

## charter revision

John Carlson <jkccarlson@yahoo.com>

Tue 2/7/2023 10:34 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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I am submitting my testimony in favor of increasing elected members to the Board of Education and allowing minority party representation on it as we do with every other board and commission in the city. Elected members are people whose ONLY purpose is to promote student achievement and well being. They have no alternative motive and owe allegiance to no one other than the children of New Haven. Elected members work independent of the mayor, they are not appointed by one and owe that office nothing.

Our current system has a mayor RUNNING the BOE, by both being a voting member and APPOINTING a majority of the membership. Are we to assume that a mayor is an expert on education? Our current system has gotten us results that put us LAST in the state. We have under 1/4 of students reading at or above grade level and only 12% completing math at grade level. According to the New Haven Independent This board instituted DEBUNKED curriculum that lacked phonics, the CORE component of any reading program (1/20/23)

Is there a profession or business that dead LAST doesn't DEMAND action and change? There is not. To allow the same system to remain in place that has FAILED so miserably would be insane. We have a once a decade opportunity to begin to fix our broken education system. Let's try to get it right!

Thank you, John Carlson, 291 Greenwich Ave.

## charter revision

John Carlson <jkccarlson@yahoo.com>

Tue 2/7/2023 10:05 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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I would like to submit my testimony against 4 year terms for mayor and alders in the city of New Haven. Four year terms would limit democracy in the Elm City. Our goal should be to increase participation in our elections and the opportunities for those to step forward and serve. 4 year terms limit that. They also allow a politician to get more entrenched and monopolize power. Four years is also a very long time for local politics, cities can change quickly and we need to keep the opportunities open to replace people doing a poor job quickly. Thank you, John Carlson, 203-464-9346, 291 Greenwich Ave.

## New Haven's Charter Testimony

Rooper, Isabel <isabel.rooper@yale.edu>

Wed 2/8/2023 11:53 AM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing in support of two changes to the charter:

- 1. Separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission.** The TA is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our street-scape. Our TA is the Police Commission, which isn't optimal because the Police Commission has a lot of things to worry about, and the design of our streets isn't their top priority. I support creating a new commission, called the Transportation Commission, which the TA would live in. The Transportation Commission (like other boards and commissions) would be made up of community members at large, perhaps with some seats reserved for CMT reps, city staff, alders, etc. In this way we could have a group of people who specifically care about improving our streets making those decisions.
- 2. Automatically approve all sidewalks.** Currently, we require a notice and hearing for the addition of new sidewalks. This makes it slow and arduous to add sidewalks where we don't have them, so I support the City preemptively approving all sidewalks, in hopes that we can achieve a 100% sidewalk network in our city.

Thanks for your time,

Isabel Rooper

—

**Isabel Rooper '20**

Lazarus Fellow

Yale Sustainable Food Program

she/her/hers | (w) 203.436.9138

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## Charter changes testimony

Chris Schweitzer <cschweitzer@newhavenleon.org>

Wed 2/8/2023 1:41 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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Hi,

We want to strongly support the two changes below.

Thank you.

Director

New Haven Leon SCP

Chris Schweitzer

361 Elm St, New Haven, CT 06511

1. **Separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission.** The TA is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our street-scape. Our TA is the Police Commission (this is a list of where they reside in other towns), which isn't optimal because the Police Commission has a lot of things to worry about, and the design of our streets isn't their top priority. We propose creating a new commission, called the Transportation Commission, which the TA would live in. The Transportation Commission (like other boards and commissions) would be made up of community members at large, perhaps with some seats reserved for CMT reps, city staff, alders, etc. In this way we could have a group of people who specifically care about improving our streets making those decisions.
2. **Approve all sidewalks.** Currently, we require a notice and hearing for the addition of new sidewalks. This makes it slow and arduous to add sidewalks where we don't have them, so we want the City to preemptively approve all sidewalks, because we want a 100% sidewalk network in our city.

## Written Testimony

Kyle Wong <kylewong1284@gmail.com>

Wed 2/8/2023 2:14 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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Good afternoon,

My name is Kiko and I am a resident in the Dwight neighborhood on Elm St. I am writing this written testimony in support of four changes to the New Haven charter.

1. **Separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission.** The TA is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our street-scape. Our TA is the Police Commission ([this](#) is a list of where they reside in other towns), which isn't optimal because the Police Commission has a lot of things to worry about, and the design of our streets isn't their top priority. We propose creating a new commission, called the Transportation Commission, which the TA would live in. The Transportation Commission (like other boards and commissions) would be made up of community members at large, perhaps with some seats reserved for CMT reps, city staff, alders, etc. In this way we could have a group of people who specifically care about improving our streets making those decisions.
2. **Approve all sidewalks.** Currently, we require a [notice and hearing](#) for the addition of new sidewalks. This makes it slow and arduous to add sidewalks where we don't have them, so we want the City to preemptively approve all sidewalks, because we want a 100% sidewalk network in our city.
3. **Reducing the number of alders.** By reducing the number of alders and paying them appropriately, we will dramatically increase the effectiveness of our city in all aspects.
4. **Mayoral term.** The mayoral term should be increased from 2 years to 4 years which would increase the ability to develop long-term plans and work towards long-term goals. This would also reduce the amount of time spent on campaigning, allowing the mayor to do their job.

Thank you,  
Kiko Wong

My name is Christel Manning, I am a registered voter, and I live in Fair Haven on 333 Front Street.

I would like to make a statement about the Charter Revision. My understanding is that the charter currently includes a residency requirement for all city government department heads. The mayor proposes eliminating the residency requirement for those department heads that do not need alder approval, because this would make it easier for him to fill current vacancies.

This is a really bad idea. Department heads are part of city government. They have authority to make decisions about departmental spending and policy, so it is important that they be representative of city residents. Although department heads are not elected, the residency requirement ensures they have some skin in the game. The head of Public Works should depend on the same trash hauling system as the rest of us. The head of City should face the same permitting process the rest of us do. And so on. I don't want some guy living in Greenwich or Madison making policy for MY city.

The residency requirement also facilitates a government that respects its residents. Several years ago, I overheard a conversation between a New Haven police officer and one of my neighbors. The officer expressed surprise that she lived in Fair Haven, saying that it was a dangerous place and that some of the people who live here "are animals." When he passed me on the way back to his car I asked him where he lives. "Torrington," he said. "I would never raise my family here." I've never forgotten the incident. It made me realize that, if anything, we ought to expand the residency requirement.

Filling vacancies is not a good reason to eliminate the residency requirement. Every organization is facing a labor shortage right now, so maybe the alders can craft a temporary fix. For example, if the mayor provides evidence that a good faith effort was made to hire locally but the position has been vacant for more than a year, then let him someone from out of town on a temporary basis.

New Haven should be governed by New Haveners!

## Charter Revision Testimony

Mark Abraham <mark.e.abraham@gmail.com>

Wed 2/8/2023 6:45 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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Dear Charter Revision Commission:

I am writing to support a proposal to revise the Charter that would eliminate the need for a special notice and/or hearing to add sidewalks or similar amenities for people who do not have access to a car. It should be possible to add sidewalks and bike lanes, and similar infrastructure, anywhere in the city without the need for slow and costly approval processes.

Additionally, I encourage the Commission to consider revisions to the Charter that would have the effect of eliminating parking requirements for new developments. Many other cities have taken steps to remove these requirements entirely. Research has found that a large share of the cost of housing is due to parking requirements, which impacts residents in our city whether or not they themselves own a car. Although New Haven often waives parking requirements for small downtown developments, it should do the same throughout the city to ensure that new housing can be developed at a much lower cost than currently. Developers would still be free to add parking, or lease space in nearby lots or parking garages, if they wished to.

I am also writing to express my support of a proposed revision to separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission. A separate Transportation Commission could be created that focuses primarily on the equitable design of streets and changes to the city that promote the goals of its Complete Streets Ordinance. It is important that seats on the Transportation Commission are given to persons without access to a car and persons with mobility limitations, given that most city residents (including children and retirees) do not drive to a job each day.

Thank you for your work to improve the Charter and create a better city.

Best regards,

Mark Abraham

## Testimony for New Haven's Charter Revision

Stasia Brewczynski <stasiabrew@gmail.com>

Wed 2/8/2023 7:03 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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Testimony for New Haven's Charter Revision: February 8, 2023

To the New Haven Charter Revision Commission,

I'm writing as a **New Haven resident and member of the Safe Streets Coalition** of New Haven with recommendations for changes to the charter:

- **Pre-approve all sidewalks.** New Haven needs to put effort into working toward the goal of a 100% sidewalk network. Currently, we require a notice and hearing for the addition of sidewalks. The charter should preemptively approve all sidewalks to improve equity, accessibility, safety, and transportation throughout the city.
- **Separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission.** The Traffic Authority is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our street-scape. [Unlike many other municipalities](#), New Haven's Traffic Authority is the Police Commission. Instead, we should create a new commission — the Transportation Commission — which would enact the work of the Traffic Authority. Like similar commissions, the Transportation Commission should be made up of community members at large (perhaps with some seats reserved for city staff or alders) who have direct personal and/or professional experience with safety, equity, sustainability, multi-modal transportation, and centering people on foot, using micro-mobility vehicles, and riding the bus.
- **Create/clarify the process for communities to nominate streets to become School Streets or Slow Streets.** This is a proven, highly effective low-hanging fruit that costs little to nothing to quickly improve our streetscape, as highlighted in Safe Routes For All. Past community push for Slow Streets has been halted at the ward alder level, despite super majorities of community stakeholder interest, because there is no clear process.
- **Reduce the number of alders and compensate them with a fair, [livable wage](#).** New Haven has an extremely high ratio of alders to residents — 1 alder per 4,500 residents. For comparison, similarly sized cities in our region include:
  - 12,700: Providence, RI (15 wards)
  - 12,100: Springfield, MA (8 wards and 5 at large)
  - 13,500: Hartford, CT (9 wards)
  - 7,500: Bridgeport, CT (20 wards)

In addition, almost all other municipalities across the nation — many with far greater populations than New Haven — have far fewer than 30 alders. Likewise, vacant alder seats, uncompetitive alder races, and low attendance records for New Haven Board of Alder meetings strongly suggest there are too many alders and that they are not properly compensated in order to meet the demands of the job. Lowering the number of alders will allow us to compensate alders appropriately with a fair package that includes a full-time livable wage. This will help prevent alderships held only by people who can independently afford to hold the role and/or alders who have conflicts of interest. Instead, we need a Board of Alders that is representative of our



community, empowered, and held accountable to put in the time and work needed to do a great job — from outreach to research to meeting with the community and city staff.

Likewise, New Haven is a relatively small, compact city, and many issues that the Board of Alders addresses are of citywide importance. Fewer alders, and perhaps the inclusion of alder-at-large seats, would help streamline processes as well as make them fairer and more effective.

To address this, we should reduce the number of wards to a maximum of 10, with up to 3 additional at-large seats. Doing so would position the city with roughly 1 alder per 10,000 residents, much more inline with comparable cities.

- **Increase mayoral term to 4 years.** This should allow for less campaigning for mayors as well as more job security — and therefore a better hiring pool — for roles that the mayor appoints, roles that are, rightly, limited to residents.
- **Publicize a provisional multi-year milling and paving list.** These lists should be publicly available with sufficient time to work through any public processes or community concerns. Likewise, milling and paving lists should be at minimum informed by Safe Routes For All recommendations for priority areas and best practices and focus on proven safety improvements including:
  - Arteries (roads used to go between two places where drivers go over 12 mph) should prioritize hard-protected bike lanes and bus lanes, particularly over on-street parking.
  - Local roads (residential, not for through travel, where drivers go 12 mph or less) should be designed for the low speeds intended. Narrowing lanes (with proven methods including bike lanes, bump outs, and floating parking) should be prioritized, and raised crosswalks and speed bumps should be used at meaningful intervals (~300ft spacing) when lanes can't be sufficiently narrowed.

Thank you,  
Stasia Brewczynski, 06515

**Written testimony for the Charter Revision hearing (I also have signed up to testify in person, but wanted to submit longer remarks in writing)**

Abigail Roth <abigailroth1234@gmail.com>

Wed 2/8/2023 8:09 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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8 February 2023

Dear New Haven Charter Revision Commission,

Thank you for considering my suggestions for Charter Revision.

**1. Remove vagrants and beggars provision:**

Article IV, Sec. 4 (B)(22) includes as a power of the Board of Alders: "To restrain and punish vagrants and beggars." This language does not seem appropriate to have in our city's Charter and I request that you consider removing it.

**2. Separate the Traffic Authority (TA) from the Police Commission and shift it to a newly created Transportation Commission:**

The TA is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our streetscape. Our TA is the Police Commission. ([This](#) is a list of where they reside in other towns). The TA meetings are held at the beginning of some of the monthly Police Commission meetings. The Police Commission is not a logical location for the TA because the Police Commission has a lot of things to worry about, and the design of our streets isn't their top priority

Given the alarming increase in traffic fatalities and injuries in our city and State, and the commitment of both the city and State to Vision Zero, it seems important to shift the TA to a new commission, called the Transportation Commission, as proposed by the Safe Streets Coalition of New Haven.

The Transportation Commission (like other boards and commissions) would be made up of community members at large, perhaps with some seats reserved for CMT representatives, city staff (Engineering, TT&P, and DPW), and alders. It would be especially important to ensure that users of all modalities are represented, with an emphasis on underrepresented and vulnerable road users (bus and train riders, wheelchair and assistive device users, pedestrians, bike riders, and drivers). This commission would ensure that those making key decisions about improvements to our streets have direct personal and professional expertise and/or investment in safety, equity, and sustainability.

**3. Pre-approve all sidewalks:**

Many streets in New Haven do not have sidewalks, and they are disproportionately in already disadvantaged neighborhoods. Currently, we require a [notice and hearing](#) for the addition of new sidewalks. This makes it slow and arduous to add sidewalks where we don't have them, and creates a process that treats sidewalks as a privilege instead of a right. Together with the Safe Streets Coalition, I propose that the charter preemptively approve all sidewalks to improve equity,

accessibility, and walkability.

#### **4. Expand the mayoral term to four years; Maintain the alder term at two years:**

I support expanding the mayoral term to four years. This is consistent with executive roles at the state and federal level. Moreover, the mayor has to build a team, develop and execute initiatives (both of which can be hard to do on a two-year timeframe), and run a citywide campaign, which is time-consuming and costly.

In contrast, maintaining the two-year alder term, the default term under state law, is appropriate. Our representatives at the state and federal level have two-year terms. Unlike the mayor, alders do not have to recruit staff. Moreover, alder campaigns cover small geographic areas and so there is not a big hurdle to run. Many alder elections are, unfortunately, uncontested, so there is no hurdle at all.

Moreover, requiring alders to campaign every two years is good for democracy. It encourages them to go out and knock on doors and hear from their constituents, improving their ability to represent them. Furthermore, it unfortunately is hard to get people to run for alder in New Haven. A four-year term would discourage more people from running, because it is such a significant time commitment.

A two-year term also improves accountability. A review of attendance at full Board of Alder meetings in 2022 shows a high rate of absenteeism. Below are the attendance statistics for July through December 2022:

July  
21-8

August  
21-9

September  
23-6  
24-5

October  
25-5  
20-9

November  
22-8  
23-7

December  
24-5  
23-7

Four-year terms do not allow for voters who are not being adequately represented by their alder to make a timely change at the ballot box.

Additionally, last year, three alders left their roles during the first year of their two-year term. Until the alder position is more of an actual job (which it will not be until we reduce the size of the Board of Alders to align with the size of our city, as so many other cities across the U.S. do), then it is not surprising that people leave the role mid-term, because people's lives change unexpectedly and the alder role is not their actual job.

One might say it is not a big deal for alders to change mid-stream, but it is disruptive and not good for democracy. For one, constituents have no representative for a period of time. Special

elections are held at odd times and typically have lower turnouts. And it is hard to start as an alder mid-term, something I experience in 2014, becoming an alder in mid-March. Accordingly, I encourage you to expand the mayoral term to four years, but keep the alder term at two year.

Thank you very much for holding this hearing and considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Abigail Roth  
42 Lincoln Street  
New Haven

## Testimony for New Haven's Charter Revision, February 8, 2023

Adam H. Callaghan <Adam.H.Callaghan@gmail.com>

Wed 2/8/2023 11:41 PM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

📎 1 attachments (57 KB)

Callaghan Adam Charter Revision Testimony February 2023.pdf;

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Testimony for New Haven's Charter Revision: February 8, 2023

To the New Haven Charter Revision Commission,

I'm writing as a **New Haven resident and member of the Safe Streets Coalition** of New Haven with recommendations for changes to the charter that would improve our city's equity, safety, sustainability, and responsiveness to residents' needs:

- **Reduce the number of alders and compensate them with a fair, [livable wage](#).** New Haven has an extremely high ratio of alders to residents — 1 alder per 4,500 residents. For comparison, similarly sized cities in our region include:
  - 12,700: Providence, RI (15 wards)
  - 12,100: Springfield, MA (8 wards and 5 at large)
  - 13,500: Hartford, CT (9 wards)
  - 7,500: Bridgeport, CT (20 wards)

In addition, almost all other municipalities across the nation — many with far greater populations than New Haven — have far fewer than 30 alders. Likewise, vacant alder seats, uncompetitive alder races, and low attendance records for New Haven Board of Alder meetings strongly suggest there are too many alders and that they are not properly compensated in order to meet the demands of the job. Lowering the number of alders will allow us to compensate alders appropriately with a fair package that includes a full-time livable wage. This will help prevent alderships held only by people who can independently afford to hold the role and/or alders who have conflicts of interest. Instead, we need a Board of Alders that is representative of our community, empowered, and held accountable to put in the time and work needed to do a great job — from outreach to research to meeting with the community and city staff.

Likewise, New Haven is a relatively small, compact city, and many issues that the Board of Alders addresses are of citywide importance. Fewer alders, and perhaps the inclusion of alder-at-large seats, would help streamline processes as well as make them fairer and more effective.

To address this, we should reduce the number of wards to a maximum of 10, with up to 3 additional at-large seats. Doing so would position the city with roughly 1 alder per 10,000 residents, much more inline with comparable cities.

- **Separate the Traffic Authority from the Police Commission.** The Traffic Authority is an entity required of each municipality by the State, and it is charged with approving most changes to our street-scape. [Unlike many other municipalities](#), New Haven's Traffic Authority is the Police Commission. Instead, we should create a new commission — the Transportation Commission —

which would enact the work of the Traffic Authority. Like similar commissions, the Transportation Commission should be made up of community members at large (perhaps with some seats reserved for city staff or alders) who have direct personal and/or professional experience with safety, equity, sustainability, multi-modal transportation, and centering people on foot, using micro-mobility vehicles, and riding the bus.

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- **Increase mayoral term to 4 years.** This should allow for less campaigning for mayors as well as more job security — and therefore a better hiring pool — for roles that the mayor appoints, roles that are, rightly, limited to residents.
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Thank you,

Adam Callaghan, 06515

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Adam H. Callaghan, he/him

[AdamHCallaghan.com](http://AdamHCallaghan.com)

## New Haven Charter Testimony

William Valvo <billy.valvo@gmail.com>

Thu 2/9/2023 9:57 AM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

Cc: Ellen Cupo <WARD8@newhavenct.gov>

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Thank you,  
William Valvo  
79 Warren St., Apt. 2R  
New Haven, CT 06511



## New Haven Charter Revision 2023

Frank Cochran <fbcochran@comcast.net>

Thu 2/9/2023 11:37 AM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

Cc: sfitzgerald1@comcast.net <sfitzgerald1@comcast.net>

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I have long regarded our City government as a mix of a long-outdated nineteenth century elitist model and mid-twentieth century "machine" politics. The many recent improvements in democratic participation have not always been accompanied by the much higher level of transparency we clearly need. Charter Revision, equally with updating the Plan of Conservation and Development, is the time set aside for basic community building.

1. My first comment is about process. The Commission should take the time to hold multiple sets of public in-person sessions, first exploring everyone's recommendations for priority subject areas. A limited number of subject areas should be chosen, and a separate approval process and vote for each. Once priority subject areas have been identified times for drafting and submitting proposals and for making all available to the public for review should precede separate public hearings for each subject area.

2. In the last charter revision it was democratic input which led the City to both elected members of the Board of Education and creation of a Civilian Review Board of Police. This time I think a priority is to reconstruct governance of Parks and Open Spaces.

3. The current Charter provisions on Psrkd and Recreation are a hodgepodge, much of it long outdated. We need a section affirming that all parks and open spaces are one Department and not a part of any other Department.

As COVID and climate change have made clear, very large numbers of people find city parks vital to health, education and recreation, and that New Haven had been blessed with a large and varied number of parks. Parks are open and extensively used every day. Stewardship and maintenance are core responsibilities of all of us, individually and collectively. The Charter reflects none of that. The result is that during much of my 50+ years as a New Havener, Parks have been underfunded, poorly organized and often left unmanaged. Illegal dumping and homelessness mar our parks. The forest canopy, the most important component for us in responding to climate change, has suffered major loss from high winds. But through all of modern day stresses, more and more diverse subsets of people (and dogs, bicycles, birds etc) meet, greet and care for parks and their adjacent neighborhoods than did before. The Charter needs to contain a governance structure for Parks, Recreation and Trees that reflects these realities.

I suggest repeal of the provision on Park Commissioners' appointment and terms and replacing it with a 9 person governing board, requiring representation from different neighborhoods and also with term limits. And I would recommend that the Charter require all records and archives be in a single location, open for public review, that meetings be held in person and televised.

I would be happy to consult further as this process goes, deliberately, forward.

Frank Cochran. fbcochran@comcast.net  
433 Edgewood Avenue

## Input for Charter Revision

Stephanie FITZGERALD <sfitzgerald1@comcast.net>

Thu 2/9/2023 11:37 AM

To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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To: Charter Revision Commission

From: Stephanie FitzGerald, 433 Edgewood Avenue, New Haven

I am testifying about two topics.

1) I want to see all eight members of the Parks Commission have time-limited service. Currently, three of them have lifetime appointments. Even the Pope and Supreme Court judges shouldn't be for their lifetimes.

2) The mayor should serve for four year terms. I would like any New Haven mayor spend more time and energy doing the job, and less campaigning.

Thank you for your attention.

Sent from my iPhone