

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

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## Kerekes: "People Are Tired" Of DeStefano

BY Paul Bass | JUN 14, 2011 2:11 PM

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(Updated) Jeffrey Kerekes Tuesday asked voters to make him New Haven's next mayor so he can serve less time in office, have less power, allow more citizens to tell him what to do, and give fewer friends and contributors jobs or contracts than the guy who has the job now.

Kerekes, a 38-year-old clinical social worker by trade and ubiquitous city government watchdog by

avocation, announced his candidacy for mayor at a press conference at his Wooster Square home late Tuesday morning. He plans to run in the Sept. 13 Democratic Party primary and, if that quest fails, as an independent in the Nov. 8 general election.

Kerekes is looking to defeat incumbent Mayor John DeStefano, who's seeking his 10th two-year term.

"People are tired of Mayor DeStefano," Kerekes declared Tuesday.

Click on the play arrow to watch highlights from the press conference. [Click here](#) for a summary of his campaign themes.





PAUL BASS PHOTO

Kerekes' announcement brings to five the number of Democrats hoping to compete in the mayoral primary. One of the other contenders, [Clifton Graves](#) (at right in photo), attended the announcement at the renovated 1870 carriage house and former bottling plant where Kerekes and his wife live. "I welcome Jeffrey into the fray," said Graves, who complimented Kerekes' platform and said he plans to sit down with him for a chat on Thursday. "No one candidate or campaign has a monopoly on good ideas."

Gary Doyens and Harry David (at left in photo with Graves), two fellow organizers of a citizen budget watchdog group Kerekes co-founded called the [New Haven Citizens Action Network \(NHCAN\)](#), attended the press conference in support.

Among Kerekes' proposals: term limits allowing mayors to serve no more than eight years; and cutting the number of aldermen and paying them more, in order to attract legislators with more time and ability to keep a closer eye on the mayor's office.

"There's too much power in one person's hands," Kerekes said in an interview prior to the event. "We have to look at structural ways to prevent one person from taking control of the city for so long."

Asked about Kerekes' suggestions, DeStefano replied, "I look forward to having the opportunity to discuss that with the candidates in front of the public as the campaign gets going." For now, he said, he's focused on "the issues that confront us today: creating jobs, school reform ... the issues of violence that are affecting our neighborhoods."

Kerekes released a "volunteer contract form" that informs potential campaign workers that he won't hire them or give them city business if he wins.

Here's what he wants his volunteers to sign:

"I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name), understand and agree that I have not been promised a job or contract or other business with the City of New Haven in exchange for my volunteer efforts on behalf of the campaign. Furthermore, I understand and agree that there will be no exchange of favors or special privileges to me or my group/organization(s) in exchange for my vote or support. I agree, in my efforts on behalf of the campaign, to abide by not only the letter, but the spirit of a clean election campaign and an end to cronyism."

Those proposals come under the heading of "transparency," part of a "Good Government" plank of Kerekes' platform.

Kerekes vowed to change a culture in which "[people get fired for talking to the press](#)," a student politics club gets shut down after its members speak out at a public hearing in favor of more spending on textbooks; a school board [passes a budget](#) three days after receiving it (over a weekend); citizens get chastised by officials for pushing for more bike lanes and narrower roads after being presented for plans on a major development project

([Downtown Crossing](#)); and a major policy decision gets made—the handing over of a public school to a private company—after “[secret meetings](#)” in which the press and public are barred.

The candidate said he'd bring more transparency and “accountability” in part by not punishing free speech or conducting public business so privately. In part he'd offer more information about the city's financial condition to the public. A lot of that information comes through specialized documents like bond offering statements, which list, for instance, “millions of dollars in guarantees to private companies” through industrial revenue bonds, Kerekes noted. He'd like to see more public discussion about those bonds as well as updates on how companies are performing.



Kerekes also pledged to run “clean” and limit the influence of special interests and “cronies”—by participating in the city's public financing system. That means he promises to accept contributions of no more than \$340 from individuals and to limit overall spending in order to receive government money for his campaign. Mayor DeStefano originally proposed and helped create that system. “He did,” Kerekes responded. “He got chastised and fined for violating that program. This year's he's “thumbing his nose at it” and not participating. (In the spirit of a [famous quote attributed to Harry S. Truman](#), Kerekes is pictured above with his Australian shepherd Luka, named after a character in a [Suzanne Vega song](#).)

DeStefano first embraced the concept of public financing in 2000 after a corruption scandal and after facing criticism for his team's campaign shakedowns of city contractors. The Fund offers a \$17,000 grant plus matching money to candidates who raise a minimum of donations—at least \$10 each from 200 local voters. A candidate who raises just \$2,000 can obtain up to \$21,000 if her opponent has raised at least \$5,000. Participating candidates agree to limit how much they raise from each donor. DeStefano argued that the Fund had failed to lead more challengers to emerge in campaigns and had acted unreasonably with his campaign.

Kerekes offered three other top platform themes:

- **“Education That Works.”** Kerekes said he supports the city's approach of trying a lot of different ideas as part of its ambitious school reform effort, including experimenting with some private management and charters. But he vowed to have freer, more detailed public discussion about those ideas before they become policy. He also said he'd put more “reformers” in charge of “reforming schools.”

“We need real reformers reforming our schools—not the same people who delivered failing results,” he argued.

For example, the graduate rate at James Hillhouse High School is 44 percent.

He also criticized incumbent DeStefano, who has led the reform drive, for being "late to the party. He was [kicking and screaming](#)" for years when [critics like the group ConnCAN](#) presented evidence of school failure and called for changes. "Now he's come around to make this his legacy."

DeStefano's response Tuesday: "I think New Haven's school reform portfolio approach to managing school, accountability, climate surveys where parents rate their children's schools, teacher evaluations, Promise, are the most aggressive suite of school efforts you'll find anywhere else in America."

- **"A Safer New Haven."** New Haven probably doesn't have the country's fourth-highest violent crime rate, despite a sensationalistic headline generated by a study based on FBI statistics, Kerekes said. But it does have too much crime. He said he'd like to see the existing police force deployed better: more cops working night shifts, when more crime happens; and more of the experienced officers working night shifts. He also called for random twice-monthly mass traffic stops, in which officers ticket everyone violating traffic laws, as a way to make streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians. He applauded the police department's narcotics unit's recent work with federal and state agencies.

- **Charter Reform.** If a maximum of eight years is "good enough for the president," it's good enough for New Haven's mayor, Kerekes said. He'd like to see the city charter amended to limit the mayor to either four two-year terms or two four-year terms. He'd like to see the city's 30-member Board of Aldermen shrunk so individuals can have more power, and so they can get paid more. The idea is to attract more qualified candidates and give them the time to wade through complex government proposals.

Kerekes dived into civic life in 2005 after receiving notice that the assessment on his home had doubled. He didn't know how upset to get about that. He checked with a relative. Don't worry, the relative said; "usually when they double the assessment, they cut the mill rate in half," and taxes stay the same.

Soon he learned that, after a phase in, his taxes really were going to double.

He started attending public meetings and learning how government decisions get made. He helped found [NHCAN](#), the taxpayer watchdog group that called for less, and smarter, government spending and more public oversight.

Ultimately, Kerekes concluded, "it's the mayor who makes things happen in New Haven. If I really wanted to effect change, I had to find a replacement for the mayor." He tried to convince some other candidates to run, but to no avail, he said. So he decided to take the plunge. "If I believe the city has to change," he said, "I can't sit on the sidelines."

Three other Democrats have announced their intentions to run for mayor: Clifton Graves, Tony Dawson, and Robert Lee. Asked about them, Kerekes responded that he welcomes other candidates' participation as a boon to democracy. "I'm running against John DeStefano," he said.

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## Comments

**posted by: Charter Reform? on June 14, 2011 8:25am**

Kerekes takes a page from John DeStefano's charter reform proposal here. Didn't John DeStefano suggest reducing the size of the board last year? I seem to recall the Board of Aldermen refusing to form a committee to even begin that process. It was a good idea then, and it remains a good idea. Where was Kerekes when this idea was originally suggested?

I hope Kerekes plans to flesh out some of his ideas and criticisms. So far, it seems like his platform is a reactionary year in review summary of New Haven Independent headlines. I hope he will take a more critical look at the issues raised here. A good leader knows there are always more sides and nuances to every story than what is reported. The squeaky wheel isn't necessarily the one that should be greased.

**posted by: anon on June 14, 2011 8:36am**

Wow. One paragraph of this article has more good ideas than the last 30 GOP debates combined. Nice reporting.

Let's hope that whoever is the next Mayor adopts all of these ideas. Glad that Kerekes has taken the time to

step up and put them forth.

Does anyone know what are Kerekes thoughts on the Route 34 rebuild, currently planned to be a pedestrian holocaust?

**posted by: Bruce on June 14, 2011 8:55am**

Good luck Jeff!

**posted by: Cedarhillresident on June 14, 2011 9:08am**

Now we have a race. I viable candidate finally. One that knows this city! And a candidate that is addressing the issues and has a platform! Not just words but ideas!

Jeffrey will be getting my vote 100%

ABOUT TIME!

**posted by: anon on June 14, 2011 9:28am**

Charter reform is needed. Can someone do a "litmus test" on this? Let's hope that we can get an effective Mayor who can finally implement this and fix our sick government. We need no more than 10 Aldermen, and consider making them at-large.

**posted by: robn on June 14, 2011 9:35am**

Interesting! The game is afoot!

**posted by: anonymous democrat on June 14, 2011 10:21am**

This guy is great. Hes transparent,has great ideas and is willing to rock the boat. I dont think destefano is as bad as some would like to think he is, but his ideas are stagnant and they did put us in the fiscal situation we are in now. Im sure that he would make a great mayor I just think he needs a team of people who think like him and that might be a challenge in this liberal city.

**posted by: streever on June 14, 2011 10:34am**

@Charter Reform?:

If the ideas are so obvious and so badly needed, why hasn't the Mayor done a single thing toward the reforms that Kerekes calls for?

You negatively refer to his campaign as "year in review of the NHI".

Your analysis could not be more incorrect. The coverage the NHI does is driven by citizens—particularly citizens like Mr. Kerekes—who have identified and stated the issues of his campaign for the past several years. The NHI coverage—and neighborhood discussions—have been driven by his work and the work done by others.

Kerekes is among the foremost thinkers in New Haven—one of the only people who seriously tackles the big systemic problems within our municipal government and comes up with solutions. He has informed the dialogue and debate in a way that no one else has done.

If you see a similarity between his platform and the news coverage of the last two years, you are seeing the fruits of his labor being realized.

I believe that he has the values, knowledge, and work ethic to help bring our city out of its current state and effectively reform our government. I look forward to his campaign and sincerely hope that he wins.

**posted by: ignoranceisbliss on June 14, 2011 10:42am**

"He said he'd like to see the existing police force deployed better: more cops working night shifts, when more crime happens; and more of the experienced officers working night shifts."

This quote sums up the distance between Kerekes' fantasies and the reality of running a city. Can I be there when he sits down with the President of the Union to negotiate this? It will be fun to watch him get run over by reality.

Kerekes is a dilettante. He has no experience actually running anything let alone a city the size of New Haven

but has the temerity to run for Mayor.

Hey I have an idea... he can hire Doug Rae!

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**posted by: roasty on June 14, 2011 10:45am**

Gary Doyens for Mayor!

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**posted by: ASL on June 14, 2011 10:46am**

The volunteer form is a great idea though completely contrary to how political jobs generally work—from small town mayoral races up through presidential races, people work on campaigns with the expectation that they will get a job on the inside if their candidate wins. Not really a criticism, just an observation.

@anon—I agree, as do all but ~ 30 people in this City, that a smaller BOA is a necessity. At-large positions would ensure that high voter turn-out areas would dominate the BOA. East Rock, Westville and the East Shore would be disproportionately represented. Again, not a criticism, necessarily, just an observation.

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**posted by: anon on June 14, 2011 11:04am**

ASL: Your observation is correct. Which is why it also would be a good way to increase voter turnout in areas where it is currently low. There's no law that says that East Rock has to have a higher voter turnout than Dixwell.

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**posted by: Bill Saunders on June 14, 2011 11:04am**

If the Guilty Party were still active in local politics, Mr. Kerekes would receive our full endorsement.

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**posted by: anon on June 14, 2011 11:10am**

@charter reform:

you seem to be forgetting very important facts about the mayor's feeble attempt at pacification. the mayor steamrolled the board of alderman and the legislative process to force the charter review hearing to a committee that he controlled 100% (with lehtonen as chair); outlined in a memo exactly the 3 issues he wanted; demanded it from president goldfield who capitulated; and flew in the face of democracy.

destefano proposed reducing the board of alderman from 30 to 28. that would have done nothing. kerekes was there begging for an open and accountable charter reform commission that wasn't hand picked by the mayor - that was accountable to the citizens of new haven and not his special interests - and that really fostered a good debate as to the future of our city.

destefano politicized the process, steamrolled the BofA (nothing new), and flew in the face of democracy. oh, and all of this was in an official memo from Adam Joseph to Pres Goldfield. Insane.

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**posted by: Brian V on June 14, 2011 11:11am**

KEREKES FOR MAYOR!

This is Great News. Jeff will make a great mayor!

He is smart, thoughtful and honest and has some progressive ideas that will be great for the City.

Term Limits! Less Alders! Stop there. You got my vote.

Good Luck Jeff!

KEREKES FOR MAYOR!

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**posted by: FIX THE SCHOOLS on June 14, 2011 11:34am**

This is a terrific development.

Whether or not Jeffrey is going to be a factor on election day (I'll bet that he will be), his entry into the race will force the candidates including the mayor to open up and address basic questions about why our city runs the way it does.

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**posted by: Kim on June 14, 2011 11:48am**

Finally!

Someone I would vote for!

**posted by: Ellis Copeland on June 14, 2011 11:49am**

Somebody needs to bring down Johnny Boy. As to the premise that this guy has no experience running anything: 1) neither did Johnny Boy when he took over, 2) Johnny Boy now has 18 years of experience and is the worst possible administrator. Sadly, however, I hold out little hope for this guy as the people of this hamlet have consistently proven they don't have the sense needed to vote for their own interests but would rather support a machine that abuses them. I guess that makes them masochists.

**posted by: Blame the Mayor on June 14, 2011 11:58am**

@ignoranceisbliss

Maybe the next Mayor wouldn't have to sit down and be in tough arbitration, IF the King had never signed bad contracts over the past 20 years, to begin with.

King John has dug such a deep hole the climb out is going to be long and hard fought, with a learning curve to deal with. Jeff is a smart man, he will make that a steep learning curve. I will happily give the new mayor a little growing room in exchange for a new face.

Here is my top 10 list of things I think the New Mayor Jeff Kerekes(!) will NOT do:

- 1) Double your taxes overnight!
- 2) Lose a US Supreme Court Case dealing with Labor. Costing taxpayers untold \$ millions in lawyers fee's.
- 3) Get New Haven #4 spot for worst crime in the U.S.
- 4) Spin, Spin, Spin.
- 5) Snow removal- what snow removal?
- 6) \$3000 Armoires
- 7) Boise Kimber & .... Peter Criscuolo.
- 8) Tear down a building, threaten owner with eminent domain and cost the tax payers \$2+ million in unnecessary screw-ups.
- 9) City Spokesperson AND a BOE Spokesperson!
- 10) Try to ride; like a rented mule, his constituent's backs to the Governor's mansion, while giving and selling away jobs, contracts, grants or whatever it took to get to the next level.

...

Be afraid Mr. Bliss, this will be the king's toughest test since Looney. The time is right and Jeff knows how to move people.

The king is dead. Long live(no more than 8 years) the King!

**posted by: Jonathan Hopkins on June 14, 2011 12:20pm**

I'm excited to see the public debates between Kerekes and DeStefano. Although I'm not convinced that Kerekes is ready to run the city, hopefully he will garner enough support to get some of his ideas implemented by whoever is the mayor for the next 2 years. 8 year term limits is an excellent idea, better police deployment is also needed, and honesty about budget problems is greatly needed.

I am less enthusiastic about school reform. The BOE budget is astronomical and in all likelihood needs to be reduced along with the police force in order to lower taxes, fund economic development planning and projects that grow the tax base and employ the city's existing population, and support our existing infrastructure.

The BOA also needs to be reworked and reduced in size. There should be a representative from each community/neighborhood that reports and meets regularly with a Board of Alderman representative who is in charge of a larger ward within the city and votes on the budget (by line item), city programs, etc.

New Wards (1 representative)- communities/neighborhoods that make up the ward (multiple representatives):

1. Upper Whalley - Upper Westville, Beverly Hills, Amity, West Hills
2. Westville - Lower Westville, Westville Village, West Rock, Upper Beaver Hills
3. Central Whalley - Lower Beaver Hills, Edgewood Mall
4. Lower Whalley - Dixwell, Broadway, Dwight north of Chapel
5. Newhallville - Above Bassett, Below Bassett, West of Dixwell
6. East Rock - Goatville, Prospect Hill, SoHu
7. Fair Haven West - West of Ferry, Jocelyn Square, Cedar Hill
8. Fair Haven East - Quinnipiac River Village, Chatham Square, Fair Haven Heights

9. Upper Quinnipiac - Quinnipiac Meadows, Bishop Woods, Route 80
10. Upper Townsend - The Annex, Fort Wooster, Farren Ave, East Shore
11. Morris Cove - Morris Cove, Lighthouse
12. City Point - Kimberly Field, Kimberly Triangle, Lower Howard Ave, Trowbridge Square
13. Hill Central - Amistad Park, Washington Ave, Boulevard, Davenport Ave
14. Legion Ave - West River, Hill North, Dwight south of Chapel
15. Core - Wooster Square, Downtown, Yale, Hillhouse Ave, Union Station

Each community/neighborhood would have a representative that met regularly with their alderman who would be in charge of the ward.

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**posted by: anon on June 14, 2011 12:21pm**

ignoranceisbliss:

... The problems of public safety don't directly impact you, or really anyone at City Hall, because almost everyone there lives in a safe section of the city (or more likely, suburbs) and drives everywhere.

Past Mayors have tried, and utterly failed, to address this issue, despite volumes worth of lip service. Dixwell-Newhallville still have a murder rate higher than Detroit. ... anyone who is honestly concerned with these things would welcome new ideas, not laugh at them.

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**posted by: James on June 14, 2011 12:39pm**

The independent commenters agree! Now you just need to convince the other 99.999% of registered voters in the city.

Unless there is an actual, sound, strategy in place.. the machine will steamroll Kerekes.

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**posted by: Atwater on June 14, 2011 1:01pm**

@jonathon hopkins: Why even have wards? New Haven is not big enough to justify such a division. The BOA should be an assembly that is made up of people that represent the city as a whole. It is time to abandon the neighborhood as a political boundary and embrace the idea of one New Haven. What's good for Newhallville should be good for East Rock, no more class segregation.

Mr. Kerekes represents the white upper-middle class demographic. The liberal elite who have no real concept of the realities of running a medium sized municipality.

It would be nice to see an independent Conservative run for mayor. Someone who understands the need for radical changes.

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**posted by: visitor on June 14, 2011 1:25pm**

i really do not see anything compelling in his platform, at least as presented in this article. the things that have set new haven apart from other abysmal ct cities are due largely to the leadership of the current mayor. it seems like residents don't realize this. while i think the mayor is far from perfect and many of the concerns stated by commenters are valid and need to be addressed (i.e. transparency and education), i DON'T think that wanting anyone but destefano is a smart move....its so easy for a candidate to run against another's weak points (and logical, of course); but people PLEASE don't forget about the things that set new haven apart from other ct cities —sustainable development (of all kinds—not just downtown!), looking at the big picture (i.e. regional and national) economy vs. assets here and tapping into that to the benefit of the city (other ct cities do nothing or repeatedly and ignorantly try retail and sports teams) and more. if we end up with a mayor who doesn't think of this or is not capable of continuing this work, then what? we will be a bridgeport or hartford. not just an unpleasant and depressing place to live, but a place that has NO tax base, is unable to attract new residents and young people, is depressing, ugly, utterly dysfunctional, etc. etc. no thanks.

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**posted by: streever on June 14, 2011 1:27pm**

@anon  
BRAVO.

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**posted by: Swatty on June 14, 2011 1:47pm**

Good news. really good news.

**posted by: Gary Doyens on June 14, 2011 1:49pm**

I am thrilled that Jeffrey is running. He has ideas, knows how to organize and most importantly, knows how to listen. Further, he is a true believer in formative public policy not for political reasons but because it is the right thing to do. School reform is not a slogan, not something to be necessarily outsourced or that you should have to hire new administrators to do (Harries) because the ones we have don't really know how to do it. He believes in hiring only the right people for the right jobs. No cronyism. No favors. No buying votes with jobs or board appointments.

Charter Reform: Long overdue. For the "Charter Reform?" character - DeStefano's version of charter reform was giving him a 4-yr term. It was all about him and not about the public and meeting their needs or for that matter, having a real democratic representative BOA instead of a rubber stamp. He handpicked the charter reform group - who would support that?

As for the needed reforms in the union contracts, they may be difficult conversations, but they will be conversations not dictatorial demonizations whose only goal is re-election and passing the blame. Kerekes believes our unions and city workforce play a vital role in how our city operates. But it's a two-way street and there has to be equal benefit, and promises made, have to be promises kept as it relates to pensions and healthcare. Both are grossly and dangerously underfunded. As the son of a life-long Teamster, Kerekes understands this.

Bottom Line: DeStefano Fatigue. Same problems for 18 years; same excuses and the need for constant reform because damn little runs right. When the fire gets hot enough or there are federal dollars to be had, standard M.O. - call for reform. Police scandals? Reform. Educational scandals and nationally recognized drop out factories? Reform. No job growth? Reform with the Economic Development Commission. Lack of Transparency? Promises of reform. Fire Department debacle? Reform the tests. Violence? Reform with monthly top ten bad guys. And so it's gone for the last 18 years. If the city were a big red barn, there would be 100 coats of paint on it, so much so, it would look like a church. It needs to be stripped to its original splendor and that can't be done by the guy who makes his living, his pension and all that he has putting more coats of paint on an already over-painted barn.

What New Haven needs is a transformer - a guy who believes in empathy and responsibility, entrepreneurship, real job creation, not just temporary gigs and low paying jobs in 2 economic sectors: Eds and Meds and a little construction. We need a transformer who understands economics and the pitfalls of too much debt. We need a transformer who knows how to prioritize the needs of the city and has a vision for the city that is not plagiarized from Scripture (Shining City on a Hill - a/k/a DeStefano inaugural speed circa couple of years ago) but that is real, tangible and attainable. We need new ideas and fresh eyes looking at old problems only addressed in crisis mode and even then, with gimmicks like all the financial scams and the city's new top 10 list.

One final note: Kerekes has not run a large organization. That's a benefit. He believes in a streamlined and sustainable government and he will hire practical and seasoned people to help him. The only ones who benefit from a complicated organization are the people running the complicated organization a/k/a DeStefano and cadre of longevity payment induced team.

Streamlined and sustainable equals good government. Good government, safe streets, education transformation and charter reform for the people equals Jeffrey Kerekes.

**posted by: visitor on June 14, 2011 2:13pm**

@Atwater

Scary that you think that Wards should be done away with...what you propose equates to NO grassroots representation and direct accountability, little chance for people who are not already politically connected to get elected. WOW. To see how well that (city wide "representation") works, look to Hartford.

Less wards, maybe. Abolishing ward representation, NO WAY!

...

**posted by: Cedarhillresident on June 14, 2011 2:40pm**

Well said Gary. this is an exciting day for us New Haveners!  
And JH I like the way configured the wards!

**posted by: Atwater on June 14, 2011 2:52pm**

DeStefano fatigue? So we trade one inept Democrat for another? Well, to say DeStefano was inept is incorrect.

He was/is very good at political wrangling, rhetoric and spin. However, his ethos, and the ethos of New Haven Democrats, is to increase the welfare systems that keep some of us dependant and others rich. This platform will only continue this city's decline. Kerekes doesn't seem that much different from DeStefano, but then again he just announced his candidacy, I am sure he will soon fall in line with the Democratic machine that runs the city, or fall victim to it.

@visitor: The only people who get elected now are people who are politically connected, that's the essence of American democracy. In a perfect world the BOA would be nothing more than an assembly that advises the citizens. The citizens would retain most of the power through direct voting on issues such as tax increases, budgets, etc. Direct Democracy. But, this isn't a perfect world and I would rather see an assembly of men and women whose only goal is to serve the entire population of New Haven and not the just voters in their wards.

**posted by: To Jonathan Hopkins on June 14, 2011 3:10pm**

Mr. Hopkins, I second that motion. Its about time the BOA is restructured. The proposal you noted makes sense. Attn Citizens: please do your best to get everyone informed & on board. Change can only happen if we work to rid this city of its general condition of apathy. GOOD LUCK JEFF! I'm with you.

**posted by: More of the Same on June 14, 2011 3:33pm**

This is by no means a dig a Kerekes, who I personally like and respect, but I have to point out the observation and ask the questions. So, to all of you cheering fans, now that another white guy is in the race, its a real election now? What skill set and experience does Kerekes have that the other two candidates, Graves and Dawson don't? Dawson was a budget watchdog years before the term became popular with the NHCAN crowd. He served on the BOA for 16 years before he was defeated by the DeStefano folks (I should know, I was part of the DeStefano team that worked to push him out). He has 25 years in law enforcement, and has been involved in New Haven for all of his life. Graves has years of experience both as a former Corp Counsel for the City and as an administrator with SCSU, as well as a fighter with the NAACP.

How can all of you folks summarily dismiss these two candidates with a straight face and good conscious?

Are your memories so short that you forget that Kerekes supported raising taxes through a new Stormwater Authority ([http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/new\\_havens\\_talking\\_rain/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/new_havens_talking_rain/))? Even he mayor, with all of his bought votes on the BOA, couldn't convince a majority of Aldermen to support that proposal.

Where was Kerekes and his crew when this last budget was debated? Nowhere. Where was/is Kerekes on the street giveaway to Yale? Nowhere.

When I see this guy take a real stand, and not jus the popular ones (no taxes, transparency, yada, yada, yada), then I might be willing to consider his candidacy. Good education, a safer New Haven, charter reform, stormwater authority, all sounds a lot like DeStefano's platform.

**posted by: Livesinfairhaven on June 14, 2011 4:05pm**

I'm not kidding. This city needs a smart, charismatic republican to run against Destefano, and win. In that way, there would actually be things to argue about and it would get the city moving again. Not sure if people are sick of Destefano or status quo.

**posted by: Canner St on June 14, 2011 4:11pm**

Finally a reason to vote. I'm so thrilled to hear Jeff will run. I wish him the best.

**posted by: Jonathan Hopkins on June 14, 2011 4:16pm**

Atwater,

I wouldn't support abolishing the ward system; I think it is an important thing to have and it could be made much more effective if the wards were redrawn. I disagree that New Haven is best thought of as a cohensive whole; really it is compilation of many different communities some of which grew quite economically seperate from the city of New Haven, but which were engulfed by the city over the years. I actually would argue that part of the reason for New Haven's decline was the abandonment of the neighborhood as a source of economic activity in favor of an intensified downtown.

I think it is best to imagine neighborhoods as small towns that should aim to provide jobs, shopping, recreation, entertainment, and civic space in addition to housing for their residents so that they may become much more self-sufficient entities and contribute much more to the strength of the entire municipality.

The current pattern of drawing wards around residential populations is a mistake, in my opinion. They should be drawn around neighborhood centers, village centers, and the civic squares of the various communities throughout the city. The focus of these wards should be to foster economic activity in their community, encourage local investment on their neighborhood thoroughfare, manifest civic activities, and gather data about the needs of the community through studies and surveys.

Maker larger wards would rationalize the BOA, make it more efficient and effective, make the job more important, and prepare aldermen much better for running for positions such as mayor.

**posted by: Dominik on June 14, 2011 4:33pm**

Try the Greens. I think they have ballot status.

**posted by: Threefifths on June 14, 2011 4:37pm**

Kerekes is pictured above with his Australian shepherd Luka, named after a character in a Suzanne Vega song.)

Everyone should do a write in vote. Luka for mayor.

I love a dog. He does nothing for political reasons.

Will Rogers

Politics are not my concern.... They impressed me as a dog's life without a dog's decencies.

Rudyard Kipling

**posted by: Cedarhillresident on June 14, 2011 4:59pm**

first ha 3/5's and Luka with those amazing eyes is a shoe in :) But he drools.

Ok here are just a few things Jeffrey has done it is a quick list so I am sure I typed it wrong linked it wrong and missed a ton of stuff but it is a start.

February 2007 he and a small group of people at a New Haven went to a city budget meetings noticed the same people at each of the meetings. Jeffery Krerekes, Gary Doyen and Harry David organized the group and NHCAN was founded. These New Haven taxpayers "New Haven Citizens Action Network (New Haven CAN)" raises public awareness of these issues.

-April 2007 offers up first of many budget suggestions.

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/04/at\\_an\\_attimes\\_r.php](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/04/at_an_attimes_r.php) (NHCAN budget suggestions 2007)

-He informed the public of information that the group was uncovering by starting an informative web site [nhcan.org](http://nhcan.org)

-He stopped the practice of city employees holding elected positions.

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/upload/2007/09/NH\\_CAN\\_letter.pdf](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/upload/2007/09/NH_CAN_letter.pdf) .....stating the concern with the familiar practice was sent to the United States Office of Special Counsel such practices violate the Hatch Act.

A complaint ( [http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/extra\\_extra/hatch\\_opened\\_officially/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/extra_extra/hatch_opened_officially/))

was filed officially on Sept. 20, 2007. In November of 2007 the Elected Official was Laid off from said position.

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rodriguez\\_laid\\_off/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rodriguez_laid_off/) NHI article Ref to New Haven

Official laid off after Hatch Act complaint was filed. Many other elected officials still have ties to city related departments

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/aldermen\\_disclose\\_potential\\_conflicts\\_of\\_interest/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/aldermen_disclose_potential_conflicts_of_interest/) ( Aldermen Disclose Potential Conflicts),

many are concerned how objectionable and honest can the votes of such officials be, can they represent the citizens of the city. (disclose statements"City Money <http://www.nhcan.org/docs/boa/boa-accountability.html> AKA why the Hatch Act was created. But is still repeatedly ignored in New Haven.

-NHCAN the group Jeffery co-founded was awarded the Best watchdog group award by the

<http://www.newhavenadvocate.com/the-arts/blog.html>

-November 2008 Voter Fraud complaint was filed after a reporter from the NHI was a witness (

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/11/machine\\_pulls\\_e.php](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/11/machine_pulls_e.php) ) to a disabled man being forced to vote and told who to vote for on election day. (

[http://www.ct.gov/seec/lib/seec/2009\\_commission\\_minutes\\_and\\_agendas/minutes\\_02112009.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/seec/lib/seec/2009_commission_minutes_and_agendas/minutes_02112009.pdf)) [case Number 2007-388] City Rep and poll worker were fined for their actions. (still vote pulling with the same tactics)

-After repeated requests for citizens participation the city agreed to set up a Blue Ribbon Panel by Jeffery and NHCAN ([http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/blue\\_ribbon\\_panel\\_named](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/blue_ribbon_panel_named)). The panel

was selected Oct 2008. The panel consisted of 7 citizens 2 Alderman as well as city controller Mark

Pietrosimone and city budget Director Lawrence Rusconi. Final Report

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/17012720/Budget-Review-Panel-Report> New Haven , CT Blue Ribbon Panel 2009 report

\*May 2009 Jeffrey Kerekes ask for a 5 year budget prediction document he was shown but BOF will not release it. He files a Freedom of Information Act (

[http://www.state.ct.us/foi/Meeting\\_Agendas\\_and\\_Minutes/Minutes/2009\\_Minutes/20090722MRM.htm](http://www.state.ct.us/foi/Meeting_Agendas_and_Minutes/Minutes/2009_Minutes/20090722MRM.htm)) complaint (Docket #FIC 2009-014). Did receive a ( <http://www.nhcan.org/docs/attachments/foic-projections.pdf> modified version of it with a better out come. City representatives claim the original document no longer exists.

-He started to take the group in a difference direction. They went out to the people. Doing community presentations ( <http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/city-news/2010/04/22/group-opposes-city-tax-hike-calls-cuts/> ) on how the city budget works.

-March 2010 City Wide Brainstorm <http://www.nhcan.org/docs/spreadsheets/citywidebrainstorm.pdf> He and his group asked the public to submit ideas to cut the budget. 316 suggestions adding up to \$269,086,818.00. (June of 2010 only 6 million dollars was cut from the budget).

-April 2010 Efforts start bearing fruit when hundreds ( [http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/taxpayers\\_enter\\_the\\_budget\\_battle](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/taxpayers_enter_the_budget_battle)) at a city hearing speak out against the way the city is being ran. City Hall attempted to set up a Fake Grass aka Astroturfing group to "Save Our Schools

([newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/school\\_officials\\_rally\\_parents\\_against\\_budget\\_critics/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/school_officials_rally_parents_against_budget_critics/)) to redirect the public from the real fact, it failed.

-2010 Budget year had over 1100 signatures for a full 10% cut in property taxes. The Mayor was quoted saying he would sign it, but when asked declined

([newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/live\\_from\\_city\\_hall/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/live_from_city_hall/) ) His group he had organized gained up to 1500 new requests to be on their email list and growing

By spring of 2010 jeffery and the group he organized community efforts managed to unite citizens, community's and Unions

([http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/both\\_sides\\_appeal\\_to\\_unions\\_in\\_budget\\_fight/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/both_sides_appeal_to_unions_in_budget_fight/)) to work together. Despite all efforts of the political powers to continue their divide and concord strategy. This was a major triumph .Who gained support from across the city.and where able to get a tax increase from 8.8 % to 4%.( <http://www.wfsb.com/money/23582395/detail.html> ).

This is just a few thing on the list of things Jeffery has organized and or have been a part of. The list goes on.

**posted by: Morris Cove Mom on June 14, 2011 5:11pm**

The good news is that Kerekes would make a great mayor, hate learning all the games and back-scratching that actually takes place, and probably have an awful time being mayor.

The bad news is that he probably won't get elected, while he most definitely should.

Where can I get him my name and my \$10? I'm in, I'm rooting for him, and I'll even campaign for him.

I'd suggest to him, ever so gently, that he doesn't say he's 'running against DeStefano', as most of the older Italian folks in New Haven will take some offense at that. DeStefano has a grip on many of our neighborhoods, just on last name alone!

**posted by: ralph on June 14, 2011 5:28pm**

@ charter reform: charter reform is not a new thing. it comes up every ten years and failed the last time around. In that reform it included smaller wards, it also included changing the mayor's term to four years and changed the way the fire department promoted it's officers. The fire department fought and killed the charter.

@ Visitor, economic development is very important to a growing New Haven during prosperous times but while the economy is slow and people are struggling to survive, pay bills and keep their homes we must not raise taxes. The working class of New Haven cannot afford a tax increase.

Jeffrey, you have my support and help but not sure if I will be in New Haven long enough to give you my vote.

**posted by: Jonathan Hopkins on June 14, 2011 5:52pm**

Here is an alternative aldermanic ward map:

<http://v13.lscache6.c.bigcache.googleapis.com/static.panoramio.com/photos/original/54214915.jpg>

As for cutting the BOE budget, the private yellow busing system really needs to be reworked. Not only is it inefficient and expensive, but the buses have presented design issues with many of the new school's parking lots and sidewalks which have ramifications for pedestrians, cyclists, car parking, street trees, storm water run-

off, reduced playground space, and absurd street geometries. A focus on neighborhoods would help to encourage and restore neighborhood-based schools which would reduce the need for busing children around. Every child should be able to walk to their neighborhood school. And everyone over the age of 14 should be able to take the city bus to high school. That money could be used to improve the public transit system, go into the general fund, or be used to lower taxes.

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**posted by: ralph ferrucci on June 14, 2011 6:24pm**

@ morris cove mom, you are right on this, a candidate should tell you he/she is running for \_\_\_ because he/she has ideas that are good for the community.

as a former political candidate and operative I always believed in making the campaign about yourself and the community never against an opponent.

being an opposition candidate works for the first few weeks but gets tiring quick. the community will know you as not being John but not who you are. Then in the booth they will say it is better to have the devil you know rather than the devil you don't