



Open Letter To New Haven Residents, Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Jeffrey Kerekes, Democratic Candidate For Mayor

www.jeffrey2011.com

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Greetings!

I am writing to announce my run as a 2011 Democratic Candidate for Mayor of New Haven.

Back in the Fall of 2005, a neighbor and I created a list of ideas for the city to generate more revenue and to cut expenses. From our first critique of the city, came real solutions. The ideas were common sense and fairly easy to implement. We presented our work to the Board of Aldermen and were summarily ignored. That launched an effort to dig further and learn more about how our city government conducts its affairs and we urged others to get involved because we clearly needed help! It's been quite an education.

Now is the time for change. I cannot in good conscience advocate only from the sidelines anymore. Too often the words of citizens fall on the deaf ears of city leadership unwilling to change, to reform, to solve problems. Too often the standard response is to deny there is a problem in order to protect the status quo. It's time for a change. No more excuses.

Together as citizens of New Haven, our efforts generated a citywide brainstorm with over 300 ideas for increasing revenue and decreasing expenses both short and longer term. Our advocacy has had great success. It resulted in a flat tax rate for the past two years; ended the inflated property valuation phase-in from the assessment conducted at the peak of the market; cut the subsidy payments to Tweed airport, Grove Street Parking, & the \$300,000 a year Trolley without passengers; created a citizen led Blue Ribbon Panel on the Budget, a more detailed city budget document and a largely revised BOE budget document.

While a number of our ideas have been implemented, the recent budget submitted by Mayor DeStefano and approved unchanged by a majority of the BOA still largely ignores the growing financial crisis of the city. And the urge to use financial gimmickry such as the monetization of parking meters and the sale of Broadway parking lot still lives on. There is little left to sell.

This annual quagmire has been detailed by not only the grassroots effort I have been leading for six years, but by others who agree, including the Blue Ribbon Panel On the Budget, city workers, and many other citizens spending vast amounts of time analyzing the finances and coming to the same conclusion. Our city's declining financial health has been recently and independently corroborated by two different financial consulting firms.

It doesn't stop there. Consider the state of New Haven's public education.

When an independent education advocacy reform organization pointed to the tragic history of failing schools in New Haven (leading one newspaper to describe our schools as drop out factories), DeStefano attacked the organization instead of the problem. His defensiveness and attacks against those proposing change have not ceased. He was late to education reform, and while he has taken steps to make education reform his legacy, he largely has not replaced the people responsible for decades of failed school leadership. We need education reformers reforming our failing schools, not the same leadership who failed to deliver results. While getting on the bandwagon late is better than never, with the salaries we pay our top education leadership, we should have the nations best education reformers with a history of delivering results. Today, we have temples for schools but students protesting that they have no or inadequate books for learning. Debt has immobilized the budget for decades to come and pending bills from the State for failure to meet enrollment numbers and overspending on buildings is likely to continue. Moreover, the most recent bill from the State for unapproved construction was \$17 million and that alone will increase our debt payments by another

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\$1.25 million per year. It's already \$65 million. We annually surpass our "\$15 million" borrowing limit (\$45M 2011).

Another independent report about the New Haven Police Department, emerging from the Billy White scandal, the PERF report again demonstrates the failure of management and oversight of the DeStefano administration. The police contract is a mess and it's not clear we are even deploying our people efficiently or effectively.

The criticism by outside observers came from even the United States Supreme Court who went out of its way to admonish the DeStefano administration about its cronyism and interference in the New Haven Fire Department. This is another example of poor management.

On the elections front, when DeStefano tried to run his election last time as a clean elections candidate, it resulted in another admonishment and fines. This time, he isn't even going to pretend to try and is skipping the clean elections program all together. I am running as a clean elections candidate so I am not beholden and maintain my independence.

There was a time when DeStefano was on top of his game – such as supporting the creation of a clean elections program in the City - but sadly, DeStefano has become too comfortable, disconnected and defensive to better ideas on running the City. His best days as Mayor are in the past, not in the future. For the past 30 years, he has held senior leadership positions in City Government and the last 18 years as Mayor. Are we safer? More educated? Do we have a more robust economy for city dwellers or more opportunities for those who don't live here? Despite massive increases in the city budget since he took office, are we more financially secure? Are we doing what's needed in our city well? Or are we doing a lot of things, a lot of 'look busy' work, but doing it all, at best, mediocre?

Ignoring calls for education reform, scorning calls for financial reform, and rejecting calls for increased public safety, transparency, and an end to cronyism are all hallmarks of someone who has lost touch with the public and overstayed his tenure as the city's top executive.

It's easy to be noble in good times. When it gets tough and you have to cut, you reveal your real priorities and who you really are. DeStefano's big reveal: Lobbyists over homeless; privately owned air planes over libraries; patronage over productivity; raises for mayor and his team and cuts to city employees. Being a Democrat is about empathy and responsibility. Where's the empathy and responsibility in keeping \$150k in lobbyists and firing librarians or turning away the homeless?

Again, as in the first time I critiqued the city, I come with solutions. I propose to **simplify and streamline** City Government on a platform based on four main priorities and run as a clean elections candidate.

1. Good Government: Transparency, Accountability & Financial Sustainability

A lower mill rate will help businesses grow and enable low & middle income families to buy and keep homes. Transparent, Accountable and Financially Sustainable Government for New Haven's future means an end to many troubling practices. You would never see a staff person fired for speaking with the press; Clear and accurate information on what the city owes and the IOUs it has written would be available; and citizens wouldn't be criticized for not liking plans we hatched in secret once they've been publicized such as the Rt 34 redevelopment (I'd ensure you were involved from the beginning).

2. Education That Works

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We can do a better job of educating all of our kids and close the achievement gap. Evidence shows that teacher quality and motivation are important. Reformers reforming our schools and elimination of the patronage jobs tucked away in the BOE budget that gets approved over a weekend sound like long overdue changes to me.

3. Safe New Haven

Reducing the number of Police Districts increases Police effectiveness by increasing flexibility to deploy officers to where they are most needed across the district. Information driven, real time systems can support effective police deployment to crime hotspots where they are most needed. More cops on duty when crime is happening not just when people are around to see them on duty is better policing and not just the appearance of safety. Safe streets for those who walk and bike is not just a safety issue, but an economic development one. Imagine “innovations” such as listening to citizens and place crosswalks where people actually cross the road such as on Whalley at the Stop & Shop and Whitney at Audubon.

4. Charter Reform

Holding office for decades (or 18 years) makes politicians complacent and makes patronage business as usual. Politicians should return to private life after no more than eight years in office (it's good enough for the President). Let's talk about a new fiscal year (1/2 the budget comes from the State and we approve our budget before we know how much they send us) and mechanisms to prevent too much power in the hands of one person.

If elected Mayor, I will find myself in the unenviable position of having to reduce things that should never have been granted. I believe financially unsustainable packages were granted by a selfish politician seeking higher office. A stable, union workforce done in a sustainable way means good jobs that provide good wages and healthy families and is the only way forward for my candidacy. I believe this can be accomplished while still cleaning up our financial mess.

This is only the start of the conversation. Let's talk more about your ideas and concerns. Get involved! The single biggest contribution you can make *this moment* is to reach out to 10 people and ensure they vote in the primary and general election. People can sign up for updates at www.jeffrey2011.com. Together we can make this happen.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Kerekes
Democratic Candidate For Mayor
www.jeffrey2011.com

Platform – <http://www.jeffrey2011.com/docs/kerekes-platform.pdf>

Biography - <http://www.jeffrey2011.com/docs/kerekes-bio.pdf>

Democracy Fund Contribution Form - <http://www.jeffrey2011.com/docs/kerekes-2011primarycontributor.pdf>

Volunteer – send an email to volunteer@jeffrey2011.com



Democrat For Mayor of New Haven, 2011

Jeffrey Kerekes is committed to bringing increased accountability, transparency and financial sustainability to New Haven.

Raised by working class parents in Connecticut, Jeffrey attended public schools and delivered newspapers from age nine for extra money. His father was a truck driver and his mom cleaned houses. Winning the Arthur Gabler Scholarship in high school helped him afford a B.S. in Environmental Education. After graduating, Jeffrey worked at the Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center and the Department of Environmental Protection's Kellogg Environmental Center.

His commitment to social change grew through volunteering as well as through the Audubon Expedition Institute, where he earned his Bachelors. This unique program focuses on developing students into agents of social change through detailed and experiential exploration of complex social issues. These experiences include learning from the people and places involved on different sides of a multiplicity of issues, from old growth logging in the Pacific Northwest, environmental racism in New Mexico, the collapse of cod fisheries in Newfoundland villages, to migrant labor struggles in Florida. This unconventional exploration of opposing sides has helped detail the complex nature of not only these issues, but the complex solutions required for them to be addressed.

After several years teaching environmental education, Jeffrey decided to enhance his skills at implementing change by individuals and communities by attending Columbia University where he earned a Master of Science in Social Work. There, he realized making social change takes time, courage and devotion.

As an emergency room clinical social worker, he helped form the Union of Social Workers at Cambridge Hospital to end unfair pay structures that allowed new hires to earn more than those with 10+ years. He was proud to be part of a progressive unionization effort guided by Kris Rondeau's "[community building](#)." Jeffrey's father has been a member of Teamsters most of his life which provided healthcare and a living wage to his family growing up.

From very early in his life, Jeffrey has been involved in his local community, having served as volunteer fireman, reader to the blind, assistant scout master, community mediator among a number of other roles. He is a founding member of New Haven Citizens Action Network (NHCAN), a grassroots effort to hold the City of New Haven to higher standards and to organize the community to become more engaged in the political and budgeting process.

Jeffrey is also a financial advocate and helped expand a grassroots resource in Massachusetts for everyday people interested in achieving financial independence. He aligns his values-based financial decision making with social change. A values-based financial decision making process has lead him to simplify and streamline his life as it became obvious to him the significant financial strains and stressors of unconscious overspending on the person and its destruction of the environment. Along these lines, Jeffrey has appeared on radio and print publications including a Japanese environmental magazine. He and his wife have made substantial changes in their personal life to secure a sustainable lifestyle congruent with their values.

Married to Pei Ye since 2002 after meeting on the NYC Subway in 1998, they make their home on Lyon Street in New Haven where the couple owns their home and investment properties. They have two Australian Shepherds, Luka and Murphy.

To get involved, go to www.jeffrey2011.com.

Paid for by Committee to Elect Jeffrey Kerekes, Harry David, Treasurer. Approved by Jeffrey Kerekes, Candidate for Mayor.



Quick Facts About The Candidate

Moved to New Haven: Wooster Square, October 2003

Living Arrangement: Home Owner

Born: Waterbury, Connecticut

Raised: Oxford & Trumbull, CT

High School: Trumbull High School

College: B.S. in Environmental Education: Rutgers University from 1991-1993;
Audubon Expedition Institute from 1993-1995

Graduate School: M.S. In Social Work, Columbia University from 1998-2000

Age: 38 Years Old

Marital Status: Married 9 years to Pei Ye in 2002 (met in 1998 on the NYC Subway -1&9 Train)

Favorite Book: "Your Money Or Your Life" by Dominguez & Robin

Favorite Quote: "The problems we face will not be solved by the same level of
consciousness that created them." - Albert Einstein

Pets: Two Australian Shepherds, Luka & Murphy

City Involvement: Member of Financial Review & Audit Commission (FRAC),
Democracy School 'Graduate', Justice Of The Peace

City Volunteering: New Haven Citizens Action Network (NHCAN), Assisted in
restarting the Wooster Square Block Watch, Taught A Computer Class at L.E.A.P,
Career Counseling sessions with TeamSuperKick'z from COOP HS, Neighborhood
cleanups, Reviewed Grants at the Community Foundation

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NEW HAVEN CAN Transform

Jeffrey Kerekes is running for Mayor because he's convinced that courageous leadership and a fresh perspective can bring about positive changes.

1 Good Government

A lower mill rate will help businesses grow and enable low & middle income families to buy and **keep** homes. Transparent, Accountable and Financially Sustainable Government for New Haven's future.

2 Education That Works

We can do a better job of educating **all** of our kids and close the achievement gap. Evidence shows that teacher quality & motivation are important.

3 Safe New Haven

Effective and flexible deployment of **experienced** officers where and when crime is happening not just when people are around to see them on duty is better policing and not the appearance of safety. Safe streets for those who walk and bike is not just a safety issue, but an economic development one. Imagine innovations such as crosswalks where people actually cross the road.

4 Charter Reform

Holding office for decades makes politicians complacent and makes patronage business as usual. Politicians should return to private life after no more than eight years in office. Lets talk about a new fiscal year!

To get involved, go to www.jeffrey2011.com.

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Volunteer Contract Form

Please read, sign, and return this form if you are interested in volunteering with the campaign in any capacity. As you know, I am running as a clean elections candidate for Mayor. As a part of that, I am running against the cronyism that has plagued this city for at least the last 18 years. To that end, I ask all my volunteers to sign this pledge to end such practices here in the Elm City. In full transparency, I plan on asking just 2-4 people into the office with me as part of the transformation team. Its a big job, and I will need serious help. The key individuals that join me may or may not come from the campaign. In no way has a promise of employment been or will be made in exchange for their assistance.

My sincere thanks for your help in cleaning up this city,

Jeffrey Kerekes
Candidate For Mayor

Agreement

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.

Signed:

Signature

Date

Jeffrey Kerekes For Mayor 43 Lyon Street, New Haven, CT 06511
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