

# New Haven Register

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## Audit triggers call for corruption probe of Conn. marshal, New Haven tax warrant collection (documents)

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By Abbe Smith, Register Staff  
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NEW HAVEN — A newly released audit report unveils a pattern of alleged misconduct by State Marshal Peter Criscuolo in serving tax warrants on local businesses.

The audit, conducted in May 2009, paints a picture of an overly aggressive marshal who served erroneous tax warrants to businesses and tacked on excessive fees. In one case, he allegedly “coerced” a business into paying \$5,426 in marshal fees on an account that was not delinquent.

While the bulk of the report’s negative findings target Criscuolo, the audit also takes aim at the city tax collector’s office for failing to properly oversee state marshal activity.

The year-old audit, which was first reported by the New Haven Independent, spurred the city to implement sweeping changes to the way it assigns tax collection work to marshals, including implementation of a competitive bidding system for marshals wanting to work with the city. The warrants reviewed in the audit were issued by former Tax Collector C.J. Cuticello.

But for a couple of community activists, the city’s response doesn’t go far enough to address the “egregious behavior” by Criscuolo and a climate that is ripe for corruption.

Jeffrey Kerekes of the New Haven Citizens Action Network and David Streever, Ward 10 co-chairman for the New Haven Democratic Town Committee, have asked Attorney General Richard Blumenthal to investigate the matter and look into the possibility of corruption within the city.

“We are supposed to have checks and balances to protect our city from abuse. We found abuse and didn’t take action to prevent further abuse,” Kerekes said.

Criscuolo, who still works as a marshal in the city, could not be reached for comment Wednesday. Blumenthal’s

office released a statement addressing the matter.

"These reports of alleged abuses, if true, are deeply disturbing and call for investigation. Within the past few days, my office has received complaints on this issue. We are consulting with other civil and criminal authorities," Blumenthal said in the statement.

The uproar stems from the findings of independent auditor RSM McGladrey, a firm hired by the city to review the handling of tax warrants and whether the tax collector's office provided proper oversight of that system. The audit was spurred by a rash of taxpayer complaints.

On Wednesday, Mayor John DeStefano Jr. defended the city's handling of the complaints.

"We perceived problems in the operation of the program, called for an audit which was undertaken and implemented comprehensive changes in the program that benefit the city," DeStefano said in an e-mailed statement.

The audit found that improper record keeping of warrants and a lack of oversight by the tax collector's office led to a host of problems and made the city out-of-compliance with statutory requirements. Among the audit's most alarming findings was that Criscuolo issued warrants for some accounts that were not delinquent and successfully served one warrant for an amount in excess of the amount stated on the warrant. In some cases, the tax office rejected payments from taxpayers because the account was already handed over to the state marshal for collection by warrant. In multiple cases detailed in the report, Criscuolo allegedly threatened to disrupt business if payment was not made on a warrant.

City spokeswoman Jessica Mayorga said the city overhauled its marshal system about a year ago by creating the competitive bidding process. Criscuolo was one of eight marshals who were then signed on by the city. As part of the bidding process, the marshals agreed to charge 10.5 percent, rather than the 15 percent cap allowed by state statute. Mayorga said Criscuolo was not given work during the period of the audit review.

Last month, another marshal, William Nolan, came under fire for allegedly serving a tax warrant to a strip club and charging double the amount of fees as was allowed. The complaint is due to be considered by the state Marshal Commission next month.

*Contact Abbe Smith at 203-789-5615.*

[Marshal Report](#)

## Reader Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of nhregister.com.

paulienet wrote on Jun 24, 2010 5:22 AM:

" sounds like a punishment is needed... perhaps a long suspension from work with full pay, then an early retirement at 90% "

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Doyens wrote on Jun 24, 2010 6:38 AM:

" This is a story of a pattern and practice of sanctioned corruption, a violation of the public trust and gross mismanagement.

The mayor's quote says City Hall perceived problems - ya think? And how long were those problems going on undetected and unaddressed, or worse, known and protected? And DeStefano failed to say that after the city "perceived" problems, read the audit, made changes, they also hired back the DeStefano crony (Criscuolo) who had been abusing DeStefano's own people - his citizens and the businesses that pay his abusive taxes. And the mayor didn't address why they buried this audit instead of making it public and turning it over to authorities who could take action against a contractor who was extorting money from the city's small

businesses.

This mirrors the city's debt problems, budgeting problems and police department problems. Just how long did Billy White beat up citizens, steal money and drugs and do so under the protection of City Hall? There is such poor executive management skills that repeated complaints and lawsuits didn't trigger a review of White's unit. What about the failure to reconcile the account discrepancies between the assessor's and tax collector's office? Now you have problems with gross and unfair assessments by Bill O'Brien - have you undertaken a review yet?

There is something terribly wrong at 165 Church Street and it needs a thorough, outside investigation. "

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sick and tired wrote on Jun 24, 2010 6:41 AM:

" The article fails to mention that Mr. Criscuolo is also the Chairman of the North Haven Democratic Town Committee. "

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Bob C wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:00 AM:

" "Egregious behavior" doesn't even scratch the surface. He "strong armed" business's like a thug and should be arrested and tried under the RICO Act.

Oh, lets not forget that Crisculo is also DeStefano's largest fund raiser. This corruption goes all the way to the top. "

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WoW wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:22 AM:

" Does anyone really think there will be a follow up by Richard B. ?

Pete has him on speed dial so he can come to DTC meetings!

Maybe it is time for a \$500. a plate dinner to start to raise money for his "College" fund. "

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New Haven Home Owner wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:23 AM:

" I have had it with this Mayor and his excuses. So we expect the city to take action to prevent further abuse. One got to be crazy to think that when they are the "ABUSERS". The city always find abuse but no action is never taken if you are on the "A Team". We the tax-payers will forever pay for these lawsuits and this abuse. When are we as a people and a tax-payer going to wake the H""I up. People can only do to you what you allow them to do. The Mayor said we have checks and blances to protect "our City from abuse, are did he mean just the people who work for him. Which is more like it. That comprehensive change the Mayor said was implemeted was only to benefit "Criscuolo and people in the Mayor's pocket. A fool can see what's going on here. No more dumb excuses, let the investigation take place. "

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corrupt\_city wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:37 AM:

" Do we have to hear Jessica Mayorga shilling for the mayor all of the time. She is an overpaid liar, and pr flak. Maybe she should get a job with the mafia - oops she's already working for them (Destafano and his cronies). "

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newhaventaxpyr wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:47 AM:

" I hope that there will be a full investigation regarding Mayor DeStefano and his staff!! How do they continue to get away with everything they do? They are corrupt!!! My taxes are so inflated. The mayor hired a o'brien knowing about all the complaints against him in bridgeport and now he is doing the same thing in new haven. WOW!

New Haven Residents we need to fight - we are not paying inflated tax bills to pay for the mayor and his staff's inflated salaries!!! "

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Fire him wrote on Jun 24, 2010 7:57 AM:

" Pursue criminal and civil charges and strip him of his position as marshal and democratic chair. "

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East Haven Corruption wrote on Jun 24, 2010 8:00 AM:

" Peter is the exclusive serving marshal for East Haven and a good friend of Gene Ruoccos and Ralph Mauro. Will April launch a probe into his conduct in East Haven? Oh, and don't forget Patty Cofrancesco the fired New Haven Attorney who is now thw EH Town attorney who uses Peter all the time. A state investigation should be made into this type of patronage and corruption. "

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Stu wrote on Jun 24, 2010 8:10 AM:

" Kick and scream all you want but it won't change anything. This stuff has been going on for far too long. It's "normal" so get used to it. Happens in all states, cities and towns. It's called politics. "

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Interesting wrote on Jun 24, 2010 8:16 AM:

" corruption - 10 of 68 thesaurus results

Main Entry: corruption

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: dishonesty

Synonyms: breach of trust, bribery, bribing, crime, crookedness, demoralization, exploitation, extortion, fiddling, fraud, fraudulency, graft, jobbery, malfeasance, misrepresentation, nepotism, on the take, payoff, payola, profiteering, racket, shadiness, shady deal, shuffle, skimming, squeeze\*, unscrupulousness, venality "

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ray wrote on Jun 24, 2010 8:24 AM:

" why is he the only one who serves the tax warrants? pay off's? "

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NewHavener wrote on Jun 24, 2010 8:57 AM:

" This one case is a symptom of the entire New Haven system. From top to the bottom. There's nothing but abuse, corruption, and waste. THESE PEOPLE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE PUBLIC SERVANTS!!!??? They only serve themselves. And the public pays for it. "

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Observer1 wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:29 AM:

" Marshals must go. They only get paid if they collect money or deliver a paper. That ENCOURAGES CORRUPTION!!!! They are only political appointees with no law enforcement background or training, yet they are considered by law "Peace Officers," and can carry guns. What kind of garbage is this??? Only a State Marshal has this special designation. Every other cop or recruit in the state has to attend the Connecticut Police Academy. We are the only state that have these Marshals. They have no supervision. They prey on the most vulnerable of society-those that have fallen on hard times....and there are many now. Its disgusting. But no one does anything about it. Martin Looney here in New Haven controls the Marshal Commission and chooses who gets these jobs. Thanks for the corrupt screw-ups Marty!!!! You are a real representative of the people!!! "

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New Havener wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:31 AM:

" This is not everything. This is just a small thing. Contributions in the Mayors campaign funds and Pac groups set up by this administration need to be looked at. They need to do a full city audit. And they need to clean house in the city. They all need to go. We have had enough. I pray that Hartford really looks into this and expands the investigation into all city departments and connect the dots on who is getting preferential treatment due to campaign donations. (that is like a bribe, no?) "

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again perplexed wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:33 AM:

" Will all those functional illiterates that had so much to say about Mrs. Fontaine want to comment on this so-called thieving sheriff? Now this is the kind of person that you need to take out all your pent-up angst on. This man has been ripping-off tax payers for years and years in New Haven. But you will continue to allow this man to keep doing what he does best. I've seen him out and about bragging about it. So come on all of you racists out there with your pent-up anger..... say something. Hello? Hello? "

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Don Corleone wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:47 AM:

" John DeStefano is a man who knows how to get things done-- you know what I mean? "

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Ken wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:56 AM:

" The marshall should be fired, arrested and sent to jail for theft--this is a crime not just an administrative matter. C. J. Cuticello should also be fired for not following up on these crimes--he was aiding and abetting a criminal and should also be arrested for corruption. As a New Haven tax payer (homeowner and 2 autos), I am appalled at this behavior by the tax office. The tax office employees, led by Cuticello, are the most rude, nasty people you'd ever want to meet. It is ironic, but they seem to be more arrogant and rude when you are handing them all of your money. "

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Realdeal wrote on Jun 24, 2010 9:57 AM:

" The City was well of aware of CJ Cutiello extra activity that's why they gave him a retirement deal. He was given a 9% increase in his pension plus medical for him and his wife until the age of 70. This was clear a payoff. He must have something on King John.

I wonder how much of Peter Criscuolo take went to King John campaign. Someone needs to look into that.

Mark Pietrosimone needs to be fired. How many more thefts are going to happen on his watch. Oh I forgot He is part of that 1 million dollar family (Bayer's). "

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Finance wrote on Jun 24, 2010 10:23 AM:

" WoW you don't know the half of it. Richard Bayer is in alot of things. The whole family is (son in-law Mark Pietrosimone). Don't forget the salary information that was listed on The New Haven Independent. They have 12 family member working for the City of New Haven. Salary totaling over 1 million dollar with pension and medical benefits. Maybe they benefitted from these takes as well. "

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WOW wrote on Jun 24, 2010 10:38 AM:

" Finance  
WOW I did not know that. That is shady.

It is a free for all in this city and the Mayor is the King. He thinks he was elected because the people want him. No, the issue is people fear him. We can not get a qualified candidate to run against him. The minute one does he is gone by a land slide.

But going back to to the citizens fearing him and his administration and what ever retribution comes along with fighting them. As you can see these people where extorted and received no justice this is just one example of the kind of activity that is taking place in this city. How do you stop it? When people are this afraid. Afraid of being the target of these creeps. We need Richard Blummy to help. We need to be protected against these monsters. "

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concerned wrote on Jun 24, 2010 10:42 AM:

" While you're looking at political cronies in the City, look at the City Clerk's full time pay for very part time work. Time to change the Charter. Save taxpayers some money. But that will never happen because the Clerk is a political ally of the good old mayor "

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chuck blogger wrote on Jun 24, 2010 11:44 AM:

" I thought this was supposed to have been fixed when we eliminated the Sheriff's system and went to Judicial Marshal's.

the answer lies in not having a fee or commission system for serving court orders. This should be done by civil service employees on a fixed salary.

I am sure that even a well paid NHPD officer would cost less overall than what the city pays to these marshal's.

Maybe even use light duty officers,m after all these Marshal's are nor armed (are they?) "

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Abolish It wrote on Jun 24, 2010 12:11 PM:

" The Mayor calls these honcho Attorneys' offices and solicits / begs / promises them anything ,then sends Mr.& Mrs. Simpletons from the Marshal office to collect . Where worse and even worse off Marshal twins beg to cut their lawn "

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Walnuts wrote on Jun 24, 2010 12:54 PM:

" If Mayor DeStefano suddenly comes to an abrupt stop; Jessica Mayorga's nose will go straight up his rear end. "

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Observer1 wrote on Jun 24, 2010 1:11 PM:

" Criscuolo made \$2750.00 contribution to ROSA DELAURO.

<http://query.nictusa.com/cgi-bin/qind/> "

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Missingyou wrote on Jun 24, 2010 2:32 PM:

" Hey Stringer and/or Jimmy, we are missing yur cogent commentary. Tru Dat Mos Def "

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amazed wrote on Jun 24, 2010 3:18 PM:

" Finance - I am shocked - how can a controller of the city, Mark Petresimone, have 12 family members working in the city. They will make over a million a year for life?? How is this possible?? This administration is so corrupt starting with Destefano.

There needs to be a full blown investigation. New Haven residents we are in for a rough ride unless something is done soon! "

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funny wrote on Jun 24, 2010 3:56 PM:

" There is a great article about bill o'brien in the New Haven Independent "

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Image Verification: (Case sensitive)

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