maneuvering took place as the the Board of Aldermen’s Finance Committee prepares to gather Wednesday night to deliberate on Mayor John DeStefano’s proposed \$476 million budget for the coming fiscal year. The budget calls for a property revaluation phase-in that will result in an average tax increase of 8.8 percent.

That has provoked some loud protest and criticism, which DeStefano plans address when he makes an appearance at the meeting.

If you can’t attend the meeting, you can follow along here at the *Independent*, where we plan to live-blog the event.

Over the past weeks, the Finance Committee has heard from city departments seeking to claim their piece of the budget. Last week, members of the general public got their chance to speak, and [hundreds of people turned out to decry the proposed tax hike](#).





The taxpayers' message has been heard, said West Rock Alderman Darnell Goldson (second from left in photo), as he stood on the steps of City Hall on Tuesday evening. With him were (from left) Aldermen Claudette Robinson-Thorpe, Gerald Antunes, Jackie James-Evans, and Michael Smart. The five aldermen called for the Finance Committee to find a way to avoid any increase in taxes.

Goldson said the call was supported by two other aldermen who couldn't make the press conference: Dolores Colon and Alfreda Edwards.

"This time, in this economy, is not the time to add to the burden" of taxpayers, Goldson said.

"People spoke loud and clear last week," said James-Evans, referring to the [public budget hearing](#).

Goldson said he and his fellow zero-percent-increase aldermen are not yet offering specific suggestions about how to trim the budget to avoid a tax hike. "We're going to allow the Finance Committee to do its job," he said. If the committee can't find the money to avoid a tax hike, Goldson and his colleagues will step up and offer recommendations, he said. "We don't want to take away from their process."

In terms of what can be cut, "everything is on the table," Goldson said.

Something has to be done to prevent people from moving out of town because of high taxes, James-Evans said. "We're losing our middle class."

Asked if the zero percent stance was a firm position, or if there is middle ground to be found, Goldson said, "That's not how you negotiate. Our position is a zero percent tax increase."





Moments later, upstairs in City Hall, the mayor reacted to the aldermen's call. He said he is open to any plan that would prevent a tax hike. "The goal is no tax increase."

Mayor DeStefano said he wants a budget that will ensure school reform moves forward, public safety is adequate, and economic development continues.

"I'm open to doing cuts," DeStefano said. However, cuts come with consequences, he said. "You've got to reconcile taxes and services."

For instance, people sometimes say the fire department budget should be cut. But no one said that a few weeks ago when firefighters were able to quickly douse a [big fire on Dixwell Avenue](#) before it could spread, the mayor said.

DeStefano said he has made tough cuts before—closing schools and senior centers—and faced a lot of angry taxpayers. If there are more cuts to be made, there will be anger again. "People will feel this," he said.

Goldson, speaking later on the first floor of City Hall, said he's willing to speak to his constituents and own up to any loss of services that might result from a zero percent tax increase budget. If they don't like it, "they can vote me out," he said.

### **1,000-Strong**

Earlier, on Tuesday afternoon, Jeffrey Kerekes of New Haven Citizens Action Network sent out a press release announcing that his organization has gathered 1,000 signatures to a petition calling on the "city's political leaders to reign in flagrant excessive spending" in next year's budget.

The petition was presented to the Finance Committee at its meeting last week. It asks for a 10 percent budget cut for all city departments, including police, fire, and the Board of Education.

"The financial path we are on is simply unsustainable in either the short or long term," Kerekes said in the release. "This is the worst economy since the Great Depression and still the mayor is attempting to borrow another \$100 million and keep the rest of the city's expenditures at unreasonably high levels."

### **An Olive Branch**

Mayor DeStefano said Tuesday he plans to make a rare appearance Wednesday night before the Finance Committee.

He said he doesn't plan to announce any changes to his \$476 million budget proposal.

Rather, he's there to extend an olive branch in a fractious year, he said.

His planned message: "Let's work together to get this done."

DeStefano said he wants the aldermen know his administration is ready to discuss proposed changes to the budget. Also, by Wednesday night the city should have a good sense of how the new state budget will turn out, a crucial piece of information in crafting the city budget.

"It's been an extraordinary year because of the economy" and because, unlike last year, his administration is raising taxes, he noted.

*Paul Bass contributed reporting.*

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### **Comments**

**posted by: Threefifths on May 5, 2010 8:15am**

An Olive Branch

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Rather, he's there to extend an olive branch in a fractious year, he said.

Don't touch that branch. It will be full of thorns!!!!

**posted by: Exiled Italian Shill on May 5, 2010 8:58am**

Its one thing to say 0% growth budget and quite another to own the cuts that are made. Most legislative bodies never want to own the cuts. They will all get together and work out the budget - they always do each year.

**posted by: Pedro Soto on May 5, 2010 9:31am**

Has there been any discussion about unpaid furlough days? The state is mandating them in their budget, I believe, and many, many companies here in the state are using them them.

I still think that cuts need to be made to city staff and services, but this might also be a way to achieve savings.

**posted by: David on May 5, 2010 9:48am**

I agree with EIS. It is easy to propose a no tax increase budget. It is quite another to actually make that work without cutting services to the very districts that these alderman represent. If streets do not get paved, centers close, services cut, will these alderman stand behind them? Or will they blame these too on the Mayor when taking a hard line position?

I applaud NHCAN on their effort to actually outline solutions. However, many of the solutions offered, e.g. eliminating positions in the Registrar of Voters, cannot feasibly be enacted.

Goldson's quote to "allow the Finance Committee do its job" is evidence that this is pure political posturing. This group of 7 has no solution to the budget problem, and only wants to make a quick political score. This posturing is not productive for the city in the long run and only serves to weaken the Board of Alderman when it is the Mayor who is the only one capable or willing to actually address the problem.

I look forward to seeing whether or not this group actually puts forward any budget changes, or whether they continue to hide from true statesmanship.

**posted by: Tim Holahan on May 5, 2010 9:49am**

The city is just now beginning a conversation that should have started months ago.

If the aldermen and Mayor can't agree on and pass a new budget by the first Monday in June, the Mayor's proposed budget takes effect automatically (per the city charter).

To responsibly investigate, identify, and pass the significant changes to the budget necessary to bring New Haven's finances in line with reality will be difficult if not impossible. If the Mayor had proposed a more realistic budget in the first place, the conversation might have begun months ago.

Good luck to the aldermen who have taken on the task of identifying cuts. Will it be tough? Yes. That's why we pay you the big bucks.

**posted by: cba on May 5, 2010 9:51am**

It is refreshing to see members of the Board of Alderman taking a firm position against this Mayor

**posted by: Anna on May 5, 2010 9:56am**

We already reconcile taxes for services. The tax hike for this years budget does not add any services. We are overtaxed and under serviced as it is. How much more can the taxpayers take? Figure out how to get big businesses back into the city. Our property taxes alone can not and should not sustain this city. Our schools are failing because there was already a mass exodus of middle class residents to the suburbs. The middle class in this city gets nothing. We don't qualify for programs we would like to be a part of, we don't qualify for some schooling because we make too much. Most of us make enough to pay our bills and put food on the table. We would love to support our downtown restaurants but can't. By the time one gets a babysitter, pays for parking and then dinner that's a \$200 night. I'm afraid we are going to see businesses shut down because the middle class is struggling and possibly leaving. Pretty sad in my opinion. There should be a hiring freeze across the

board, no bonuses, restructuring of departments to include some consolidations and possible pay cuts to non union employees. The residents have had to tighten their belts and time the city does the same. Be responsible with our money. By the way who does a performance review on the Mayor? It should be the residence.

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**posted by: asdf on May 5, 2010 9:57am**

I find it somewhat surprising and ironic to see my alderwoman, Robinson-Thorpe, there. Just a week or two ago, she was starring in an Independent article calling to make a youth center out of the armory—how much money would that cost?

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**posted by: Gone on May 5, 2010 10:00am**

Too late. Doesn't matter. Already sold the house to an out-of-towner. See ya.

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**posted by: Allan Brison on May 5, 2010 10:09am**

The Mayor's budget is a negotiating tool. He does not expect the 10% hike. He probably hopes for a budget that will be more in the neighborhood of a 5% hike.

This is standard practice for chief execs across government. Come in with more than what you want and negotiate down to what you actually do want.

If, instead, his original budget had reflected a 5% hike, there would have been a big storm and he would have had to negotiate down. This way he gets what he wants.

What to watch for: Some of his favored alders will ride in like knights in shining armour and will appear to get the Mayor to cut some fat. They will take credit for cutting the tax hike by half.

In reality it is all a charade. The favored alders will look good to their constituents thus insuring their re-election as alders, or their election to higher office as the case may be. DeStefano will get the budget he wants and, at the same time insure his control over the Board of Aldermen.

The favored alders will appear to be the ones telling the Mayor where to cut. In reality it is the Mayor who tells them where to cut.

And you can be sure that the alders REALLY responsible for getting the budget trimmed, the ones mentioned in this article, will get NO credit whatsoever.

This is the usual scenario. I hope I'm wrong.

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**posted by: Morris Cove Islander on May 5, 2010 10:34am**

Bravo Alders! The citizens of New Haven do not want a tax increase. Where are you others? Where is Arlene DePino the Republican minority leader? Shouldn't she be at the forefront of the fight against more taxes?

It is about time that you as Aldermen fulfill your responsibilities! The core power you have to shape policies and create programs for your neighborhoods is via the budget. If the budget is mostly defined by debt service, wages, pensions, maintenance and an educational budget you have to take as a whole, there will be no creative room left. Thus you have to save and cut today in order to maintain any fiscal room for creative improvements without increasing taxes year after year! Otherwise tomorrow's debt service will strangle the city!

If being an Aldermen is not about creating and shaping the world you live in and only about power - then TAKE it BACK. Change the rules of the game! Do not longer accept that you have to swallow the education budget as a whole!

Why does the city have five indoor pools we pay for? Only one is open for the public a meager five hours a week! Indoor pools are money pits! But can you as Alders close three of the five?

That much about your power.

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**posted by: cedarhillresident on May 5, 2010 10:39am**

I read this story and the one in the Reg. The olive branch.... not buying it! Proof is in the putting. They are playing the same game still... trying to scare community's and trying to pit them against eachother so we are distracted...NOT WORKING! We are onto the game try to spin it that we are unrealistic as you want NEW HAVENERS are not taking your word as Gospel anymore they are reading the budget you presented and doing the math!

I stand and give applause to all the citizens of this city for uniting as one! I stand and give applause to the alderman for uniting as one!

30 WARDS, 1 MESSAGE,  
WE CAN'T afford to love New Haven

NO TAX INCREASE.

**posted by: cedarhillresident on May 5, 2010 11:15am**

IT IS NEVER TO LATE TO SIGN THE PETITION

<http://www.petitiononline.com/NewHaven/petition.html>

**posted by: harry David on May 5, 2010 12:01pm**

This is first time anyone has acknowledged that we do have a tax problem yet I agree with Brison that even this admission is a charade—let us all work together, compromise a bit on X %, and by the way why not jack up fines, permit fees and other indirect forms of taxation. And, please help us lobby the State so you can get to pay additional sales taxes, etc..

Let us keep the momentum going. To those who say outsiders like ourselves need to offer concrete solution, I say : We have tried over the past three years to do so, both with structural suggestions and with specific nitty-gritty ideas, to no avail.

This process is flawed and has been for some time. In an administration attuned to the hard times residents face there would have been a mandate late last year, if not before, advising all department heads to come back with budgets that reduce costs X% with minimal service impacts. Highly compensated department heads know best how to do this. This did not happen and everyone came in with “preserve my last years spending patterns, and raise me 5”

We have seen profligate spending on all aspects of administration—from unnecessary positions, to bloated administration heavy departments, to unsustainable pension and medical benefit promises. And every year we are treated to another of those financial engineering marvels—a medal for most creative financial engineering should go to whomever invented this years parking revenue monetization scheme. To even spend City time to consider and evaluate proposals such as this tells us something about the rarefied atmosphere in which these emissions emanate.

(Think about it. In a time when we expect further and more severe hardships ahead we consider selling the next 25 years of parking revenue, and propose to do so at an effective interest rate of 8.5%? Someone forgot to do the math as the first year take will not be the \$10 million anticipated but about \$6 million (net of lost revenue this year). And when the proposal calls for paying 8.5% interest per year one would think it would have been structured so that we did not just get \$50 million up front so we could take this \$40 million bought at 8.5% and park it in a bank paying 2% interest. Someone really creative could have come up with a scheme to make a real investment in parking meter automation, eliminate coin collecting labor, and make it fit the definition of a capital project which can be funded with municipal bond money costing 3-4%.)

When we speak of unsustainable budgets we include unsustainable pension promises. Who really believes the City can actually make good on the bloated pensions baked into our cake? With assets of \$420 million in the two pension funds, the present value of the pension payment stream is \$1,020 million giving us an unfunded liability optimistically estimated at over \$600 million ( \$12,500 per household). And what is worse, these present value calculations are rigged using generally accepted rate of return assumptions that are ridiculous—8.5% a year. Dream on. Lower this rate of return assumption. and presto, we are looking at an additional \$2-400 million in unfunded liabilities.

Everyone in the Finance Department and the Budget Department knows all this. The Board of Aldermen either knows or should take the time to get expert advise to make themselves understand all this. Yet budgets are routinely rubbe stamped year after year.

Just in case this tirade is percieved as a rant against organized or other forms of labor let me say that it is those who are on the receiving end of these pension promises who will suffer a rude shock when the City declared these payments cannot be made and must be trimmed or the pension plans themselves restructured.

My rant is done.

Harry

**posted by: khagearty on May 5, 2010 12:12pm**

Arlene was at last week's meeting all night even though she is not on the committee. She also took the time to listen to my concerns.

**posted by: Coincidence or Not? on May 5, 2010 12:20pm**

What does Robinson-Thorpe, Jackie James-Evans, Dolores Colon and Michael Smart all have in common? They are all yale union backed candidates.

If I were a union member in the city i would be mad as hell that they were taking help from labor and then laying off union members through budget cuts.

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**posted by: cedarhillresident on May 5, 2010 1:33pm**

Coincidence or Not?

are you trying to do the ole' divide and concor tactic???

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**posted by: Brian V on May 5, 2010 1:49pm**

16 years of signing sweet-heart union contracts and now they are coming due, without the ability to fund them.  
16 years of flip-flopping leadership direction and micro managing the police department and now crime is on the rise -again.

16 years of poor preforming schools and now we are supposed to give them more money to fix them.

16 years and the buck has NEVER stopped at the mayors desk.

16 years is enough, it is going to take that long to fix this mess.

New Haven:

Now Accepting Applications for Mayor

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**posted by: HewNaven?? on May 5, 2010 1:50pm**

Does anyone know what the city spends on gasoline and vehicle maintenance in total? I'd imagine that's a huge expense. If there's any way to cut back on the number of miles our city vehicles travel (by making more efficient use of time, better routes, etc.) that would probably save some money.

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**posted by: AnotherElectedOfficial on May 5, 2010 2:22pm**

Good job alders. Stand in the light of the taxpayers and you will be empowered. Fear no primary

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**posted by: streever on May 5, 2010 2:30pm**

I'm gratified to see the Mayor address this: I agree that it's a political tool, to announce the huge increase & then come back when the public demands cuts to say "Well we didn't want to cut this but we were required to by citizens"

I'm also grateful to see Shah say that they are going to make cuts in the budget. It has to happen.

To that end, I have a huge suggestion. Christine Bishop, mayoral appointee to the Budget commission, said that we'd save over 20 million THIS YEAR ALONE if we put a halt to new construction. GO FOR IT.

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**posted by: Doyens on May 5, 2010 3:46pm**

With all due respect to the mayor, nobody in the room tonight will be looking for an olive branch. We'll all be looking for your list of cuts which you will recommend and the BOA will pass. It should total 10% of the total general fund budget; it should minimize impact on citizens and taxpayers; it should begin at the top and be felt through nearly all departments. Some departments could be spared provided you find the money to cut elsewhere. (i.e. Public works which does a fine job and took cuts in the past)

The time for "I can't" is over. It's time for "I can." There is no place for "I can't" at home, school or at City Hall. That is the language of cowards, the weak and sucklings.

If we are to have a sustainable, livable and affordable city, the time to act is now. For those alders holding back, a more nuanced approach may make you feel better but it sure looks terribly wishy washy. Take a stand for the people you represent. If not in the face of a crisis, when?

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**posted by: Tim Holahan on May 5, 2010 4:11pm**

Streever, I'm not sure that's accurate. Approximately 80% of the school construction funds come from the state. If we don't use them, I think the money will return to the state.

Even so, it's in the city's interest to trim the construction budget back to what's absolutely necessary, but I'm not sure that we could actually save that much money.

I'll ask Christine to confirm or clarify.

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**posted by: fairhavengal on May 5, 2010 4:13pm**

What about furlough days? Have city employees taken any?

**posted by: Harry David on May 5, 2010 4:15pm**

Inevitably we will have to make choices when we ask for a 10% cut across the board—it is a meataxe approach because scalpels have been unheard of for years.

Those departments with the most bloat and the most wasteful spending will be asked to cut the same as those departments—such as Public Works that live by a credo to maximize service delivery with cost management. Who says the Admin cannot and should not have already demanded the appropriate cuts before this budget was even submitted.

I for one can live with any combination of cuts that result in a 10% cost reduction overall.

I hereby nominate the other John —Prokop of Public Works—to head up a multi-departmental Quality Task Force to look at all aspects of service delivery with the same thinking that he seems to have done with Public Works. This would really putting the Innovation in the Innovation Based Budgeting instead of it being just another consultantese buzz word with no meaning.

Harry

**posted by: Morris Cove Islander on May 5, 2010 4:30pm**

Ups - I misread the opening hours of our indoor pools. During the year the only one open for public can be visited for seven hours a week (not only five). That are 40 % longer opening hours that I reported. Now that should be worth the 100,000s of dollars what it costs to run a SINGLE indoor pool a year.

Or did I get that number wrong (in other cities they spend about \$400,000 a year to operate an indoor pool)? If so, what does the city pay for its indoor pools annually?

Swimming is great. But we have to tighten our belts. I think the city will be ok with only two pools open for educational swimming ...

One last sentence about our minority leader - showing up and making no comments can be interpreted as silent consent.

**posted by: Budget Check on May 5, 2010 5:10pm**

Streever,

Don't know if you have your facts rights, I've heard Christine speak to this suggestion before and I don't think she ever used that number.

Nor is there any possibility that the \$20M number could be correct:

- 1) debt service annual increase only +\$3M (pg 3-27)
- 2) on page 4-23 you see what schools are new CITY authorizations: Helene Grant (\$4M) Micro Society (\$1M) Hyde Leadership (\$7M) HSC Magnet (\$4.4) total (\$16.4M) over the next 20 years or less than a \$1m a year

**posted by: steve on May 5, 2010 5:45pm**

I totally agree that the true desired outcome is a new mayor!

At every neighborhood meeting anyone who dared suggest he reduce his budget was treated to one of his ... "No's". He was bold enough to tell some that it would be okay with him if they were forced to move because they couldn't afford his taxes.

This budget problem is about years of spending our money recklessly and the bill has come due. If I have to pay more taxes it will be just a down-down-payment on the final days of the reign of Mayor Johnnie! I will work night and day to be sure he is done regardless of the final outcome. HE HAS GONE TOO FAR!

Wish we could find the deals he made to get union support in his stupid run for Governor!

**posted by: The Professor on May 6, 2010 9:09am**

I think we should look at who is and isn't in this group of alders. The most important element that they all have in common: they reflexively and unthinkingly oppose the Mayor's every move. If he proposed a city resolution to honor Sally's and Pepe's, they'd start screaming that he was excluding Modern, and if he included Modern, they'd express their outrage that he was biased in favor of pizza and excluded Louis Lunch and their delicious burgers.

Moreover, it's tough to reconcile their public statements with their actual votes and policy proposals. Goldson, for his part, wants to raise the living wage in New Haven. I think that's an admirable goal, but it seems he has to explain how he wants to simultaneously do that AND avoid a tax increase. My guess is that it would involve

some cuts that nobody wants to see, so it's pretty clear why he doesn't want to spell out what they might be, but given that he's the ringleader of the group (I assume he is because he seems to be the only one with a fully functioning brain), he should at least have the intellectual honesty to let us know what we have to cut to achieve his goals.

Meanwhile, Dolores Colon was one of a handful of alders who last year voted to continue fully funding the group of washed-up ex-commies that is the New Haven Peace Coalition rather than give some of that money to homeless services. I hope that this year, she decides to do the right thing and trim the fat on that front.

Meanwhile, Evans has kept busy failing to do absolutely anything in her role as the former chairperson of the special commission on housing and proposing legislation that would further deplete city coffers by keeping young people out of downtown and forcing officers to waste time, energy, and money, enforcing that prohibition.

And literally within the last ten days, Claudette Robinson-Thorpe called for a multimillion dollar city project to remodel and modernize the old armory in her ward. Again, I'm not sure how she expects to pump millions of dollars into that heap of brick and metal and simultaneously avoid a tax increase.

As for Antunes and Smart, I literally am not aware of a single thing that they have done as alders to ease the burden on New Haven's taxpayers. Nada. Zip. Zilch. They've basically been less-abrasive versions of (thankfully) former Alderman Bobby Lee, who was so woefully inept at representing his ward that he predicted a massive landslide in his favor, didn't campaign, and ended up getting buried.

I'm all for the idea of eliminating wasteful spending, but the alders who took to the stage here don't seem to be particularly serious about it—they seem to be trying to score political points at the expense of the Mayor. Maybe they should spend less time grandstanding and more time trying to figure out how to fix the problems that the city faces.

Here's an idea: how about they go to their union backers and ask them to be open to the idea of making some concessions. They've gotten a pay raise in the last few years, while the executive staff has, believe it or not, largely gotten a pay cut due to restructuring their pension arrangements.

More generally, I don't think we should expect any serious proposals to come out of this group, with the possible exception of Goldson. I think we're much more likely to see people like Elicker, Lemar (if he's not too busy with his state rep run), DePino, and Jackson-Brooks come up with reasonable and workable proposals. The people in this group certainly all have their own views and to some extent their allegiances, but more importantly, they're all intelligent and serious. And with the exception of Elicker, who is unusually—and refreshingly—outspoken and active for a freshman, they've all got some experience with these things.

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**posted by: Tim Holahan on May 6, 2010 9:32am**

I've been highly critical of Mayor DeStefano and his administration, and I remain so, but I want to express my disgust at and rejection of the personal attacks that have been heard lately in the comments section of the Independent and elsewhere.

It diminishes the validity of an argument to couch it in personal language. Those of us who want New Haven's government take a different direction need to stay focused on issues and ideas.

The Mayor puts an enormous amount of energy and time into public service. There is no doubt that he has great affection for the city, and no question that he has done some good things for it. He puts his name and his reputation on the line every day that he shows up for work, and he doesn't deserve petty, anonymous sniping.

Say something meaningful, put your name on it, and leave it at that.

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**posted by: Why this? on May 6, 2010 11:19am**

This is bad politics. Goldson, et al. (and it really is Goldson- he's the only one of this crew who can pull something together) just screwed Jorge Perez and Andrea Jackson Brooks. There is a reason why Goldfield, despite the fights, always appoints Perez and Brooks to Finance. He respects their work and their efforts. They are the adults who will help make tough choices. This Goldson theatre now ensures that they have no votes to deliver around the budget. This now all becomes a posture toward the Mayor's terrible budget becoming enacted because not enough alders are willing to sit down and work through the problems.

The Board's finance committee is actually pretty good - you could likely remove Shah and Goldfield, take off Morehead, Buaer and Sullivan, and allow 4 folks to write the City's whole budget - Perez, Lemar, Jackson, and Elicker. Whatever those 4 come up with would likely be the best way forward. Having known them both for a long time, I still don't get the politics that has Perez and Lemar on opposite sides, but those two seeing their self-interests in one another would likely tip this City's political scales dramatically.

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**posted by: Darnell on May 6, 2010 11:40am**

To the Professor:

I must start by saying that even though you and I have disagreed in the past, I think most of the time you have been civil. Your comments this time were unnecessarily abrasive, and even though you were a little less so with me, I still think you were unfair, especially since you hide behind a curtain of anonymity.

Your comment - "I think...the most important element that they all have in common: they reflexively and unthinkingly oppose the Mayor's every move."

This is simply not true. If you monitored the board meetings and correspondence between these aldermen and the administration, you would find that there has been much common ground and support. I for one personally wrote the mayor during the recent spate of murders to offer my personal support of the strategy he had initially proposed to deal with the problem (except for bringing in a new police class). Charter Revision is an example of how we were able to convince a majority of our aldermen (20-6) that his way of accomplishing this goal was not the right way. This parking meter sell off deal is a bad deal for the future residents of this city. Setting a goal and target of a zero tax increase budget is a positive goal to have, especially in this environment. It keeps the pressure on the admin and finance committee to not settle for the simple solution. By doing these things are we being obstructionists, or is it just good public policy?

Your comment - "Moreover, it's tough to reconcile their public statements with their actual votes and policy proposals. Goldson, for his part, wants to raise the living wage in New Haven. I think that's an admirable goal, but it seems he has to explain how he wants to simultaneously do that AND avoid a tax increase. My guess is that it would involve some cuts that nobody wants to see, so it's pretty clear why he doesn't want to spell out what they might be.."

We have a living wage ordinance on the books for contractors that we do business with that we do not follow ourselves. We actually hire people at \$8.50 an hour. My position is that if we are not subject to the very rules we set for others, we shouldn't have the rule. So, yes, I would like to see it extended to city employees also. The admin has estimated that it would cost us an additional \$106,000 to do so. Less than the salary of one mid level manager in this city government. Heck, we could reduce travel costs for our top brass by that much and hardly affect them. For me, it is about setting new and different priorities, not necessarily making wholesale cuts to taxpayer services (even though some of that will happen). I'm certainly not afraid to offer solutions, I have deliberately left off of committees and out of meetings because those in power do not want to hear my solutions. I would suggest that we not spend \$500,000 to plant trees, or \$250,000 to purchase new recycle bins, or \$1 million to teach people how to cross the street safely. I would not hire the new police or fire classes, or purchase new hybrid cars and trucks, or build any new schools. I would not spend any city money on concerts and fireworks displays. I would force the unions to take furlough days or face layoffs. Those employees who work here but don't pay taxes here, they would contribute or be gone. I have plenty of suggestions, and I'm not afraid to put them forward. I have spoken to individual finance committee members to let them know. If these suggestions are not part of the solution when the committee completes its work, then I will make amendments at the full board meeting. If we really wanted to posture and take shots at the mayor, we would have made these suggestions at our press conference and try to take credit for the committees work. We did not do so. In fact, we never mentioned the mayor, we instead focused on the finance committee, which now has the task of working on this budget.

Your comment - "...he's the ringleader of the group (I assume he is because he seems to be the only one with a fully functioning brain)..."

First off I am no ones ringleader, I was part of a group who were not on the finance committee but wanted to let the committee and community know what our goal was from the very beginning. We didn't want to come to the full board and have some say that they did not know our intentions. We have agreed as a group that EVERYTHING is on the table, there are no sacred cows.

How is that that for "intellectual honesty".

And lastly, the lack of "fully functioning brain" comment was uncalled for, rude, and wrong.

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**posted by: What on May 6, 2010 11:53am**

Why this?

You have one point correct, Jorge and Andrea are always appointed to the Finance Committee. But your conclusion is wrong, they are not appointed because they make "tough choices", they are appointed because they do not push the status quo, which is exactly why we have a city government structure in place that is now difficult, if not impossible to remove. Goldson et al are doing the right thing by keeping the pressure on.

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**posted by: really.. on May 6, 2010 2:58pm**

This armchair analysis is terrible. No one knows why one politician alligns with another, except some really attentive people close to them. I trust that Darnell is honest in his approach and that these other alders were

willing to go for a ride. I agree that Darnell is going after Jorge's role as the "oppositions alpha dog. I also agree that the "swing votes" on the BOA are now the East Rock two and maybe Blango/ Rodriguez.

It'll be interesting how the respective State Rep. races play out. If Jorge/Al Paolilo cuts the deal with Lemar to really support him, he's guaranteed election. He's a slight favorite now, with them he is guaranteed. Without them, he's in a tough race throughout August. He'll likely still win, but it will be harder. If Lemar trades his replacement to pledge support for Jorge on the BOA, maybe Al P. as next Mayor? Game over. Jorge and Al should offer it up to him. The administration has always gone out of their way to manufacture tension between Perez and Lemar/Sandman in order to ensure that they couldn't trust each other. Sean M. and his crew play them beautifully so that they are always on opposite sides. Roland never trusts Jorge, Jorge never trusts Roland. They'll start doing the same thing with Darnell now.

Similar thing on the west side...only Sergio is a huge underdog. Can Darnell and crew deliver an election for him? What would Darnell want to get it done for him?

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**posted by: Cedarhillresident on May 6, 2010 3:20pm**

"really.."

could not go without saying.... that is a very interesting take on things. you could be right about a lot of that

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**posted by: The Professor on May 7, 2010 1:42am**

Mr. Goldson was absolutely right to refer to a portion of my comment as rude. It was a poor choice of words and I wish I'd made my point in a more considerate manner.

I further appreciate Mr. Goldson's clarification of his stance regarding the minimum wage ordinance, and I hope that it marks a sign of good things to come in these budget negotiations.

However, he is but one member of this group of alders, and the remaining members have a) a track record of reflexive opposition to the Mayor, b) a track record of advocating questionably justifiable policies, sometimes at odds with their stated priorities here, and consequently c) some explaining to do. Furthermore, it should be noted that given some of the inherent conflict between stated priorities, some of these alders are either trying to fleece the electorate, or are genuinely clueless as to the presence of these contradictions and therefore a bit lacking in the intellectual firepower department. ...

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**posted by: Darnell on May 7, 2010 9:11am**

To the Professor:

I am not in a position to defend my fellow aldermen past records, in their defense though I would like to make a few additional comments.

Your comment - "the remaining members have a) a track record of reflexive opposition to the Mayor, b) a track record of advocating questionably justifiable policies, sometimes at odds with their stated priorities here... Furthermore, it should be noted that given some of the inherent conflict between stated priorities, some of these alders are either trying to fleece the electorate, or are genuinely clueless as to the presence of these contradictions and therefore a bit lacking in the intellectual firepower department."

Robinson-Thorp is a new alder, as myself, and therefore does not have a record of inconsistencies as you noted. Her recent public outing of a dream (the community center) is just that, a dream. She has spoken of a private-public, mostly private, that would cover the cost of the center, relying less on public funds, and, it is a dream that is a little off in the future, it will not affect this year's budget in the least.

Unfortunately, I can not speak on any other issues because frankly your comment is so general without specific references that it is impossible to respond. That is oftentimes the problem here, general statements that can not be responded to intelligently.

I do thank you for your specific comments related to me :).