

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

IT'S YOUR TOWN. READ ALL ABOUT IT.

## Aldermen Approve \$472 Million City Budget

BY **Thomas MacMillan** | MAY 27, 2010 5:04 PM  
[\(52\) Comments](#) | [Post a Comment](#) | [E-mail the Author](#)

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



THOMAS MACMILLAN PHOTO

Despite last-minute attempts to make more cuts, and an eleventh-hour insurgency that almost stopped the process dead in its tracks, the Board of Aldermen voted to approve the city's new \$471.6 million budget largely unchanged.

The aldermen Thursday night took up final consideration of the mayor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2010-2011. Over the course of nearly five hours, they heard amendments that would have made additional cuts to the budget, including an ambitious multimillion dollar proposal from West Rock Alderman Darnell Goldson. Goldson's plan failed.

With only a small reallocation of funds and an amendment to save money by reducing paper use, the board passed the \$471.6 million budget [recommended by the Finance Committee last week](#).

Aldermen approved a a \$1.5 million change to the Innovation Based Budgeting (IBB) section of the budget, proposed by East Rock Aldermen Roland Lemar and Justin Elicker. The amendment reduced the Board of Education's (BOE) general funds allocation by \$1.5 million, and took out \$1.5 million in BOE cuts that were part of IBB.

Lemar and Elicker managed to pass an amendment designed to make the budget process more inclusive and transparent.

In a last-ditch effort to stop the budget from passing without further cuts, Goldson led a campaign at the end of the evening to tie up the process by voting down the tax revenue plan for next year. At that point, the spending side of the budget had already passed. But aldermen have to approve a budget in two parts: the spending side

and the revenue side.

Goldson and his allies hoped to block the revenue side, in an effort to gain leverage for further negotiations. Nine other aldermen voted with Goldson to not approve the tax plan, successfully blocking its passage, because a two-thirds vote of the 30-member board is needed.

Then Newhallville Alderwoman Alfreda Edwards (at right in top photo) flipped. Another vote was called. Alderwoman Migdalia Castro followed Edwards and the budget resistance crumbled.

Edwards said after the meeting that she was confused, and hadn't understood what she had been voting on the first time. Mayoral Chief of Staff Sean Matteson and Chief Administrative Officer Rob Smuts said they explained the situation to her between the two votes. Their pitch to the alderwomen may have been based on an incorrect reading of city law.

Thursday's meeting marked the culmination of a contentious budget season. [Tears were shed](#), voices were raised, [hundreds of taxpayers stormed City Hall](#). Aldermen investigated the details of complicated [parking meter monetization deal](#), plumbed the [depths of the Board of Education budget](#), and grappled with the nebulous ["Innovation Based Budgeting."](#)

The Independent was on the scene at City Hall Thursday reporting on the action live as it happened, scroll down to read the live-blog.

The most controversial element of the budget was the mayor's proposed increase in property taxes. Initially, the tax hikes would have raised the homeowners' tax bills by an average of 8.8 percent. Last week, [aldermen accepted a budget amendment](#) that would halve that hike, to an average of 4 percent. [The proposal](#) includes a property revaluation freeze and cuts to school and police budgets, as well as a cancellation of Fourth of July fireworks and the annual holiday tree on the Green.

Mayor DeStefano warned that further budget trimming would result in drastic reductions in city services, including the closing of libraries, senior centers, and homeless shelters.

Budget watchdogs called for more cuts. The New Haven Citizens Action Network (NHCAN) organized resistance to the mayor's budget since the beginning. The group called for a 10 percent cut from the budget of each city department.

On Thursday night, with the exception of Alderman Goldson (pictured), no one came close to proposing the type of deep cuts for which NHCAN had advocated.



Goldson's amendment would have cut about \$10 million from the budget, but he couldn't find support for it. His proposals failed even when he broke his big amendment down for voting in smaller chunks, line by line.

At the end of the night, after aldermen had approved the spending side of the budget, Goldson led a charge to block the revenue side of the budget. That would have stalled the budget's passage and forced more negotiation on cuts in order to find the support of Goldson's bloc of allies. With 10 votes on his side, Goldson appeared to have succeeded, until Alderwoman Alfreda Edwards reconsidered. She called for another vote and sided with the majority to pass the revenue side of the budget. Alderwoman Migdalia Castro also flipped.

"I didn't realize what we had done," Edwards said after the meeting, as she hurried out of the aldermanic chamber and down the hall. "I thought we were doing something else."

What did you think you were doing?

Edwards walked away without answering.

Smuts said he had spoken with Edwards about her initial vote. He asked her, "You understand what you were voting on?"

"I think she was confused," Smuts said. He said he told her that if she blocked the passage of the budget, that the mayor's original proposed budget would take effect.

Asked if that was true that the mayor's budget would take effect immediately, Smuts said he'd have to consult Robert's Rules of Order.

He left the chamber with a pair of souvenir anti-IBB glasses (see 7:09 p.m. below).

Matteson said he had also spoken to Edwards. "Alfreda was mistaken," Matteson said. She thought she was voting for the 4 percent tax increase, Matteson said. He said he explained to her that "if no further action was taken," the mayor's budget as originally proposed would take effect.

Castro explained her change of heart. She said she also wanted to avoid going back to the mayor's first budget.

That wouldn't have happened, Goldson said. The board doesn't have to pass the budget before the first Monday in June, he said. Aldermanic staff concurred.

Anything could have happened before June 7. There was time for more negotiation, Goldson said.

"I thought we had it," said Goldson. He said he hadn't expected Aldermen Katrina Jones and Alex Rhodeen to be able to make the meeting and had therefore expected his anti-tax bloc to carry off the budget-blocking plan. He conceded defeat. "There's nothing else we can do," he said. "This budget is a bad budget."

Members of NHCAN concurred. Jeffrey Kerekes said he was "very disappointed."

"It's disingenuous to say they cut anything," Gary Doyens said. The budget is still \$10 million higher than last year's. Aldermen "pretended" to make hard decisions, he said. "It offends me."

In response to the outpouring of organized resistance to this year's proposed budget, Aldermen Elicker, Lemar, and Westville's Greg Dildine proposed four amendments designed to make next year's budget process more inclusive and participatory. The amendments call for regular budget reports and public meetings throughout the year. The measures passed on Thursday night.

NHCAN members were skeptical.

"That's good, but are they going to follow through?" Rebecca Turcio said.

The alderman have history of not listening to public input on the budget, Kerekes and Doyens said.

"I think it's not worth the paper it's written on," said Alderman Goldson.





If there was a winner at Thursday's meeting, it was Al Lucas (at right in photo), head of the legislative services department, which assists the Board of Aldermen. The board voted to take over \$12,000 out of its budget for consulting services and put it towards a raise for Lucas.

If there was a loser, it was [former rookie cop Jason Bandy](#), who was the subject of an amendment designed to prevent him from returning to the force. The legislation couldn't do that, because of the rules of union negotiations. But Bandy was nevertheless publicly excoriated by aldermen who decried his alleged abuse of sick leave, drunken misbehavior, and multiple run-ins with police. Former Police Chief James Lewis convinced his board to remove Bandy from the force after he called in sick then caused a ruckus and got arrested at a downtown bar. He's had further problems with the law, but the city's new chief has gone along with a City Hall decision to reinstate Bandy.

### Live Blog

Live-blogging commences below. (Note: only text inside quotation marks is directly quoted; the rest is paraphrasing. Observations and comments are generally in brackets.)

**6:45 p.m.:** T-minus 15 minutes until the start of the meeting. Aldermen are filtering in to the chamber.

Mayoral staff are out in force tonight. Against the wall, Chief Administrative Officer Rob Smuts is talking amendments with Fair Haven Alderwoman Migdalia Castro. New staffer and former Register reporter Elizabeth Benton is sitting nearby. Chief of Staff Sean Matteson and liaison Adam Joseph are also in the room, as well as corporation counsel Victor Bolden.

A number of amendments are up for consideration tonight. In addition to the expected amendments mentioned above, East Shore Alderwoman Arlene DePino has a proposal. Westville Alderman Greg Dildine has signed on as a sponsor to an amendment with East Rockers Lemar and Elicker. Their amendment would revise the budget-making process for next year, complementing Innovation Based Budgeting (IBB) with Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB).

West Rock / West Hills Alderman Darnell Goldson has submitted three amendments. One would prevent the re-hire of police department rookie Jason Bandy. Another would increase the salary of the head of the Board of Aldermen's staff. The third would cut \$10 million out of the budget.

**7:01:** President Carl Goldfield bangs the gavel. The roll is being called.

**7:03:** A couple of dozen spectators are here so far, and it's filling up fast.

Goldfield addresses the crowd. He asks people to respect the deliberations by being quiet.

**7:04:** DePino leads the request for divine guidance, which starts every Board of Aldermen meeting. She asks that the board be "blessed with wisdom" to make good decisions and asks for a moment of silence for Rafael Segarra, Jr., [the detective who recently passed away](#).

**7:06:** Majority leader Katrina Jones moves the budget items A through H, which are not the main budget and are non-controversial.

**7:07:** The room is filling up with people. Including green-shirted members of the AFSCME union, which

represents many city employees. [Several of them were outside before the meeting. Political Field Representative Matthew Brokman said the union is protesting the passage of the budget “on the backs of” city employees. He was referring to the possibility of privatization of custodial services as well as other parts of the budget which he said seek to win \$1 million from union contracts.]

**7:08:** Alderman Yusuf Shah, chair of the Finance Committee, speaks about items A through H. They have been approved by the committee, he says.

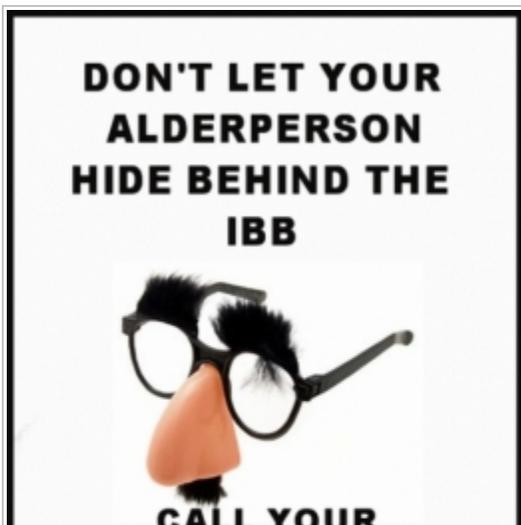
No further discussion. The items pass unanimously.



Alex Marathis, Chris Randall, and Briana Virtue (In glasses, L to R), onlookers to the budget debate, silently protest Innovation Based Budgeting.

**7:09:** Jones now moves item I. This is the big one. It’s an appropriating ordinance: the largest spending part of the budget.

Shah speaks again. “We cut the tax increase in half.” People would like to see more, but “we have made cuts” and we still have to make up the Innovation Based Budgeting (IBB) and monetization sections of the budget. “This budget includes some very very hard cuts.” It preserves the police department and “advances school change initiatives.” The public was listened to, he says.

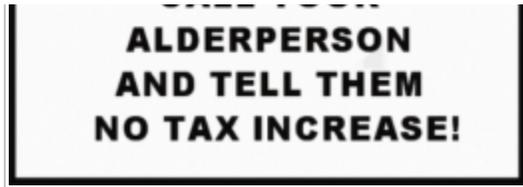


[Some observers (in top photo) are wearing novelty glasses with big noses and mustaches and eyebrows attached. This is a reference to IBB. “Don’t let your alderperson hide behind IBB,” read a recent email from NHCAN (pictured).]

**7:14:** Shah is thanking individual alders for their work on the budget. More than anyone else, the committee is indebted to Budget Director Larry Rusconi and aldermanic staffer Don Hayden, Shah says.

[Other spectators are holding small pink signs that say “T.A.G.,” a reference to the Board of Education’s Talented and Gifted program, which is slated for cuts.]

**7:17:** Shah closes by voicing a hope to



“proactively move forward together” to minimize budget growth without “endangering the loss to our city’s residents.” He speaks about the large public outcry against the tax increase. “I’ve never seen 300 people at a budget meeting.” “This was a very very tough budget, under some very very serious

circumstances.” Shah apologizes for losing his temper during the process. “At the end of the day we are the great city of New Haven. ... This budget will help us.”

**7:20:** Further discussion: Roland Lemar, who is [running for state representative](#), stands. He thanks Shah for leading aldermen through the process. He offers an amendment, an “opportunity to improve.” The amendment: to reduce the Board of Ed by \$1.5 million, targeted at cuts to the central office staff.

Elicker seconds.

Discussion on the amendment: Elicker (a co-sponsor) stands: The amendment would flat-fund the Board of Ed. The spirit of the amendment is not to affect the quality of schools. It’s not targeted at TAG. “We’re looking for a leaner and more efficient Board of Ed.” The amendment would take \$1.5 million out of IBB, closing that budget hole somewhat. [This amendment could avoid the privatization of school custodians, since that was a \$1.5 million part of IBB.]

**7:25:** Some clarification is happening. There are multiple versions of the amendment floating around.

**7:28:** A recess is called so that the real amendment can be printed up.

**7:37:** Goldfield calls the meeting back to order. Lemar reads the amendment again.

**7:40:** Goldson speaks: “Here’s my problem,” he says. We have no control over the largest part of the budget, the Board of Education. It’s sad for the mayor to put summer programs and the TAG program on the chopping block, when there are other areas to cut. As much as I want to support this amendment, there’s no guarantee that it would cut from the central management and assistant principals. Until there is such a commitment, Goldson says he can’t support it.

Whooping applause erupts. Goldfield calls for order.

**7:43:** Castro rises. She wants to know why this amendment is going to cut IBB rather than reduce the mill rate. What is the purpose of moving one item to another item?

Elicker responds: There’s about \$11 million in this budget that we’ll have to make up over the next year. Our attempt is to reduce that uncertainty by attaching cuts to some of that money by flat-funding the schools.

Castro: Sometimes we do things for the right reasons. Sometimes we are really not doing something that is good. If this amendment was to reduce the mill rate, it’d be something that I could consider. “The taxpayers told us loud and clear that they don’t need a tax increase.” “To bring it into the IBB is like more uncertainty.” “I’m strongly opposing this because it doesn’t make sense to me,” and it won’t reduce taxes.

Lemar responds to Goldson: It’s true that we have no discretion over the Board of Ed. It’s unfortunate. The BOE cuts are not now allocated in areas that “don’t hurt us.” “We don’t have control to change their direction.” That’s why the amendment states where the cuts should come from. It establishes priorities. It would be unfortunate to not support this because we can’t control where the cuts come from.

**7:50:** Lemar responds to Castro: To take money out of IBB is an appropriate action to reduce the uncertainty of that section of the budget.

Goldson: The Board of Education has said it will cut TAG and summer programs for youth. He believes the board. We need to find a way to make cuts and retain control of where those cuts come from. The proposed cuts could come from union negotiations. He says, I urge you to protect our young people and vote no.

**7:52:** Shah: When we look at the Board of Education, we’ve already reduced it \$1.5 million. The amendment would be an additional cut of \$1.5 million.

**7:53:** Elicker has a question for Goldson: You’re planning to reduce the BOE in an amendment later on.

Goldson: “I had an epiphany! I had a change of heart!” I realized that if we can’t control where the cuts come from, we shouldn’t make them, he says.

Lemar responds to Shah: We are flat-funding the Board of Education budget. And to Goldson: We have to trust that BOE has the best interests of our children in mind. It's disingenuous to say this will hurt our kids.

Goldson: What's disingenuous is that this amendment flat-funds only the BOE. What about other departments?

**7:58:** Castro: It really bothers me that we only have the power to make recommendations to the BOE. "What they decide to do is what they decide. We don't have a say." If we take this out of IBB, we no longer have a say, and it could hurt our kids. "It doesn't sound good. It's not good!"

Elicker: It's an oversimplification to say that flat-funding the BOE budget is going to hurt our kids.

No more discussion. Roll call vote. Voting NO: Michael Smart, Gerald Antunes, Stephanie Bauer, Castro, Paolillo, DePino, Alfreda Edwards, Greg Morehead, Shah, Sergio Rodriguez, Claudette Robinson-Thorpe, and Darnell Goldson. All others vote yes. [Jackie James-Evans is absent. I'm told she's on doctor-ordered bed-rest because of pregnancy complications.]

Castro asks if the [aldermen who work for the Board of Ed](#) can vote on the amendment. Board President Carl Goldfield says yes.

The item passes: 17 yes, 12 no.

**8:04:** Elicker rises to propose another amendment: to cut the state lobbyist position from the department of Economic Development, saving \$50,000.

Another roll call vote: NO votes: Clark, Smart, O'Sullivan-Best, Antunes, Bauer, Paolillo, Blango, Morehead, Shah, Paca, Dildine, Goldfield. DePino abstains. K. Jones passes.

The item passes 15 to 12. [Actually, it failed. See 9:01 p.m.]

**8:07:** Sergio Rodriguez, who is also [running for a state representative seat](#), stands with a new amendment. He proposes to cut longevity pay and perfect attendance pay and initiate a five-day city-wide furlough and four-day workweek. Total savings: \$3.58 million.

Castro seconds.

Rodriguez says people are hurting. He's received over 150 calls from people worried about the budget. "We can no longer afford the escalating cost of property taxes."

**8:11:** Jorge Perez says he confused. This is not cutting anything?

Rodriguez: The negotiations would have to go through with the unions.

Perez: There are other things that I'd like to see negotiated, like pensions. I'd hate to see negotiations tied to only certain areas. If we were to pass this, the mill rate is not going to go down today.

No further discussion.

Nays carry it by a voice vote. The amendment fails.

**8:13:** Goldson introduces his first amendment, directed at preventing Jason Bandy from being rehired as a cop. The amendment doesn't mention Bandy by name. Goldson says he understands that the amendment can't prevent Bandy from being hired. [That's because that decision was made through collective bargaining with the police union.]

The amendment includes language that prevent city money being used to "pay the salary of any public safety employee who while employed, on leave or terminated with the City of New Haven has been determined to have misused sick leave and while misusing sick leave has multiple arrests for Class C or higher misdemeanors."

Castro seconds.

Goldson: We do not need officers with multiple arrests and anger management issues on the force.

Alex Rhodeen expresses astonishment that the city would negotiate with someone who has shown such recklessness [Bandy]. Individuals who engage in this kind of conduct are not worthy and are an insult to the city. "I am insulted and offended and outraged."

Voting: Passes unanimously. Alderwoman O'Sullivan-Best abstains. [Smuts later said that the amendment has "no basis in law," because the mayor has the authority by law to negotiate for the hire of employees.]

**8:18:** Lemar introduces policy amendments that would 1) implement IBB and Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) in time for the next budget season, 2) establish working committees to work on IBB and ZBB, 3) require articulation of long term goals to reduce capital budget, and 4) establish regular town hall meetings to discuss budget priorities with the public.

[ZBB means starting the budget from zero rather than starting from the previous year's numbers.]

Castro seconds. [She is always quick to second.]

Lemar: Budgeting needs to be transparent and closely monitored. Our debt service is out of control. What we saw this year was really impressive. It's incredible to see what one organization [NHCAN] has done. The energy needs to be captured for creating the budget next year.

**8:24:** Elicker, a co-sponsor, rises: "I think this is the most important policy amendment that we're going to vote on tonight." Because next year the budget picture will be worse. We shouldn't wait until 2011 to discuss our budget priorities. It's an attempt to reduce the capital projects expenditures. "This should be a year-long collaborative process."

Dildine, the third co-sponsors, rises. The amendments will improve the budgeting process, he says. They provide for increased accountability.

**8:28:** Joey Rodriguez rises in support.

Shah asks what the difference is between this plan and the [blue ribbon panel which looked at past budgets](#). That was also meant to gain transparency.

Dildine responds: The blue ribbon panel was productive. This amendment provides for more discussion.

Lemar: "If we were at best practice levels with regard to how much debt we've taken on, there would be no tax increase this year." We'll need to make tough choices.

Goldson says he's not sure if he supports the amendment or not. How would the town hall meetings be different from the Finance Committee meetings? ZBB and IBB, are fine but "I'd like to see no-tax-increase-based budgeting."

Dildine: The town hall meetings could be "E-Town Hall meetings" held online. It's different from Finance Committee meetings because this establishes a year-round collection of ideas, and debate. It could very well result in zero tax increases.

Shah, Finance Committee chair, has a clarification: There was no blue ribbon commission, it was a panel. "What I'm confused about is why this has to be a mandate." We have groups in the community. NHCAN certainly has an "E-mecca of a website." I don't think our employees need to spend time on this.

Lemar: It needs to be a mandate because a couple of years ago I proposed a similar thing without making it a mandate. ... The Finance Committee doesn't do what this amendment would do, because of the words, "that's not germane to the topic at hand." The Finance Committee can't have the kinds of wide-ranging discussions that a town hall meeting could have. "We can talk about anything we want," in a format that's accessible to the public.

**8:38:** Castro says she supports the amendments. The community is really organized. "They really want to be partners with us. ... This is something that our community needs and desires to be engaged."

Shah says he thinks the amendment is a duplication. He takes issue with any implication that the blue ribbon panel or the public are not listened to. "You don't need a mandate from the government to have an e-meeting. You can just do it." The Finance Committee structure has been a structure of this community in New Haven since the 1700s. The appropriate thing would be to go to the charter and make changes that way. The amendment has no teeth. "I don't believe I will vote against it if the majority is voting for it. I still think it's a duplication."

**8:42:** Elicker: This amendment gives us more oversight over IBB. ZBB "breaks down the previous conceptions .. it starts from each dollar spent and says 'why are we spending that dollar?'" ... We spent \$65 million this year on debt service, let's bring that down. ... The process may have been in place for a long time, but it's not working. People come to the Finance Committee and "speak at us." "It's not a conversation."

Dildine: The reason this is being brought up this evening is that it's an integral part of creating future budgets.

Goldson: How much is this going to cost us? "Whenever we ask the administration to do something new, they

develop an entire department to do it.”

[Laughter.]

Lemar: A department will not be needed. We are asking more of staff.

Goldson: So it won't cost any money?

Lemar: I don't believe it will cost any money.

Goldson: “I will support this if it doesn't cost anything.” He calls again for zero-tax-increase-based budgeting. [ZTIBB?]

**8:49:** Clark: I'm a very practical person. When we pass this, we'll feel great and then go back to business as usual. OR, we'll talk about nothing but the budget for 12 months. “I think three months of talking about the budget is fantastic.” More than three months, and nothing will get done.

Charles Blango: What about union contracts that prevent people from working in the evenings? “How would it not cost us nothing?”

Shah: In my ward, not everybody has a computer. “There will be some information haves and some information have-nots.” Not everyone will be able to get online and debate.

**8:52:** Dildine: It won't just be online meetings.

Lemar: The folks without access are the same folks that can't make it out to Finance Committees and sit and wait to give their three minutes of testimony. Community meetings should be held before the budget is compiled. Additional cost will not interfere with implementation. As Clark said, it will draw the budget process out. That's good. We need more diligence and care.

Joey Rodriguez: All this amendment would do is provide additional opportunity to participate.

Gina Calder urges her colleagues to support the amendment. All of our department heads can work on this, she says.

O'Sullivan-Best: With an elderly population in my part of the city. It would be very difficult to have meetings anywhere but here [City Hall].

Goldson: We had over 1,000 people submit a petition to the Board of Aldermen. We didn't listen to what they had to say. We had a roomful of people ask for no tax increase. We didn't listen to them. I don't see how having more input is going to make a difference. We've had a whole lot of input. “I don't know how this makes a difference.”

No further discussion. The ayes have it by a voice vote.

**9:01:** Goldfield, with a surprise: the amendment to eliminate the lobbyist position actually failed! Because a change like that requires 16 votes and it only got 15.





**9:02:** DePino proposes an amendment to reduce the stipend for the peace commission from \$3,150 to \$500. We cannot afford to extend this benefit to the Peace Commission. That money has been used to attend conferences in Europe and in Quito, Ecuador.

Castro opposes: "The Peace Commission have been really great to this city." Let's look at other things to cut.

Rhodeen supports: This budget has no funding for a Christmas tree. We can't afford to send people to Europe.

Paca supports: It's a matter of priority. We are all for peace.

Shah opposes: The peace garden is in my ward. It has the symbol of the United Nations on it, the only UN symbol to be constructed and used in Connecticut. No one else can use that symbol. Our city represents peace and equality.

Rhodeen: This doesn't eliminate the Peace Commission. It just eliminates "European vacations." \$3,000 is one-seventh of a Christmas tree.

**9:10:** Katrina Jones: I take offense to the notion that this money is used for "vacation." "We need more people to stand up for peace." "It is not a vacation to go to South America for peace. It is not a vacation to go to Europe for peace." In "war-torn Greece ... there is no vacationing over there."

Dolores Colon opposes: The Peace Commission puts New Haven in the forefront of the world. The chairman, Alfred Marder, is well known across the globe. It takes \$4 million to lower one mill rate. This \$3,000 will do very little. "This peace movement is a priceless movement."

DePino: This was not intended to disparage the Peace Commission. It is a luxury, a benefit, to go attend conferences abroad.

Castro: "Peace equals justice. Do the right thing!"

Lemar: If we're actually concerned about travel, let's just say they can't use money to travel.

**9:22:** Voting. 16 votes are needed to pass. NO: Mike Jones, Perez, Colon, Clark, Smart, Lemar, Best, Antunes, Bauer, Castro, Paolillo, Edwards, Blango, K. Jones, Morehead, Shah, Paca, Dildine, S. Rod., Thorpe, Goldson. Yes: Brooks, Elicker, Rhodeen, J. Rod., DePino, Lehtonen, Goldfield.

The item fails. Yes: 7. No: 21.

**9:25:** Alfreda Edwards says she and Blango have an amendment, on paper use. "We're asking that the city use less paper." It will save \$150,000. "It may be more, it may be a little less."

No discussion. Passes unanimously by voice vote.

**9:27:** Goldson stands to present his second amendment, which would decrease the Board of Aldermen's legal services and consulting fees budget by \$12,430 and increase the salary of the board's head of legislative services. [The department head, Al Lucas, would then have an annual salary of \$98,000, Goldson said before the meeting.] The amendment would bring Lucas' salary closer to others who have put in less time, specifically the mayor's chief of staff and the chief administrative officer.

The motion is seconded.

Goldson: Lucas has had his salary frozen for the last seven years, has worked for the city for 20 years, and been the director of legislative services for more than 10 years. "When you call this office at 8 or 9 o'clock, he's still working. I don't know how he's stayed married."

**9:31:** Goldfield: Last year, Lucas got an increase of \$10,000.

Shah: With all due respect, everybody's making reductions. "I believe that he deserves an increase, but I don't think it should be now." If the majority thinks we should raise it, I will not stand against it. How are we leading by example if we do something like this? It's warranted and he's definitely qualified. All of us are underpaid. "If the

leadership sits in the limousine, we can't do that." We should lead by example.

Lemar: With great respect, I've learned a great deal from our director. He works until midnight. But is this the right time for a raise? "I'm not comfortable increasing anyone's compensation this substantially." I was upset by [the way raises were given to the chief of staff and the CAO](#) last year. We can't do the same thing.

Goldson: I'd like to see the same sort of support for cuts later tonight. We have a staff person who has toiled for 20 years and every year we say this is not the right time. When does it become the right time? He's paid \$30,000 less than others who are doing the same job. You can't say he's not qualified. You can't say he hasn't put the time in. This gentleman has a family just like everyone else in the city. I don't know why he's stuck around, with the way he's been treated.

Mike Jones seeks clarification: This would not place any additional burden on taxpayers?

Goldson: Correct.

Castro: I support this amendment.

**9:31:** Roll call vote:

YES: Jones, Calder, Brooks, Colon, Smart, Antunes, Rhodeen, Bauer, Castro, Paolillo, DePino, Edwards, Morehead, Paca, S. Rod., Thorpe, Goldson

NO: Perez, Clark, Lemar, Elicker, Best, J Rod., Dildine, Lehtonen, Goldfield

Pass: Blango, Jones, Shah

Shah: "This is the hardest vote I've ever had!"

NHCAN's Rebecca Turcio, from the gallery: "That's sad."

Shah votes yes.

The matter carries. Applause from the aldermen.

**9:44:** Goldson stands to present his third amendment, the big one. Before he presents it, Goldfield calls a five-minute recess so people can look at the amendment.

**9:56:** Back in session. Goldson presents his big plan.

Goldson: In 1990, newly elected Mayor John Daniels inherited a \$12 million debt. He could have "cooked up a budget" with Innovation Based Budget and "wishful thinking based budgeting." He didn't. He laid off 200 employees. "The sky didn't fall. The gangs didn't take over. City Hall didn't crumble to the ground." DeStefano four years later inherited a prosperous government. It's time for us to make the tough cuts. This amendment creates a budget where "almost everyone takes a hit" and we get to a zero percent tax increase, because that's what constituents asked for. Costs are increasing everywhere for taxpayers. "Let's make the decisions that are tough. The sky will not fall. ... The gangs will not take over the city of New Haven."

Now Goldson goes line by line. The amendment incorporates the Finance Committee's approved cuts and adds an additional \$4 million of cuts. Some highlights:

- Cuts to the Board of aldermen, the mayor's office, and the CAO's office.
- The office of corporation counsel would be reduced by \$121,060. [This is still an increase from what the department had last year, Goldson says later.]
- Labor relations office and Human Resources cut.
- The Department of Finance would take a big hit: \$1,013,308
- A cut of nearly \$100,000 from the assessor's office
- Half a million dollars from Parks.
- \$100,00 each from police and fire departments, each of which have budgets of over \$30 million.
- \$338,768 from the Department of Public Health
- \$208,788 from Community Services Administration
- \$2,000,000 from "contract reserve" (contracts with unions)
- \$100,000 from the engineering department
- Over half a million dollars from Development Operating Contributions
- Over \$120,000 from traffic and parking.
- \$351,500 from the office of economic development
- \$2,000,000 from the Livable City Initiative
- \$1.4 million from Employee Benefits

- No cuts to libraries, town clerk, registrar of voters, fair rent commission, elderly services, youth services, disability services

A revised cut to the BOE [which Goldson decided against after his epiphany (see 7:53 p.m.)] leaves \$605,418, which Goldson proposes to put toward a new line item: "Wishful-Thinking-Based Budgeting." [WTBB?]

**10:13:** Rhodeen, with a friendly amendment: Let's take 10 percent from each department. [This is what NHCAN has been asking for.]

Goldson: "I don't know how friendly that is." He rejects the amendment.

**10:13:** Goldson explains his amendment. "I don't do this willy-nilly. ... I've been laid off because of budget changes in my lifetime. ... We were elected to make the tough decisions." Taxpayers made it clear what they want. Many of the cuts outlined above represent five or ten percent reductions. The cuts to fire and police are 0.3 percent reductions. Tweed (a "black hole," Goldson says) would see a 75 percent reduction. Pilot Pen would see a reduction of 100 percent. That's because Yale owns the property where the tournament is held. A deal was made on the condition that the city would receive a portion of ticket sales from the tournament, which hasn't happened in the 20 years since the agreement.

**10:22:** Dildine: The Pilot Pen stadium is owned by a non-profit.

Paca thanks Goldson for his "diligence in putting this together." He says he likes that libraries and the fair rent commission are untouched. A couple questions: In the end of Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan, Spock chooses to die because "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." There are a lot of variables and unknowns that we would have to work out before some of these items get done. Clarification is needed on "contingency plans behind some of the variables." [Huh?]

Goldson: The stadium is owned by Yale and leased by the tennis foundation. City cut a deal so no one has to pay taxes, but contribute ticket sales. He asks for Paca to repeat his question.

Paca tries again: The variables are the contingencies of union negotiations.

Goldson: "Luckily, I'm not responsible for making sure it gets done, the administration is." It could mean furloughs, or four-day weeks [like S. Rodriguez proposed tonight (see 8:07 p.m.)]. "It's not my job to get it done."

**10:27:** Castro: "For me, I have issues with some of this stuff. ... Some of this stuff I could support. But there's others that means jobs." Taxpayers will be laid off. Taxpayers are "the fuel" that makes this city happen. Castro says she can't support anything that means jobs lost. "I'm not going to put somebody out from a job, because it's going to make it worse for us." New Haven will be a "ghost city."

**10:33:** Goldson responds. He says he respects Castro's opinion, "but let's look at the facts. ... I haven't suggested anyone be laid off." When Daniels laid people off, they didn't lose their jobs permanently. 63 percent of New Haven's employees do not live in the city. 68 percent of weekly salaries goes to employees who do not live here. \$230 million leaves the city annually. "I haven't suggested people get laid off. That's the departments' responsibilities." If there have to be lay-offs, they can be temporary. The average salary of a city employee is \$53,000. The average income of a resident is much lower. "How about the 83-year-old elderly lady that paid off her home, has a \$700 income, and pays \$300 a month in property taxes?" "I'm going to stand by this, because I think it's important for us to do. ... Be brave about it. ... Go knock on their [your constituents'] doors and explain it."

No further discussion. Roll call vote.

YES: Calder, Smart, S. Rod., Thorpe, Goldson

NO: M. Jones, Brooks, Perez, Colon, Clark, Lemar, Elicker, Best, Antunes, Rhodeen, Bauer, J. Rod., Castro, Paolillo, DePino, Edwards, Blango, K. Jones, Morehead, Shah, Paca, Dildine, Lehtonen, Goldfield.

Goldfield: Anyone else wish to vote?

NHCAN's Gary Doyens raises his hand from the gallery. Laughter.

The amendment goes down in flames.

**10:41:** Goldson springs to his feet. He says he's going to take it piece by piece now, since the board couldn't handle it all at once. He proposes a line of his previous amendment: reducing the Mayor's Office budget by \$46,931.

Roll call vote: same as above. The matter fails.

**10:41:** Goldson: "I'm a little amazed." The board voted to cut millions from the Board of Ed, but "We can't seem to make these small cuts. ... But I'm going to try again." He moves for a reduction to the CAO's office of \$24,130.

Failure by voice vote.

**10:45:** Goldson's back with another: reduction of corp counsel by \$121,060. Castro seconds [She's been seconding all of these, but then voting against them.] The matter fails by voice vote.

**10:46:** Goldson: "I am not a glutton for punishment. ... I'm done."

No further amendments to Item I: Appropriating Ordinance. [This item decides how the money will be spent. It does not cover where money comes from.] General discussion follows.

Goldson: "This budget is a pig." It increases taxes by 4 percent. "I'm still astounded by the fact that we could whip off \$3 million from the Board of Ed like it's nothing," but couldn't make other, smaller cuts. "When is the pain shared? ... I urge you not to support this budget."

Smart says he will not support the budget.

Castro says she wished Goldson had continued down his list one by one. She says she would have supported some of the components of his amendment. "This is what it is. I really struggle with this. ... Thank you very much for all your hard work, Alderman Goldson."

Goldson: You are welcome to take any piece of this and move it.

Elicker: "Tonight really stinks.... None of us are going to leave here happy." But we cut \$6 million and we killed the monetization plan.

**10:52:** Paca: This has been a "very interesting" process. The people spoke loud and clear. I spent three days this last month and half knocking on doors and asking for ideas. "We have made a lot of cuts." When the original budget was proposed, I went to Carl [Goldfield] and talked to him. "This is a lot better than where it was. ... We've done a decent job, not a great job."

**10:55:** Rhodeen: The "blind 10 percent" which has been proposed is the only way to do it. The worst thing would be to not act, which would pass the original budget. "Vote for it. It stinks," but let's not go back to the first draft.

Lemar says he has had the great pleasure of working with his colleagues on this budget. "What we've done here is painful and it's hard, but I think it's the right budget. ... I know a 4 percent tax increase is not what anyone wants." The city is at a permanent disadvantage by relying solely on taxes. A lot of the fault lies in Hartford, which does not fully fund PILOT payments. "In the end, would I like to propose more cuts and look like a hero losing them 20 to 10? Sure." [Goldson groans at the dig.]

**11:00:** S. Rodriguez says he takes offense: "There's nobody playing hero here."

Goldson: When I ran for alderman I had a very short platform. One of those items was to reduce taxes. "I'm not trying to look like a hero." I'm trying to do what I said I would do. It's easy to blame Hartford. But we didn't cut \$6 million. We added \$10 million over last year! "We're willing to blame it on somebody else. But we're not willing to do what we need to do." We've been hiring and promoting people, spending more money. "That's not Hartford's fault!" We hired more executive leadership. "That's not Hartford's fault! ... We added \$10 million dollars to our budget. ... I'm not going to be called a hero. And I'm not going to blame anyone else."

**11:04:** No more discussion. Roll call vote:

NO: Calder, Smart, DePino, Morehead, S. Rodriguez, Thorpe, Goldson

YES: M. Jones, Brooks, Perez, Colon, Clark, Lemar, Elicker, Best, Antunes, Rhodeen, Bauer, J. Rodriguez, Castro, Paolillo, Edwards, Blango, K. Jones, Shah, Paca, Dildine, Lehtonen, Goldfield.

Appropriating ordinance #1 passes. [A big moment. This is the most significant part of the budget.]

**11:07:** K. Jones moves Item J. appropriating ordinance #3, covering bonds.

Roll call vote:

NO: Smart, S. Rodriguez, Thorpe, Goldson.

YES: Everyone else.

Item passes.

**11:11:** K. Jones moves Item K, covering new school construction. The construction of two schools has been

delayed to save money.

[Observers have been clearing out. Only a couple dozen people remain.]

Roll call vote:

NO: Smart, Goldson.

YES: Everyone else.

Item carries.

**11:14:** K. Jones moves Item L, covering the budget for in-progress school construction and school renovations. The renovation of two schools has been delayed to save money.

Roll call vote:

NO: Smart, Goldson, and one other [I missed it.]

YES: Everyone else.

Item carries.

**11:17:** K. Jones moves Item M, which changes some fees.

Roll call vote:

NO: Smart, Goldson

YES: Everyone else.

Item carries.

**11:20:** K. Jones moves Item N, which covers taxes.

Clark: This is the revenue side of the budget, how the city pays for the appropriating ordinances, which were just passed.

Goldson: "We have one more chance to stop this madness. ... I urge my colleagues to vote against this tax levy."

Roll call vote:

NO: Calder, Smart, Antunes, Castro, DePino, Edwards, Morehead, S. Rodriguez, Thorpe, Goldson.

YES: Everyone else.

19 yes and 10 no. The motion fails! [This is big. It means the budget hasn't passed, even though Aldermen voted to approved the spending part of it.]

Goldfield calls for a recess, "Because we have to figure out what to do."





Aldermen confer during the recess.

**11:29:** Back in session. During the break, Goldson said this means that there will have to be negotiations with the people who voted against the taxes ordinance.

[Mayoral staff are bustling around.]

**11:31:** Edwards makes a motion to reconsider the vote. Goldson has a question. Staff are checking Robert's Rules of Order. The answer: A motion to reconsider a vote can only be made by a member of the prevailing side. It says nothing about seconding. Paca seconded. [In other words: Edwards voted against the tax plan. She was on the winning side. But now she's flipped. So she can make a motion to reconsider. Paca, who was on the losing side, can second.]

Roll call vote on the motion to reconsider:

[Edwards flipped. "They twisted her arm," Goldson says. Smuts is standing behind her.]

NO: Smart, S. Rod., Thorpe, Goldson, and one other.

YES: Everyone else.

The motion to reconsider passes, so now we're back to the vote on the taxes. Discussion:

Goldson: This process is not dead. We have until the first Monday in June to find a deal [that's the final deadline for passage of the budget]. If there's anyone else in this room who wants to join us, please vote no.

Roll call vote:

NO: Calder, Smart, Antunes, DePino, Morehead, S. Rodriguez, Thorpe, Goldson.

YES: Edwards and Castro and everyone else.

Item passes. Now it's over. Edwards backpedaled. So did Castro, after passing when her name was first called.

**11:41:** K. Jones moves Item O, freezing the revaluation phase in. Dildine explains the freeze.

["Had you guys running for a second," Goldson says as he walks by mayoral staffers Bolden and Benton to talk to someone else.]

Revaluation freeze motion passes unanimously.

**11:45:** Motion to adjourn. Done. It's over. The budget has passed.

---

## Comments

**posted by: Doug Hausladen on May 27, 2010 6:32pm**

thanks again to the Independent for great coverage - I cannot make tonight's meeting (illness), but am looking forward to a play by play. How much would a livestream cost i wonder?

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 7:17pm**

Finance Chair Shah is introducing the budget and claiming the Finance Committee is the best they could do. The current slate of cuts represent a little more than 1% of the total budget. There remains millions of dollars of inefficiencies and ineffectness.

If this budget passes, people will lose their homes and the city will be in the foreclosure business to a much greater degree than it currently is.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 7:22pm**

"We still have a city that does not close schools..." Shah

The question is whether we need all the schools we have and how the city BOE defends the rapid growth in administration in the face of a 7% decrease in school enrollment not to mention a dramatic increase in debt that will cost us \$65 million this year, up from \$30 million in 2002.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 7:25pm**

Lemar/Elicker re-ignite amendment to flat fund BOE - and to decrease the IBB commitment accordingly. All this does is solidify the BOE cut which up to now was an unspecified component of the IBB. Real Net effect: Zero to overall spending.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 7:48pm**

Castro - Sometimes we do things to try to do good. Sometimes we do things that just make us look good but accomplishes nothing in terms of reducing the need for higher taxes.

There is real skepticism re: the BOE's determination to cut TAG, to cut educational programs and fail to cut real fat, real administration costs.

**posted by: roomforaview on May 27, 2010 7:52pm**

Bloggng critical city budget meetings is only the latest example of the tremendous cutting edge reporting practiced by the Independent's outstanding staff. What a great community resource the NHI is!

**posted by: robn on May 27, 2010 7:59pm**

Does anyone else find it unnerving that at every important meeting, one sees the seating area encircled by standing city employees looking inward at the crowd. Talk about Big Brother...is the administration identifying and marking dissenter for retribution?

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:02pm**

Golston - don't understand his opposition to this amendment. The net effect is zero. What he really wants is better control over the BOE spending plan. However, currently the BOA has no direct control over the BOE nor is there a plan to do so. I'm not sure what the point is...

**posted by: funky chicken on May 27, 2010 8:09pm**

Castro: "To bring it into the IBB is like more uncertainty." "I'm strongly opposing this because it doesn't make sense to me," and it won't reduce taxes.

The fact that Castro doesn't understand something is not a reason to vote it up or down. In my observation she usually can't grasp the finer points of most items.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:09pm**

Elicker:

Wants to cut the state lobbyist dollars - \$50K. I believe the city's long time lobbyist is Arlene DePino's ex-husband. She abstained.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:23pm**

There are a number of policy amendments that together have zero impact on this budget year or on the proposed tax increase.

1. Rodriquez to furlough employees
2. Golston to eliminate city funding of cops who violate the law and eliminate from future contracts the ability to reinstate troubled cops at city expense.
3. Tightens financial reporting and control with regard to zero based budgeting, performance based budgeting and seeks to codify best practices with regard to overall debt and future budgeting.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:36pm**

The best part of these policy changes is a newly articulated concern over the city's ballooning debt. It seems a number of alders have not bought the mayor's rhetoric that "the city pays down debt rapidly."

Lemar, Elicker and Dildine note that if our debt was limited to 10% of the budget which is a best practice, we would not have a tax increase this year. This is something NHCAN and citizens have been saying...as mandates go, this is a good one.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:45pm**

Shah seems defensive about the purpose of these accountability amendments. In reality it gives the alders greater power and greater responsibility. The Finance/BOA has not always heretofore exercised the power they have - hence the moniker "rubberstamper."

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:47pm**

The real benefit for the public is that the discussions about the budget will be happening year round. This is good and will take the pressure off the March through May time frame.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:54pm**

Bitsie brings us back to reality. We may feel good for the minute and two months from now, it will be business as usual.

To be honest, that is what has happened in the past. But then again, these policies have never been articulated. There will be greater responsibility...from City Hall side, from BOA side. It raises the expectations ...

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 8:56pm**

While not expressly saying so, these policies are a smack down to the administration and raises questions as to why after all these years, we have not captured best practices in City Hall budgeting.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 9:02pm**

wow - O'Sullivan-Best opposes. She's a banker?

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 9:06pm**

Another gotcha moment - what we thought passed eliminating \$50K for an unneeded state lobbyist is wallah-back again. It needed 16 votes and only got 15. Spending is back up

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 9:21pm**

They have now spent a lot of time talking about the Peace Commission, a line item of \$3K. While admirable and small, the question before the board is whether it will limit spending to what we must vs. what we want. Is this a want or a need?

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:04pm**

Golston introduces a slate of cuts affecting nearly every department - total amount of additional cuts: \$10 million. NHCAN supports.

Pitches the budget cutting amendment as the responsible thing to do, the right thing to do. Have courage.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:18pm**

Goldson proposes the big one - but not 10% across the board. He says they're targeted. Alex Rhodeen says let's make it easy - 10% across the board. We all go home crying.

Citizens wouldn't be crying...we'd be dancing in the streets. Goldson didn't like the blanket approach.

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on May 27, 2010 10:18pm**

It would seem that Katrina Jones should learn more about war and peace before spending money on it. War torn Greece? Greece is not at war with anyone - nor is it in civil war.

The peace commission brings prestige to the city? Give me a break. No one outside of the Board of Alderman knows this body exists.

This little debate shows that utter lack of regard many Alderman have for the tax payers of this city. When many have lost their jobs and are suffering from high taxes this board thinks we can afford something like a peace commission.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:20pm**

Alder Goldson: Sorry about spelling of your name.

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on May 27, 2010 10:24pm**

The idea that small amount of money does not matter is why the budget is broken. Small amounts across many areas and many years do matter. The city can no longer to afford the various luxuries of the past. If we can no longer afford a Christmas tree how can we afford a peace commission etc.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:32pm**

Castro concerned about layoffs. However, most of the city employees are not city residents. 70% do not live here. 82% of cops do not live here.

Line items that mean job cuts she will not cut.

**posted by: Claudia Bosch on May 27, 2010 10:34pm**

A word to Katrina Jones and all you others supporting the \$ 3,000 travel stipend to vacation places like "war-torn" Greece.

Greece is NOT war-torn, there are unrests right now because Greece has to cut the budget in a way New Haven faces down the road. But unrests do not equal war.

Every cent in Greece counts as it should in New Haven. You have NOT understood that yet. But we will join Greece soon ...

Then when we really have to trim the budget, because there is no other choice - the peace commission will be getting probably no money at all (thus a waste this year). Nickles do add up.

One last thing - the world - or at least my homeland Germany - does not really care about New Haven's peace efforts.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:36pm**

City payroll: \$230 million. 68% of payroll leaves the city.

**posted by: Frugal Freddy on May 27, 2010 10:37pm**

Who is the controller of the budget - the Board of Alderman or the BOE? The BOE may get a lump sum but it is the Board of Alderman's job to consider how much that sum should be.

The alderman should be infuriated that the cuts they made in the finance committee to the BOE led to the cynical cutting of academic programs by the BOE. There are plenty of things that could have been cut instead - like one or two of the five swimming pools that we have in our schools.

A failure of courage now - will mean an even tougher job next year for the Board of Alderman. Times are not getting better for city revenues - they are going to get worse. The State is facing a severe budget shortfall and the federal government will not be passing anymore stimulus programs in the next year. So - next year the city will have even less funds than it has now. A failure to cut now will lead to an even bigger problem next year.

I am still rather boggled that the city did not spend the good years getting itself into fiscal shape as many governments do - if it had - we would not now be facing the fiscal problems we are. But the attitude that we can spend on anything is just the type of attitude that leads to fiscal crisis. When small sums mean nothing so do large ones.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:38pm**

Be brave. Roll call time. We'll see who has stones.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:41pm**

All talk and no commitment to seriously cut the budget. It is doubtful many of them have read the entire budget. 5 yes...24 no.

He's making another run...

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:43pm**

Perez has stood against every spending cut proposed. Justgoes to show he's all hat and no cattle...

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:50pm**

Third time's the charm??? No. Goldson is moving each line item now to see if alders will be able to swallow bite size pieces...but no.

The BOA once again has shown they have no balls to seriously cut this budget. It is astounding that they sit here and make no cuts to nearly all the city departments. It keeps them all whole.

**posted by: Cut the Kids on May 27, 2010 10:50pm**

All City Departments skate and most get increases while the BOE gets slashed and the Alderman's Top Employee gets a huge raise.

Too bad that the kids cannot vote because they just got screwed.

**posted by: not really on May 27, 2010 10:55pm**

Not all money made by out of town employees leave the city.

They Buy gas for their cars, groceries, clothing, Breakfast, Lunch or dinner.

Just remember the merchants thrive on money from out of towners.

**posted by: Kevin Buterbaugh on May 27, 2010 10:56pm**

So - the board will make no cuts if it may lead to a loss of someone's job. Obviously, cutting jobs is not something anyone wants to do - and I would hope that savings could be found without job losses. But - sometimes a city - a state - a business - etc - must rethink what it does and how it does it - and this may mean that jobs in the end are lost. The city cannot continue to do what it has been. The alderman need to find the guts to do what it is right - now - and that means paring back the budget and determining what the city must do - and do correctly - instead of what it would like to do.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 10:56pm**

As expected, once again the BOA turns a deaf ear to the pleas of the people who pay the bills. While this budget is far better than first cynically proposed by the mayor and the demonization of citizens in the process. But at the end of the day, this is like being a little bit pregnant - you aren't and you can't be. Either this is a good budget for citizens and taxpayers, or it's not. It's not.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:04pm**

I'm astonished that these people call this small cut a "tough decision." It is clear they don't know what tough cuts are...I will go home and now cut my family budget because the city can't cut its budget enough.

Lemar says much of the blame rests in Hartford with unfunded mandates. The mayor sat on a Rell appointed commission that could have recommended mandate relief - the mayor made not one recommendation.

**posted by: Bill Saunders on May 27, 2010 11:07pm**

Favorite Line Showing Our Politicians Are Out of Touch:  
(the ugly face behind the window dressing)

Castro:.....(the community) really wants to be partners with us.

Sounds like an inside joke amongst spineless public servants!

Who will get us out of this Duck Soup?

All Hail Freedonia!!!

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:07pm**

Powerful closing statement by Goldson. Make no mistake, we are increasing the budget by \$10 million. We haven't cut anything."

Amen. No truer statement has been made tonight.

**posted by: Claudia Bosch on May 27, 2010 11:08pm**

Castro - who do you support? Residents of Hamden, Branford or North Haven (not New Haven - be aware)? It is us residents of New Haven who pay the taxes which are paid to residents of other cities.

And then - if you are in favor of some items of Goldson's list you should have said it earlier and not when it was all done. And why are you supporting amendments when you then vote against them?

Flip-flop.

**posted by: Tim Holahan on May 27, 2010 11:13pm**

I want to correct one point: Christine Bishop is not, as far as I know, a member of NHCAN. She was a diligent participant in the Budget Review Panel, and she is now a member of the Financial Review and Audit Commission.

It would be helpful if the Independent could provide a link to the material she submitted.

**posted by: budgeting is hard on May 27, 2010 11:29pm**

You have to give credit to Goldson for standing up there and fighting for cuts but I give no credit to anyone on this list who voted "no" without proposing cuts to the damn budget that was getting passed:

NO: Calder, Smart, DePino, Morehead, S. Rod., Thorpe, Goldson

The point is to pass a streamlined budget. If the BOA had voted down the amended budget, as Rhodeen pointed out, the original ~9% increase behemoth would have passed. The worst of all worlds.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:30pm**

Last key vote fails to raise the mill rate. Needed 20 votes, only got 19. Now the budget is unbalanced..and additional spending will need to be cut.

**posted by: amicahomi on May 27, 2010 11:32pm**

Uh-oh. Better call the Peace Commission!

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:33pm**

Intrigue, suspense. And confusion. It is no wonder the public has no confidence in how the city spends money and balances its books.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:40pm**

The BOA is re-considering raising taxes. Right now, the budget is out of balance and Goldson wants another week to force cuts with the mayor. He's asking for alders to be brave...

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:44pm**

Castro sells out and votes yes for higher taxes after voting no....One really wonders how these people think, what they think about and what strategy they have. Many have conflicting votes. Bottom line is that the city will now escalate foreclosures. Look for more uncut grass, more unkempt houses and more vacancies.

**posted by: Doyens on May 27, 2010 11:46pm**

Dildine is introducing the freeze of the reval - he calls it saving us money. That is a crock. He just voted to take more money from my family. How is that saving me money? Who wrote this? The message maven?

Dildine says he wants to end the night on a high note. They did. They raised our taxes higher.

**posted by: working(too hard) mom on May 28, 2010 12:00am**

What a farce!

Mr.Goldson-Thanks for all your efforts. Do you know of any like minded individuals around the city that would be interested in joining you on the BOA? We need more people like you, TRUE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE in order to stop this madness.

I am a 25th warder who is truly disappointed in what I saw from my alderman tonight.

**posted by: cedarhillresident on May 28, 2010 1:46am**

all that is going though my head right now is

<http://calendar-updates.com/info/sup/music/Taps.mp3>

Great show. I am bewildered that ALL OF those alderman did not and would not MAKE CUTS....ohhh we made 6 mill in cuts...no you did not...are my taxes increasing yes! Then some one is doing more spending.

Tonights votes had nothing to do with the budget it had to do with NEXT YEARS Elections!! If they made the cuts this year then what would they do next year? They stack piled them so they can look good for elections in 2011 NOT BUYING!

---

**posted by: Bill Saunders on May 28, 2010 1:50am**

Here is the blog behind the blog— Friday, 12:45 am

Smuts, Mattison, et al whooping it up like frat boys at a local bar not far from City Hall. (entourage of attractive ladies in tow)

Smuts was wearing the Groucho Marx glasses on his head.

When I told him that he'd be reading about that on the Independent, he proudly put the joke glasses on his face.

Such Mockery.

---

**posted by: Doyens on May 28, 2010 2:08am**

Budgeting Is Hard -

Budget is not hard if you know what you are doing and are committed to spending within your limits. You are incorrect that if the ordinance raising taxes failed, the mayor's abusive budget would have been enacted automatically. If that was actually true, you wouldn't have seen Matteson and Smuts running Alfreda Edward down like a runaway train and scaring the hell out of her. She doesn't understand the budget anyway and they further confused her.

Now that the latest greatest hike is in place, I can't wait until the mayor's next visionary speech about a shining city on a hill...made up of foreclosed homes.