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# The East Rock Gazette

## SPRING 2026

Reach out if you have any questions, comments, concerns, events, photos, writing, or even ideas you would like to include in future issues at: [EastRockGazette@gmail.com](mailto:EastRockGazette@gmail.com)

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# XXIII: EDITOR'S NOTE

Season's greetings. It's been awhile, I know. I wish I had a better excuse other than moving apartments and staying busy at my dayjob, and I do. But like, that stuff's personal, omg !!

As you can see, the snow has quite rapidly begun its melt and we've officially entered Fake Spring! With the skipping of clocks and tidying of socks, another cold spell and we'll be in one of the most wonderful times of the year. When the birds' morning call harkens sunnys days to bloom — nature's bud splitting open to drench the city in morning glory and honey dew. Countless connections, sparking madly, and the growth of entirely new adventures for each and every one of us. Some big, some small, all the same in time.

Resign yourself to those ideals that are self-evident as good and permeate through our world, in all scales and translations, but do not rest on these morales as virtuous inventory. Pious thought without corresponding action is merely self-righteous baggage to bear. Put your name and time next to projects that align with these higher values and the dots will connect themselves. Enjoy Spring!-JB



## TRAFFIC CAMERAS TAKE EFFECT

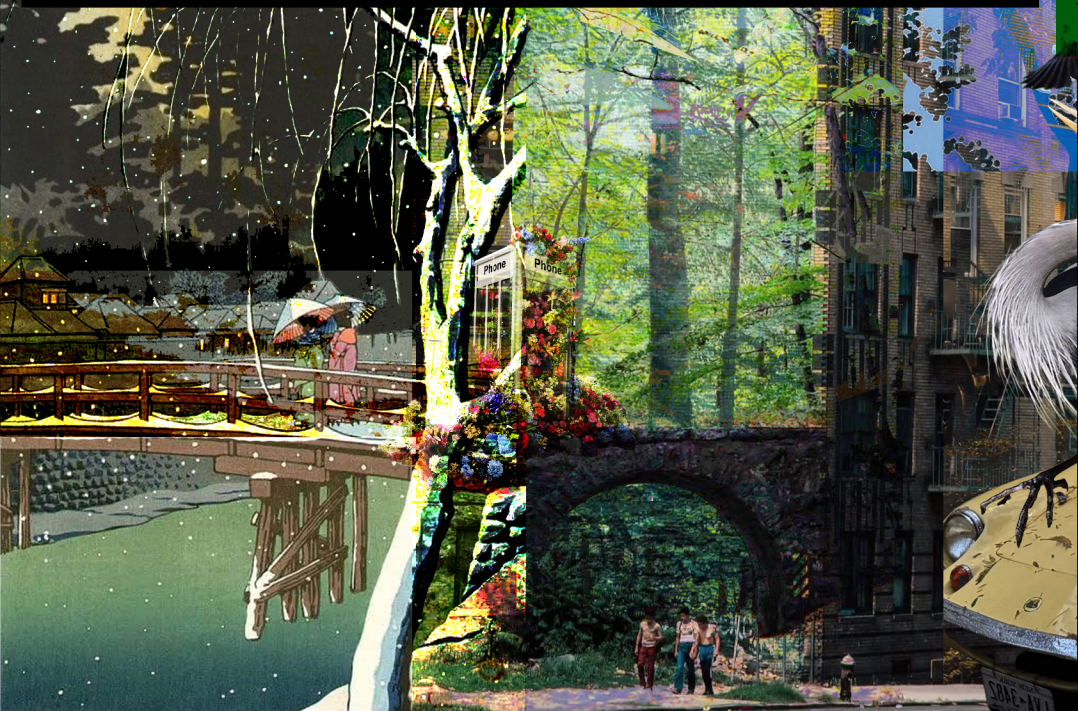
Starting this month, New Haven will use 15 speed cameras and red light cameras to record photo and video evidence of traffic violations and automatically issue citations to registered vehicle owners by mail, according to the city's Safe Routes for All New Haven website. In Oct., the state signed off on the mayor's proposal to put up the cameras, which will be reviewed by a city-contracted vendor and a city transit employee before fines of \$50 to \$75 are handed down, the Independent reported.

### RED-LIGHT CAMERA LOCATIONS

1. MLK Jr. Blvd./N. Frontage Road at Church Street
2. College Street at George Street
3. Ella T. Grasso Blvd. (Rt. 10) at Derby Ave (Rt. 34)
4. Quinnipiac Avenue at East Grand Avenue
5. Whalley (Rt. 63) at East Ramsdell St./Ramsdell St.
6. Orange Street at Edwards Street
7. Ella T. Grasso Blvd. (Rt. 10) at Washington Ave/Spring St.
8. Quinnipiac Ave (Rt. 103) at Foxon Blvd. (Rt. 80)
9. Prospect Street at Highland Street
10. I-95 South Off-Ramp/Main Street Annex at Woodward
11. South Frontage Road at Park Street

### SPEED CAMERAS

1. Fountain Street
2. Sherman Parkway
3. Townsend Ave.
4. Rt. 80



# Tree of the Month: Quaking Aspen

»Populus tremuloides is also known by many names, including Quaking aspen, Trembling aspen, American aspen, white poplar and trembling poplar. It is the most widely distributed tree species in North America, spanning all of Canada, all of the western U.S. and as far south as West Virginia and Virginia.

»The species mainly propagates itself through root sprouts, creating extensive clone colonies that share a single root structure, like Pando in Utah, considered the heaviest and oldest living organism on Earth. Individual trees in the humid East are faster growing and shorter lived (50-60 years)

»The species is also an “aggressive pioneer species,” the U.S. Forest Service says, readily colonizing burned areas and persisting even when subject to frequent fires.

»The common name identifiers of Quaking and Trembling are a result of the leaves flexible, flattened petioles, which allow them to flutter and dance in the wind. These glossy leaves, though dull on their back, become golden-to-yellow in autumn.

»The tree exhibits fast growth, resilience in extreme weather and is home to many animal species, making it a key pioneer for reforestation, climate adaptation and biodiversity. Because of these attributes, the Quaking Aspen’s almost identical-twin, the Common/European Aspen (Populus tremula), was named 2026 Tree of the Year by the Dr. Silvius Wodarz Foundation for its annual award aimed at encouraging tree ID + appreciation.

»In nature, the buds and bark supply food for snowshoe hares, moose, black bears, cottontail rabbits, porcupines, deer, grouse and mountain beavers, which store their logs for winter food. Feed caterpillars for various moths/butterflies.

»“Quaking aspen ... is a quintessential “foundation species” in early-successional forest ecosystems throughout much of North America,” according to a 2013 Forest Ecology and Management research article that studied defensive adaptations of the species. “Although subject to damage by hundreds of species of herbivores, aspen has persisted in these environments due largely to a suite of defense strategies.”

»But the large-scale use of Aspen to feed livestock and wildlife, due to its high nutritional value, has led to the failure of aspen to regenerate in many areas. Further, warming climate is expected to expand the range of insect defoliators that target aspen.



## SPRING GARDENING

*I know, I know, the snow has barely begun its flight out of town. But if you haven't already, it's time to plan this year's garden. It can be extremely beneficial to sit down and consider what did and didn't work last year, what you expect your bandwidth to be, and how you can best prepare for success from your soil.*



*For those interested in starting to garden or looking for a plot, check out the city's community gardens in person (come say hi at Williams St.), or visit online @gathernewhaven.com!*

**Get your soil tested!** - Soil samples can be submitted, FOR FREE at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) on Whitney Ave. Samples are tested for texture, organic matter, pH, nitrate nitrogen, ammonium nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium. Based on the test, you may soil amendments like limestone, fertilizer, compost or manure to ensure plants have a solid baseline to grow from!

For each area tested, use a garden trowel to take 10-20 narrow slices or cores of soil. For gardens and landscape planting, sample the upper 0-6 inches of soil. Mix the slices/cores together in a container and place 1-2 cups of the mixture in a sealable, waterproof bag or container.

Label sample with an identifying name and location and send/bring samples to CAES:  
*Mailing Address: The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station | Slate Laboratory | Soil Testing |  
123 Huntington Street | New Haven, 06511*

### PLANTING SCHEDULE (NEW HAVEN LAST FROST DATE ~APR. 22)

#### **MARCH:**

**Plant Inside (8-10 weeks before last frost):** Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chives, Eggplant, Lettuce, Hot Peppers, Sweet Peppers, Early Tomatoes

**In garden when soil temp is >40F:** Lettuce, Shelling Peas, Spinach, Turnips

#### **APRIL:**

**Start Inside (6-8 weeks before last frost):** Tomatoes, Basil, Peppers, Cucumbers, Melons, Spinach, Squash

**In garden when soil temp is 45-50F:**

Arugula, beets, dill, endive, kale, lettuce, parsnips, edible pod peas, radishes, spinach, swiss chard

**Transplant seedlings into garden (after hardening off):**

Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, onions, pansies, most perennials

#### **MAY:**

**Plant these seeds inside (2-4 weeks before last frost):**

More basil, cucumbers, melons, squash, nasturtiums

**Plant in garden when soil temp is over 50F:** Snap beans, beets, carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, radishes, spinach, swiss chard

**Transplant into garden after all danger of frost has past:**

Cucumbers, Melons, Spinach, Tomatoes



# Make Your Voice Heard: FY26 Budget Proposal

On Friday, Mayor Elicker unveiled his FY26-27 budget proposal that would raise the mill rate 4.01% to 40.98 in an effort to increase the city's general fund. The need for the tax hike is due in part to rising costs of debt service, employee healthcare, new police and teacher labor contracts, and a \$5 million bump for city schools.

The mayor's proposal would net the addition of 13 full-time city positions, including a new deputy controller and new internal auditor "to ensure city funds are used" appropriately, in response to recent scandals involving the theft or loss of city funds, the New Haven Independent reported. Projects previously funded by ARPA, like emergency response crew COMPASS and the city's climate and sustainability office, would be moved to the city's general fund as the federal deadline for spending hits at year's end. The proposed budget would also accommodate recent contracts struck with the police and teachers unions and a deal to maintain Yale's voluntary payments to the city at \$24M, per the Indy.



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Now, the proposal is in the hands of the Board of Alders for 3 months of public hearings and reviews prior to a final vote in late May. The city fiscal year begins July 1. I recommend you read the full proposal at the QR above.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS ARE SCHEDULED (City Hall @ 6 PM)**

**Thurs. 3/19 – Tues. 3/31 – Wed. 4/29**



For those that would like to participate in civil discourse and deliberations on where they think the city can improve, how the budget varies from their expectations, projects they support or or issues that still need to be addressed, the best way is to contact your alder. But how you do it matters, according to Ward 9 Alder Adam Marchand, who serves as chair of city's finance committee.

"Individual people calling their alders is always good. Alders want to hear from their constituents. But ... it's important to understand the timing of [the budget process]," Marchand said during a monthly meeting for the New Haven Climate Action Task Force. "You don't want to flood them with letters next week. You want to do it over the course of the budget cycle, and there's certain key moments to have in mind. There are three public meetings. Get people to turn out and testify at those meetings," he said.

Sending letters will have a bigger impact after the first public meeting, and maybe after the second, but it is really crucial to attend those meetings, Marchand underscored. "They're not Zoom meetings. Folks have to physically show up, but that means a lot," he said. "It means a lot when people actually physically show up. But they have three minutes. That's one sheet of paper – not both sides – one side. If you talk too much, folks will tune out."

Making the most of these opportunities requires engaging with other residents and businesses ahead of time and spreading out talking points. "If you have five things to say, get five people to say one thing each with a story attached to it. That has a much bigger impact," Marchand said.

"Gather support from organizations and residents who agree with what you want to have happen," he said. "Talk with them about coming to finance meetings where the budget is publicly heard, and if they're willing to do that, have them ready with one or two points, a brief anecdote, and make it less than three minutes long."

## CLIMATE EMERGENCY TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

The Climate Emergency Task Force is a group created by New Haven's Climate Emergency Resolution in 2019 that is charged with educating residents and working with local organizations to include job creation, environmental justice and public health in project development. The 15-person committee, which includes two Alders and multiple city employees, meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 5:15pm (zoom).

### Geothermal at Union Station

—The city completed thermal conductivity tests for the \$16.5 geothermal heat pump project at Union Station that will provide highly efficient, lower-cost heating and cooling at the station and could share heat with the proposed Union Square development across the street, where the New Haven Housing Authority hopes to build up to 1,000 units of mixed-income housing.

—The tests are now complete and the project remains on schedule, which would mean the ground loop portion of the project — i.e the actual drilling if and piping — would break ground in spring 2027, Steve Winter, executive director of climate & sustainability, said during the Climate Emergency Task Force monthly meeting on Feb. 25. A \$9.5 million EPA grant for the project is still intact, despite the current administration working to claw back two other grants to the city.

### Federal grant funding lawsuits

—Last March, New Haven joined a second nationwide lawsuit against the Trump administration over the city's loss of \$21 million in two already-allocated grants that would have funded clean energy retrofits in homes and a number of community and climate infrastructure projects across the city.

—"At the appeals court level, the judges said that the federal government can cancel individual grants. And if the grantee has issues with that, they can file suit, but they have to go to the special Court of Federal Claims," Winter said in CETF's January's meeting. "The other argument that the lawyers were trying to make is that it's not legal for the EPA to just cancel entire programs. Like with the Community Change or Government-to-Government program, they just said 'We're canceling all of these grants.'"

—That process is ongoing. The city's lawyers did note "it's a narrow legal pathway. ... but it's legally possible that this is a winning argument," Winter said. "I wish I could say I knew how long the next steps in this process will take, but I don't have any insight into that."

### Solar projects

—Two car ports solar canopies at Beaver Hills and Hill Central schools began producing electricity at the end of January, Winter said. A developer is financing the design, install and maintenance of the canopies, which act as both shaded parking and solar panels, and will then sell electricity produced at the arrays to the city at a fixed rate over a 20-year term power purchase agreement. The canopies will offset 35% of power used by the schools, resulting in an estimated \$27,000 in savings the first year and \$1.25 million over the course of the agreement, Elicker said in June.

—Another solar project led by Greenskies Clean Energy at the city's old dump at 260 Middletown Ave is also almost complete, Winter said. He expects the project's 1,920 solar panels to be energized by the end of March. The project is expected to yield over 1.4 million kilowatt-hours of power each year for Greenskies, whose lease requires it to pay the city \$6,000 per month for 20 years (\$1.4 million in revenue for the city's general fund, the Independent reported in Sept.

### Electric vehicles, equipment

—The Office of Climate & Sustainability met with the Department of Public Works and is working on an application for electric replacements for its current fleet. The city hopes to use a federal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grant administered through CT DEEP to cover up to 60% of the cost of new technology to replace older diesel engine, if current vehicles meet usage requirements.

—The Parks department has also created a rubric containing several criteria for evaluating electric equipment; though the department is not going all-electric at this point, metrics like weight, upfront cost and operating power can now be used to make decision about purchasing additional electric equipment replacements in the future, Winter said.

### Building inspections

—The task force also discussed work being done to transition Parks department equipment to electric and plans to perform investment-grade energy audits of the department's facilities at three priority locations at 720 Edgwood Ave (Parks HQ), 180 Park Road (Parks Operations and Pardee Greenhouses) and 775 Whalley Ave (Coogan Pavilion).

—These audits will consist of an energy engineer conducting an assessment of upgrades that the city can use to apply for utility incentives, Winter said. New Haven can then either claim the incentives and financing or find another funding source to pay for the city's cost share of the improvements, Winter said. The engineering consultant being used, from OCOsink, will also do a site visit for City Hall and the Hall of Records, "which are larger and much more complicated," Winter said.