FROM THE FRONT

"Miracles do not, in fact, break the laws of nature."
C.S. LEWIS BRITISH AUTHOR

Jacobson allegedly gambled city funds

CHIEF FROM PAGE 1

Jacobson withdrew about $5,000 a month from a fund designed to pay confidential drug informants through the NHPD's Narcotics Enforcement Program and made hundreds of transfers to DraftKings and FanDuel, according to the Connecticut State Police warrant.

The NHPD in January increased oversight of the accounts that Jacobson withdrew from after three assistant chiefs — including David Zanelli, who now runs the department — confronted Jacobson about the missing money.

Mayor Justin Elicker said in a Friday press conference that Jacobson will remain free on bond until his sentencing. The mayor said he expects Jacobson will be ordered to pay the full amount he stole, which will be determined by an ongoing investigation by the Connecticut State Police and the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office.

"Chief Jacobson's actions do not reflect the actions of the New Haven Police Department," Elicker said.

Elicker called the amount of money Jacobson spent on gambling "astounding" at Friday's press conference and said that the fund that he stole from now has more stringent oversight protocols.

The NHPD is no stranger to financial scandals. In 2007, a group of high-ranking NHPD officers stole and subsequently gambled thousands of dollars of narcotics informant funds, prompting the departure of then-chief Francisco Ortiz.

Part of the city's new oversight protocol following the scandal was appointing a fund chaperone — a role that Jacobson assumed in 2019 when he started extracting money from the fund and continued to hold until he stepped down.

After this year's theft, Elicker and the NHPD opted to stiffen money withdrawal rules, increase auditing of funds and keep department money in a video-monitored safe. Elicker also hired a third-party organization to conduct a review of department financial oversight policy.

"The city's faced a lot of financial challenges recently, and that kind of debt damages the reputation of the city but also takes funding away from programs we're working really hard to implement," he said.

A search and seizure warrant for records related to Jacobson's gambling revealed that he lost nearly $215,000 on FanDuel and DraftKings in 2025.

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Courtesy of Michelle So
The four-day walk from New Haven to Grand Central Terminal, which began last year, returned during October recess. Student leaders said this year's trip added deposits, injury refunds and early hotel bookings after last year's scramble for lodging.

Tradition sees more completion this fall

WALK FROM PAGE 1

including three who had always planned to walk only part of the route, dropped out, according to Steven Nguyen '27, who helped organize the trip. Last year, 41 people started out, and 13 people finished the walk. Some students attributed this year's increased success rate to early planning.

"You're completely isolated from people for the entire day just walking, and it gives you such a wonderful chance to just talk and talk and talk with these people, get to know about their lives, their interests and their stories," Bryce Falkoff '29, a returning walker and one of this year's leaders, said.

This year, leaders worked to keep participants from pushing past their limits. Emily Singh '28, who also walked last year, said leaders packed first aid kits and built stretches into every morning. They also split the route into legs of about four miles between stops, which they said helped tired walkers keep going.

Leaders also guaranteed to return deposits if an injury forced participants to stop.

"We promise to give everyone refunds for their deposit if they are injured and unable to continue," Singh said.

Participants who did not show up or who left without a health reason forfeited their deposits, which went toward hotels and other costs, she added.

Organizers also responded to last year's biggest logistical scramble. In 2025, every hotel near the group was fully booked or unaffordable, and a junior hosted 15 walkers at her family's home.

This year, leaders booked hotels early, checked each one's cancellation policy and planned to cap sign-ups if too many people registered, Singh said. One person paid for all the hotels up front, and the cost was split evenly among walkers, she said.

Leaders said they also announced the walk well in advance so students could plan their fall breaks around it and that they wanted it open to anyone within the limits of booked hotel rooms. When two first years emailed the day before departure, leaders offered to sleep on the floor to fit them in, Jayden Dao '30 and Owen Gregory '30, who both completed this year's walk, said.

Dao and Gregory attributed the increased number of successful participants with how early the walk was publicized, as opposed to last year, when it was more spontaneous. The trek began in 2025 as a joke among four members of the class of 2026.

"They knew more and they knew earlier, so it was easier for people to fully commit," Gregory said.

The structure still left room for detours, though, and a few participants worked with a restaurant to print fake menus that offered Harvard students free food and charged Yale students double.

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Locals spar on vacation rentals

RENTALS FROM PAGE 1

tive days and are often listed on sites like Airbnb, from operating without a license. Under the proposed legislation, only homeowners and longtime residents who rent rooms in their primary residence are eligible for a three-year renewable license.

Conditions of the license include hosting only one group of visitors at a time and compliance with protection codes. Guests would be limited to either two people per bedroom, excluding minors, or 10 people in total.

Supporters claim rising rent decays social fabric

Many commenters at Thursday's public hearing cited rising rent costs as the reason for their support.

Christopher June Zizzamia, a landlord and resident of the Edgewood neighborhood, said multiple real estate agents urged him to raise rent because neighboring Airbnb units "are determining marketing rate." Zizzamia said that he has seen his neighbors become displaced due to short-term rental properties, and that one was priced out of the area.

"Her unit is one of the many that's been converted to an Airbnb," Zizzamia said. "Two doors down, the neighbors who I'd known for almost a decade were pushed out to not only convert part of their home into Airbnbs, but to remodel with the explicit purpose of raising rent."

There is nominal empirical evidence linking an increase in vacation rental properties to an increase in overall housing prices. A 2019 working paper found that a 1 percent increase in Airbnb listings nationwide was correlated with a 0.018 percent increase in rents and a 0.026 percent increase in housing prices.

The paper noted that areas with lower owner occupancy — meaning higher populations of renters — face steeper pricing increases. New Haven's owner-occupied housing unit rate in the period between 2020 and 2024 was 28.4 percent, less than half the national owner-occupancy rate during the same period. A 2022 study found a correlation between increased short-term rentals and increased rental and housing prices in New York City.

Taran Samarth GRD '26 '29, a member of UNITE HERE Local 33, alleged that a lack of regulation in the city has incentivized investors and corporations to create short-term rentals. Samarth claimed multiple New Haven apartment buildings, including Winchester Lofts, the Pierpoint, Westville Village, Twenty Fair, the Maddox, the Liberty and the Taft list one or more "vacant, investor-owned" units on Airbnb.

Winchester Lofts, Pierpoint, Twenty Fair, Westville Village, the Liberty and the Taft did not respond to requests for comment. A spokesperson for RMS Companies, the real estate developer that owns Pierpoint and the Maddox, confirmed in an email to the News that the company offers a limited selection of fully-furnished short-term rental residences. The spokesperson did not confirm whether those rentals are located in Pierpoint or in the Maddox specifically.

Samarth also alleged that Mandy Management, a property management company, "has converted numerous apartments in Wooster Square" into short-term rentals. Other New Haveners, including Local 34 vice president and former alder Ellen Cupo, also alleged that Mandy Management hosted short-term rental properties near their residences.

Yako Ma, the general manager of Mandy Management, wrote in an email to the News that the company does not operate short-term rentals.

"No Mandy Management unit has ever been listed on Airbnb, Vrbo or another short-term rental platform," Ma wrote. "Further, a review of current Airbnb listings in Wooster Square shows that they are hosted by individuals or hospitality businesses with no affiliation to Mandy Management."

Some residents also said that the proliferation of short-term rentals has damaged community relationships. Zizzamia said "that you can feel the social fabric of our street deteriorating."

Camila Bortolleto and Alex Rodriguez, who live in Wooster Square, said that 14 out of 31 units in their building have been converted into short-term rentals. They said that guests have left trash with foul odors that permeate the hallways and parked their cars in resident's spots.

Bortolleto and Rodriguez said they have not been able to remedy issues they related to short-term renters with building owner Urban Haven Corp. Urban Haven Corp did not respond to a request for comment.

Some residents said they supported the proposal to regulate vacation rentals because it would direct more visitors to hotels.

"As a proud union member, I prefer visitors to our city to use hotels staffed by workers with union jobs that compensate them fairly and that treat them with dignity," Ellie Browne GRD '29 said.

Shams Goodwin, a worker at the Omni New Haven Hotel, said he believed the ordinance "provides dignity" to hotel workers like him.

New Haven Rising, a community organization focused on social justice, built support for the ordinance through an online petition and a rally at City Hall last Tuesday. New Haven Rising is affiliated with the four locally-based UNITE HERE unions. One of those, Local 217, represents hotel workers. Some community members cited support for labor unions in advocating for the ordinance.

Opponents cite community investment

While opponents of the ordinance agreed with concerns about affordability and corporations' profiting off of short-term rentals, they urged legislators to consider the financial needs of their constituents.

Rafael Bayarri, who lives in the Dixwell neighborhood, said the Airbnb he runs in his multi-family home allows his family to afford their bills. Under the proposed ordinance, licenses for multi-family homes would only allow operators to rent the housing unit they occupy.

"Thanks to my Airbnb, I can actually pay the mortgage every month and I can afford to live in New Haven," Bayarri said.

Some opponents also pushed back on claims that short-term rental owners operators aren't invested in the New Haven community.

Westville resident Stephanie Kilpatrick, who operates an Airbnb, said her rental unit features artwork made by neighborhood artists and a guidebook promoting local businesses. She added that Airbnbs can fulfill needs that other accommodation types cannot.

"They're not simply looking for separate hotel rooms," Kilpatrick said. "They're looking for a home where they can gather, share meals and celebrate together."

Local property manager Edward Masse said certain visitors may not be able to turn to hotels if Airbnb rentals are restricted.

"One of our properties is the only place in New Haven that is 100 percent allergen free and safe," Masse said. "We've had people that have been undergoing treatment at Yale New Haven Hospital that that's the only place they can stay."

Amendments to ordinance in the works

All seven alders on the Legislation Committee agreed on the need for short-term rental regulation, but some questioned the rigidity of the proposed license requirements.

"Listening to people say that they're basically renting out their first floor so they can keep their whole house, that's real," Committee Vice Chair and Ward 22 Alder Jeanette Morrison said.

Committee Chair and Ward 27 Alder Richard Furlow discouraged members from adding amendments to the ordinance during deliberations because New Haven's corporation counsel, which provides legal advice to city officials, "did not give an opinion" on the proposal. Earlier in the evening, Assistant Corporation Counsel Michael Pinto said his office had "not done a deep dive on the legality" of the proposed ordinance.

"I suspect that there'll be some amendments by the time it hits the floor," Furlow said. "We need to take some steps back. There needs to be some research."

Ward 1 Alder Elias Theodore '27, who voted for a favorable recommendation, said that he would support amending the ordinance to allow operators who own multi-family homes or units next door to their primary residence to obtain licenses.

"I really care about the composition of our neighborhoods and that people feel like they have neighbors," Theodore said. "At the same time, when I think about my ideal view of New Haven, we do have some short-term rentals."

Asked for comment on the outcome of the meeting, Airbnb spokesperson Ivan Valladares wrote in an email to the News that the company is "encouraged by the many residents who spoke out against the proposal and urge city leaders to consider their concerns, as well as study the impact on local businesses, before moving forward."

Morrison and Ward 26 Alder Amy Marx LAW '00 voted against sending the legislation to the full Board of Alders.

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Zora Penager Davidson / Contributing Photographer
Over 100 people testified at a Thursday Board of Alders Legislation Committee meeting on a proposal to create a licensing program for most New Haven vacation rentals. If passed, the ordinance would only allow short-term rentals in primary residences.