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Aldermen approve mayor's budget

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By [Esther Zuckerman](#)
Staff Reporter
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Updated, May 29, 12:05 a.m. The New Haven Board of Aldermen passed Mayor John DeStefano Jr.'s proposed 2010-'11 fiscal year budget Thursday night, according to a release issued by City Hall spokeswoman Jessica Mayorga.

The 22–7 vote in favor of the budget comes after DeStefano [amended his original proposal earlier this month](#). The amendment cut the tax increase for the average homeowner by approximately half, from an 8.8 percent increase to a 4 percent increase.

The \$6 million worth of cuts that the amendment added to the original budget do away with the city's Christmas tree and Fourth of July fireworks, as well as slashing elements of the Board of Education and public safety budgets.

To cut \$1.5 million from the Board of Education, the amended budget eliminates the Talented and Gifted Program, non-academic summer programs and athletics programs. On the public safety side, the amendment cuts the presence of district managers at team meetings and the mounted police unit. Though the amended budget also cuts public safety hires, according to the press release, the budget will allow new firefighters and police officers to be trained so they can enter the departments in fiscal year 2011-'12.

Ward 23 Alderman Yusuf Shah, the chair of the aldermanic finance committee, said Friday that "there are a lot of things that went right" at Thursday's vote. He noted that the city is not closing schools and said it is not laying off "a whole lot of people."

But Ward 30 Alderman Darnell Goldson, who voted against the budget, said it does not define where certain funds would come from.

"I think the budget is more of a wishful thinking-based budget than anything else," Goldson said.

At the same time, Goldson also said he would have liked the budget to have no tax increase at all.

Even though the activist group the New Haven Citizens Action Network also advocated for no increase in taxes, one of its lead organizers, Jeffrey Kerekes, said the decrease to only a 4 percent tax increase for the average homeowner is "quite a success."

NHCAN had circulated a petition advocating for 10 percent cuts across city departments, which Kerekes had said would allow the city to avoid increasing taxes altogether.

Still, Kerekes said he was disappointed that the final budget did not change much from the mayor's amended proposal.

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In addition to the 4 percent tax hike, the budget also increases parking meter fees from \$1.25 to \$1.50 and building permit fees from \$25 to \$27.

Correction: May 28, 2010

An earlier version of this article misstated the amount by which the budget cuts certain programs for the Board of Education. It is \$1.5 million, not \$1.5 billion.

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