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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES MORE THAN 17,300 UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCED IN 2014, ENOUGH TO HOUSE NEARLY 42,000 NEW YORKERS

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Okay. We're here at 45-55 North Elliott to talk about affordable housing, because this is a place that epitomizes the work we've been doing, and the work we're going to do over these next years, to help hard-working New Yorkers have an affordable place to live. You're going to hear about the story of this place, and this is not abstraction, this is not a study – this is the real thing. This is where people who need affordable housing are being given a chance to stay in a building they love, to stay in the neighborhood they love, to continue to be part of the borough they love, to know that this city is still a place for them. And I've said a number of times over the years, but I think I've got to frame it again – our goal here is to keep New York City a place for everyone.

We've seen some troubling developments over the last few decades – more and more people feeling priced out of their own neighborhood, feeling this wasn't a city for them anymore. New York City has to be a city for all. That is our history and that is our destiny. We have to be a city for all to be the greatest city in the world. And so, we endeavored to put together the biggest, most ambitious affordable housing plan in the history of this country – literally no city or state has ever attempted to build or preserve 200,000 units of housing in just ten years. It's unprecedented, but it's necessary. And we believed from the beginning, if we put our minds and our hearts and our souls and our resources to it, if we were single-minded, we could achieve this goal.

So let's start with some good news. The goal – 200,000 units over ten years. We always knew the first year would be the hardest. We didn't even announce the plan until May. We were putting all the personnel in place. We were revving up the engine. But we said if we could get to 16,000 units by December 31st that were in the pipeline – that had been financed, were starting to move – at least have the financing in place by December 31st, 2014 – that that would've put us on pace to meet our overall goal. 16,000 units, and we would know we were on track. I am very pleased to report to you that we have reached 17,300 units that have now been started – that have been financed and are moving forward. So this team standing around me today, from my administration, was given a very ambitious goal, and they surpassed that goal by a lot – 1,300 more units than they were planned to hit. That means 1,300 more families who will have affordable housing in the near term.

I want to put that in human perspective. Those 17,300 units will be enough for at least 42,000 New Yorkers – 42,000 more people who will get affordable housing. It is an extraordinary start on an extraordinary program, and it gives us great confidence about our ability to keep hitting the numbers year in and year out.

The folks who deserve so much credit – I want to acknowledge, of course, our deputy mayor, Alicia Glen, who has led this effort with extraordinary skill and energy. I want to acknowledge the president of the Housing Development Corporation, Gary Rodney, who's been a key player in making sure that these complicated financings happened and happened on time – and I want to thank Gary for his leadership and focus, making it happen every day. You're going to hear from our housing commissioner, Vicki Been, in a few minutes, who is

charged, with her team, to do all the nuts and bolts of making these complicated deals come together – finding the right locations, working with communities. This team has done an exceptional job, and they’re just getting started.

I want to acknowledge some of the elected officials who are here with us. Assembly Member Joe Lentol – we’re in your district, Joe, I understand – and he is the dean of our assembly delegation from the city. Walter Mosley, of the assembly, thank you as well for being here. Laurie Cumbo, we’re in your district – and you look fabulous today – not an unusual state of affairs. Your level of sparkle is really taking attention away from the topic at hand. And obviously some other key elected officials around me – you’re going to hear from them in just a moment.

What’s happening here on North Elliott is exciting because it’s the real thing – it’s real people being helped. The deal that was put together for this building will keep these units affordable for 159 families – 159 families.

[Applause]

For the next 30 years, these families will have the confidence in knowing they can afford to be in their neighborhood. And, as part of this plan, this building will get a real upgrade that it’s needed for a long time. It will get repairs it has needed. Although this building is a co-op, it may not be the kind of co-op you read about sometimes in the real estate section. This is a co-op that was put together by working people, hard-working people, who didn’t have a lot of resources. And they struggled, but they wanted the kind of housing that they and their families could be a part of for the long-term.

Here in this building, many households have modest incomes. A lot of families make – in fact, most families make under \$60,000 a year. Many make only \$30- to \$40,000 dollars a year for family income. We all know that \$30,000 or \$40,000 doesn’t get you very far in the New York City housing market. They needed someplace affordable. Many of the residents came into this building at a time when Fort Greene, like so many neighborhoods in Brooklyn, had not had a lot of the investment it’s received in recent years, when things were more affordable. In fact, a lot of folks came into this building as their next step coming out of NYCHA developments. This was a chance to keep building their dreams and moving forward. But even with that history, the threat began to loom more and more each year that this building might be taken away, that it would become unaffordable, that it would become unsustainable. So folks who had worked so hard to make this work and have a way to live in their own neighborhood had to worry, if they saw prices rising all around them, that they would lose a grip on something so precious to them and their family. And one of the things I’ve said is that in a city which has seen so many challenges, but also so many good developments, we have to always address the lives that people are really living.

There are some things that have happened because a lot of investment has come in, because of gentrification and other factors, that you could say have strengthened a lot of our neighborhoods. There’s also something that’s happened in terms of rising housing prices that put immense stress on everyday people. And a lot of times our policies didn’t fully account for that reality. One of the reasons we developed this plan was to really address that head-on, and in fact, to focus a lot of the housing in neighborhoods where the gentrification pressures had been particularly intense, to give people a chance to stay in their own neighborhood. Fort Greene is a great example of that. The city looked at the situation and intervened.

And this is what I like about this team and this plan – it is a muscular plan. It is a plan that sees a problem and gets in the middle of it, rather than just watching as affordable building after affordable building slowly fade away. This policy is about intervening and making a difference. So, 159 families know that the resources are now going to be there, so they can stay here and get the repairs they need for the long-term viability of the building.

Now, some people have had the impression that our affordable housing plan was just about building new shiny buildings – and we will certainly be building some new shining buildings – but the plan also hinges on preserving so many buildings where everyday New Yorkers live and making sure they remain affordable. In a lot of cases, we have the building and we have people in many of the units in the building – the problem is an economic one. If there isn't some intervention made, people will be forced out, and you will lose a currently affordable unit and it will become an unaffordable unit. That's the preservation part of this plan – to intervene – keep the unit affordable. So, it's a big part of what we're doing.

65 percent – in fact, 65 percent of the units for 2014 in that 17,300 units – 65 percent – are preservations, meaning existing housing. In the plan overall, over 10 years, we plan on 60 percent being preservation, 40 percent being new units.

For real people – again, couldn't make more difference. This is the number one expense. As I say that, I imagine everyone who's thinking about their rent check or however you pay for your housing – your mortgage – you're thinking – I think we can all agree that we would have a unanimous show of hands. There is no greater expense in our lives than housing, particularly in this town. If you can address that, you can really make a difference in the core problem of income inequality, because income equality can be addressed two ways – raising incomes and benefits, and reducing the cost of living. Now, those two concepts go together.

We're taking dead aim at the number one expense in people's lives, which is housing. For people like Sheryl Morse, who you're going to hear from in a moment – born and raised in the neighborhood, lived here all your life – true blue Brooklynite –

[Applause]

– in this building nearly 40 years?

Sheryl Morse: Yes.

Mayor: And three generations of her family have lived here. And Sheryl is one of the people who've made this building great, but she's known it has faced real repair challenges, maintenance challenges – there's only one working elevator, there's been scaffolding up for a longtime over the years. So, the co-op was at a point where they were running out of options and they needed resources – and they needed them in a way they could actually afford to handle. The city is investing \$3 million dollars for the repairs in this building because by investing that \$3 million dollars 159 families know for 30 years they will be secure. That's a great way to use \$3 million dollars for the betterment of this city. Now, we understand that this is one example of a situation we're experiencing all over the city. That is why we feel an urgency, why the plan is so ambitious.

Many people said to me why didn't you come up with an easier plan? Because that 200,000 units is definitely needed, and we need to keep finding ways to create market rate units as well – there's a desperate need for housing in this city. So we went to the largest plan we could possibly sustain, and it means every time you build one more unit or preserve one more unit, one more family is secure, one more family is stable, one more family can realize their dreams and all the other things that matter in life. Getting education for their children, getting a good job, taking care of the seniors in their family – it all hinges on housing.

We don't want a situation where people feel that the forces around them overwhelm them and there's no one fighting for them or no one compensating by coming up with a plan that protects everyday people. That's why we created this plan. And I think it's fair to say, people like Sheryl who've given their lives to their neighborhood, helping to make the neighborhood a better place – they are the backbone of this city. If you believe New York City is a great place, if you believe New York City is great because it's a city of neighborhoods then look at Sheryl and so many other people who've made neighborhoods great. We owe a debt

as a city to the people who've made our neighborhoods great, and we need to make sure they can stay in the neighborhoods they love.

A note in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

It's the same in Spanish. Did you know that?

[Laughter]

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that –

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: Gracias.

[Laughter]

With that, a woman who has to actually make those 200,000 units happen – and she's doing a great job leading the troops – our housing commissioner, Vicki Been.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Just one comment on what Jumaane said – I don't know about all of my colleagues – I had 12 years before I was mayor as an elected official – eight years in the City Council, four years as public advocate. Every single year, when I went to subway stops, when I went to supermarkets, when we had to town hall meetings – number one issue was affordable housing, every single year. So I think there is a tremendous groundswell in this city for this kind of plan, and a lot of support to see it work.

We're going to do questions on this announcement, and then we will do off-topic. On topic first, yes.

Question: Looking at the income bounds, there are only 4 percent [inaudible] extremely low-income. I wonder if you do have a plan to increase your low-income [inaudible]?

Commissioner Vicki Been, Department of Housing Preservation and Development: Yes, we absolutely do. We committed in the housing plan that we would try to get to 12 percent for that extremely low-income and very low-income band. We are making progress. It's going to take a while, because as you know, those are the hardest, and they require the most resources. We just issued several new term sheet programs, which we affectionately describe as ELLA – the extremely low-income and low – and very low-income program – and also a program called SARA. Sorry, we're in – we're in [Laughter] – for our very low-income seniors. But we are rolling out those programs, and we expect to make a lot more progress towards those extremely low-income units.

Mayor: The – the other point in that is this is some 200,000 units – again, enough to house half a million people – over ten years. This is a jigsaw puzzle, and I've really watched these professionals do their work – it's extraordinary. They find a building that might be supported for the long term, like this one. They find a place where a new building can be built. They find a place where rezoning can be done. It's this constant – literally,

putting the pieces together, putting the financing together, putting the neighborhood support together, working with the elected officials. And whatever is there at any given moment, you make the play with what you've got. Sometimes, as we had in the Bronx with the senior development that I was at the groundbreaking for with Cardinal Dolan, that's all low-income seniors – every single unit. Other times, it will be a mix of incomes, and some on the higher scale, some on the lower scale. It's all going to depend on the individual building. As you heard here, a lot of people make \$30- to \$40,000, which is certainly an income level where people are struggling to stay in New York City. So, it's going to be mix and match, mix and match, all the way through, but we're going to hit those overall targets.

Question: So [inaudible] preserved – like, what's the difference between preserving a house, and just sort of like, helping out? Like, does it have to be [inaudible] ?

Mayor: I'll start, and I'll pass to Vicki. It literally is contractual, meaning – let's say you provided a grant to fix the elevator or something. That does not guarantee a long-term outcome. This is, we're providing financing, and there's a contractual deal – it's a legally binding deal – that it will remain affordable over a 30-year time frame.

Commissioner Been: But we also define, you know, preservation in terms of putting the unit under a regulatory agreement, which requires it to check in with us. You know, we do asset management to make sure that the building is being maintained well, to ensure that it's on strong financial ground. So, it's a combination of the regulatory agreement, the affordability restrictions, and the fact that we're keeping an eye on making sure that the building is in long term health.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Been: That's one piece of our preservation but we – we have a wide variety of strategies, and really try to, you know, reach different buildings –

Mayor: That is an example. It's true.

Commissioner Been: Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Mayor: Because – I think it's a good question, because I think what happens is you can build, but again, in New York City, of course, there's space restrictions. There's only so many, you know, available plots of land and it takes time to build and all. When you preserve something that already exists it's very fast. If you think about it in the scheme of things, you have a fast immediate impact. But if that building leaves affordability, it's very hard to ever get it back. So, yes, I think you hit the nail on the head, on one piece of this plan – is finding a building before it leaves affordability, saving it so it remains affordable for the long term.

Question: [inaudible] do you think, if you bring these proposals to developments [inaudible] affordable housing anywhere in the city to get a 421-A.

Mayor: We're going to address the 421-A issue as part of our Albany agenda, which will be coming up soon. I'll be testifying in Albany. So, you know, I will defer that question until we put together a clearer vision. What we've said throughout, of course, is – as part of our affordability plan – we're working very closely with the real estate industry, but we're also driving a very hard bargain, and ensuring that we get maximum affordability in each situation.

Question: I just would like to address how you count the units because as you know, Mayor Bloomberg was counting some of his units [inaudible]. So, you know, if you're counting, I think it's over a thousand units that he was counting on. He fell short on his goal. So, I wonder if you can address, you know, why are you counting calendar year instead of fiscal? And how do you feel about the fact that he didn't meet the goal while you are progressing on your goal?

Mayor: I'm going to turn to Vicki on the details, but first, we do both. We look at things, by definition, calendar year because that's what the rest of the world does, you know? And then governments look at things in fiscal year terms too. So this is a calendar year announcement. As Vicki mentioned, there will be a fiscal year goal as well. I think in terms of any administration's previous efforts – and there is a pretty solid history in this city of noble affordable housing programs that really had a big impact – ours is the biggest, ours is the most ambitious, and the fastest, too. But I think one of the things that is a little different here is that we said from day one – this is an urgent – a personal priority of mine, and of everyone in City Hall – that we are literally talking about this veritably every day; that Deputy Mayor Glen knows that any tool she needs to achieve this goal is at her disposal. So I think it is about the very ambitiousness of the plan has brought us to a level of focus – very personal focus for all of us – that I think is different than some of the things that happened in the past, because we set such a challenging goal that the only way we're going to get there is with constant, personal focus. And it's on us. You know, we have drawn that fire on ourselves. We're going to hold ourselves accountable to get it done.

Commissioner Been: So, you know, we count anything that we close, which means the financing and the regulatory agreements are put in place, from the time that Mayor de Blasio took office, right? And – which is exactly what Mayor Bloomberg did when he took office. Certainly, some of the projects that we closed in the very early months were projects that that team worked on, and similarly, we will leave other projects in the pipeline that the next team will work on. But, we – you know, we started from the day we – from the day that the mayor took office.

Question: [inaudible] ten years, so presumably for the last two years, who will take credit for those units – your administration or the next?

Unknown: [inaudible]

[Laughter]

Mayor: Project future credit – that's an abstract question. Let me make sure we're clear – and I have not been in the nuances of housing finance closings before, so we had a really good discussion at the beginning of the administration about what we believe the standard should be. There has to be value added, is the simple answer. If the previous administration had finished everything on a project, then we aren't claiming it, but if there was real work that had to be done to get to that final deal – and financing deals are complicated, they take a lot of work, a lot of human power – that's when we said, okay, we added the value to get it to the finish line, that goes on our account. When the day comes that the – my employment contract is no longer viable, we're going to leave a plan on-goal. And then, if the next administration wants to pick it up and keep it going as is, they have that opportunity to do so. That will of course be their choice how they want to approach it, but we are going to lead this thing on-goal for 200,000.

Question: Can you explain to us here in this building why these units are considered preserved and what you did to preserve them?

Mayor: I'll give the overview and then over to Vicki. The building, again, had experienced real financial challenges and physical structural challenges – and that's a bad combination that would've meant, at a certain point, it would've been no longer financially viable. There would've been certainly a temptation to sell it privately. And we wanted to keep this affordable, and so we have come in with the financing to make the repairs, to keep it affordable for the long-term, and, again, to do it in a way that is contractually binding.

Commissioner Been: So we [inaudible] – give me – give me height. So, we really, you know, do two different things, right? One is that we provide money so that the costs of maintaining the building are affordable to the low and moderate income people who live here, right? If we didn't do that, they'd have to raise maintenance, it

would become unaffordable, they might sell, and they might sell to people of much higher incomes – the building might flip, right? So that’s the first thing. We also always enter into a regulatory agreement, which requires that the building, if anyone – if any of the currently low and moderate income residents were to sell, they must sell to a similarly low or moderate income person. So that keeps the project affordable over the long-term.

Question: [inaudible] repairs involved [inaudible]

Commissioner Been: The elevator, the roof, the façade, windows, weather-stripping, asbestos removal, et cetera.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Been: About three and a half million dollars.

Question: [inaudible] percentage [inaudible] interest rate on the financing [inaudible]

Commissioner Been: It's a – it's a loan. It's a loan that gets extended under a – I don't want to bore you with finance, because you probably didn't have that in pre-k, but you know –

[Commotion]

[Laughter]

Commissioner Been: But it's what we call the [inaudible] program.

Mayor: But if you want to see the nuances of financing [inaudible].

Question: [inaudible] timeline when you preserve a unit. Are they always inevitably a 30-year preservation or are [inaudible]?

Mayor: 30 is very typical, but there's – Gary – 30 is often the case, but there's different permutations.

[Laughter]

Gary Rodney: Okay. Exactly. What the mayor said is exactly correct. It's done case-by-case. In some cases we actually do go beyond 30 years. In some cases permanent, sometimes it's high-charge tax abatement – it varies on each deal and what we're trying to do and what the particulars are.

Question: [inaudible]

Gary Rodney: [inaudible]

Mayor: [inaudible]

Gary Rodney: Minimum 30. Minimum 30 and some cases we've gone on longer.

Mayor: And I think the other point in that is everything costs money. And someone once said, “It's not about the money, it's about the money.” Everything costs money, so, it – you know, the longer you go and the more you add to the deal, the more it costs. But 30 years is obviously, you know, a whole generation – and we think it's a good standard and we can add to it – we always do. On topic. On topic, going once. Please.

Question: [inaudible] 17,000-plus and then the 16,000 next year. You still need to get –

Mayor: That 16,000 was by the end of the fiscal year – just for the fiscal year, though.

Question: Is your goal 20,000 a year? Is that what you're [inaudible]?

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, again, the – hold on. I want to give you some education. The original plan, that is the cover of this beautiful illustration, is the cover of the original plan from May. And – I don't know if we brought copies?

Unknown: [inaudible] the website is always available.

[Laughter]

You can use the interweb to – [laughs] – but in any event, that lays out the 200,000; the time frame; the breakdown by income; the different types – you know, the preservation, and the new construction, rezonings, the whole thing. So, but your question – obviously we have to get to an average of 20,000 units a year. Now, 17,300-plus is very, very strong. In the context of the last 10 years, it's one of the strongest years we've seen – certainly in the last decade. We want to keep doing more because we'd actually required ourselves to do an even more ambitious level. So, I think the average year, by definition, will be about 20,000.

Yes.

Question: How much actual money is going into these 17,300 units?

Mayor: Gary. I can't decide if I'm [inaudible] – Vicki or Gary? Gary? Gary!

Gary Rodney: For the transactions that HDC financed, we had a total of \$1.9 billion dollars in bond financing that we had advanced. And then, in addition to that, we have subordinate mortgages. That was not on every single transaction. In some cases, some of our preservation deals were able to support it without and some went with some additional money to that. We can kind of get you details if you'd like, but there was additional money that HPD put in and certain transactions that we were not involved in.

Mayor: Explain what the \$1.9 billion is – \$1.9 billion of –

Gary Rodney: \$1.9 billion of what we call our tax-exempt bond financing.

Mayor: So it would leverage that?

Unknown: [inaudible]

Gary Rodney: And that's not city dollars, as well. That's actually a very good point – a very important point.

Mayor: Very important point – not the taxpayers' money. Yes. [laughs] Thank you.

Last call, on topic. Going once. On topic, going twice. Off topic?

Question: [inaudible] report today about Rikers, [inaudible] people that work there have criminal records. I want to see what you thought of the report, what's being done for changes, and also, you know [inaudible] gangs [inaudible]?

Mayor: Sure. There's a lot being done. I think people should go back and give that report another look. I think some of the interpretation of the report missed the fact that in the report is an articulation of the reforms needed that had already begun. Commissioner Ponte has a national reputation as a reformer, and he came into a situation where those problems described in the report existed before he got there. And he immediately started putting in the checks and balances to address the problem. So in fact, now, the screening process is very different than it was even a year ago, because of Commissioner Ponte's reforms. And we think it's going to make a big difference. There's absolutely a sensitivity to the possibility that anyone might have a connection to, you know, a gang, or any other type of negative activity, and there's a lot more screening being put in place to catch that – that you also know, all our law enforcement entities have an internal affairs type capacity to look for any signs that may need to be addressed, of any kind of corruption. And certainly, DOI does that as well, all the time.

Question: [inaudible] protesters [inaudible]? And also, [inaudible] –

Mayor: [inaudible] time, let me – let me. So the first one – I mean, obviously, we're coming up on Martin Luther King Day, and Dr. King is, you know, I think the greatest example in the history of our country of how to change society using nonviolent, peaceful, respectful means – but very resolute means nonetheless. His movement was known for a positive, but constant, vigorous approach to social change, and that's what I believe in. And there was not hatred, there wasn't negativity – it was about a positive vision of where we had to go. And by the way, his movement won the day in so many ways, and achieved their goals in so many ways. Anyone who thinks we need to make some changes in our society should express that peacefully and respectfully. That is the path – if they want to be true to those goals, if they actually believe in those goals, and actually want to achieve those goals. But anyone who uses hate speak, anyone who denigrates our officers, anyone who is negative or threatening to our officers – first of all, it's wrong, it's disgusting, it's unacceptable. But second of all, if they actually believe in what they're saying they want to change, that's not how you change it. And I've said it many times, I'm going to say it again – it is up to people who believe in change. If they see people using that language, disassociate from them. If they see people – in any way, shape, or form – planning violence towards a police officer, that needs to be reported immediately, and interrupted. And, the people have to literally intervene in any way they can to stop it. We're going to protect peaceful protest. That's part of the American tradition. It's part of what our constitution demands. But people need to be respectful of the men and women who protect us, and actually help to guarantee that our democracy can function.

Question: In terms of the police unions, your relationship with them – where do you see it standing today?

Mayor: We are very much in sync with the people of this city – me, my team, we want to move forward. We believe the best path for this city is that we work together – all of us – communities and police, City Hall and certainly, we're working with the police unions, we're reaching out, we've meetings – because we need to move forward. We need to create a safer city for everyone – for community members and police alike. And we have said very readily, we have an open door to anyone who wants to have a conversation about ways to make this city safer, ways to support our officers, make our officers safer. We're going to keep doing that. So, I think there is clearly a way forward, but I think it's very important that others participate willingly and positively in that process.

Question: [inaudible] yesterday, the Lieutenants Benevolent Association president sent you a letter saying [inaudible] police force [inaudible]

Mayor: I thought it was a thoughtful level Mr. Turco sent, and obviously we've been working with him very respectfully on the contract, which will be presented to his members soon. And I want to say, I think he's played a productive and constructive role. He raised several issues that I've said, certainly, we want to work on together. Now, as to whether we need law changes related to resisting arrest, I'm not a lawyer, and that's something we will certainly examine, certainly we'll talk about with Commissioner Bratton, and with the City Council, et cetera. But on the core question of how citizens should handle their relationship with police – it's

abundantly clear, if a police officer says you're under arrest, you must – you must – submit to that. You must respect that the police officer has given an instruction, and you have to respect that instruction. It's very straightforward. And I think people all over this city broadly understand that, and those who don't, need to understand that. But we'll look at the substantive content of that letter, and we'll see how we can work together. Okay, Dave, I still owe you another one, but first, let me get Jake.

Question: Yeah, [inaudible] following the Paris attacks [inaudible]?

Mayor: We did, yes – at key Jewish community locations.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I want to separate the questions, because the first point was, in the aftermath of the attack in Paris – by the way, this was true when there was a very tragic attack at the synagogue in Jerusalem, this was true in the attack, I think it was in Belgium – there was a number of very inappropriate antisemitic incidents around the world, and each time, we go on alert. We reinforce the Israeli Consulate. We reinforce key Jewish community locations around the city. That is for a period of time, while the police assess if there is any additional specific threat, because obviously there's a great deal of concern, whether there will be either a coordinated action that might negatively affect the community, or whether there might be a copycat attack, et cetera. So that is always for a period of time, and the police have that judgement from the intelligence division, of what that period of time should be. Separate – the question of what's going on in precincts around the city, I think it's very clear, more and more good things are happening – more and more progress. And that is, from my point of view, meaning that we are making sure people are safe. I think if you look at the overall numbers, in terms of what's happened in the last days – people are being kept safe. And I believe that is true in Jewish communities as well. But if Assemblyman Hikind – who I've known for a long time – has a specific suggestion, or a specific problem, we'll certainly look to address that.
Bobby?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I was looking for my notes, because there's been a big rebound today. Look, what we are pleasantly surprised by is the level of interest. We honestly thought it would ramp up over time. We got a huge outpouring of interest in the beginning – we consider that a victory, we consider that a good thing. There was a problem on the website yesterday. Now, website applications are – I'm being handed a blackberry, thank you, Phil – okay, website applications are operational again, so much so, that primarily through the website today, more than 17,000 appointments have been booked for people to get their municipal ID card. So, we now have had over 5,000 people enroll in the municipal ID program in just three days and change. 17,000 more have an appointment scheduled. The typical wait time is about six minutes, if you call 3-1-1, to get through the process. So, we think things are moving in a very good direction. As for how long it takes to get to the appointment, I'll – we'll check back on that, the exact timeline. But we're going to keep additionally adding personnel as needed. We just didn't expect such a wonderful demand. It's a good thing, and we'll add additional personnel as needed.
Sally.

Question: Mayor, [inaudible] message to members of the PBA who are dissatisfied with their leadership in the upcoming election?

Mayor: Again, my view is, it's not my place to talk about the internal dynamics of a labor union. I think a lot of people want us to move forward in this city. I think a lot of police officers want us to move forward. And by the way, over half our police officers live here in this city. So it's not just personal for them in terms of their employment, it's personal for them in terms of their lives and their families, as residents of this city. I think – I think what people really are looking for is a chance to move forward in a productive fashion. And that's what I believe they're debating internally, and that's what labor unions do.

Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor, just to reference [inaudible] are you supportive of the council speaker's plan [inaudible] \$7.3 million dollars [inaudible] would you raise money for that? How would you fund that?

Mayor: Yeah, the speaker informed me that she's going to make that request formally as part of the budget process, and I think it's a very good idea. I support it. And we'll put that right into the budget process for this upcoming year. And I think, you know, it's a good example of the fact that once she and the members of the City Council identified something that needed to be done to additionally support our officers, and support officer safety, they were quick to act on it.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Meaning?

Question: Renew that, or –

Mayor: We want to obviously make sure the resources are there so that our officers have the best protective capacity. So, you know, this is an investment we would make in this budget, and then continue to add as needed, to ensure people are safe.

Question: The 2016 Democratic National Convention is expected to be announced in the next couple of weeks. You have said a few times now that you don't believe that the protests we've seen in the last six weeks or so, the resulting tensions with police, should impact your bid. Two part question on that – have you or your staff received, sort of, concerns from members of the DNC about those issues, and whether that's happened already, or would happen, what would you say then to reassure them?

Mayor: Every conversation that I've had with the DNC has been about very practical issues, of what kind of resources will be available – I think in many ways, this is the first question on their mind – logistics, all the things necessary to put on a convention. The host committee – that's quite colorful [laughter] – the host committee – this is an extraordinary story. The host committee for the Democratic National Convention that was formulated by this city now has 116 members – all of them people who have a lot of capacity, and can help bring together a lot of resources. We have \$16 million dollars in commitments. We have \$6 million dollars in the bank already. That is far beyond what any other city has. So, and I think – also, by the way, when the DNC is making its evaluation, they're looking at one of the newest and best arenas in the whole country. They're looking at, in my case, a mayor who will be there throughout this process – which is not true in at least one of the other locations. They're looking at the finest police force in the country, and a large police force that can handle big events. So, I think that's what's on their mind right now, and I think that's why we'll prevail.

Question: A few weeks ago, you said the media was being divisive by laying out some of the things that protesters had been saying, and now you're [inaudible] sick things the protesters are saying. I just want to know, have your thoughts on protest movements evolved at all in these past?

Mayor: What I was trying to say then and I believe now is that the vast majority of people who have been protesting have been peaceful and respectful. The vast majority of people protesting are asking for changes and reforms in the relationship between police and community. We are working every day as this administration for changes and reforms in the relationship between police and community – and we laid it out less than two weeks ago. A huge decrease in stops, and I think we've gotten out – we've weeded out the unnecessary stops. We're now at about 47,000 compared to over 700,000 just three years ago. We have seen the stops that are being made are much higher quality in terms of policing – more likelihood that they actually lead to a charge or arrest. We have seen a great decrease in marijuana arrests. Systematically, we are addressing the concerns that community members have had, and we're going to continue to do that with the retraining of the police force, with body

cameras, with a host of other measures. This is what people want to see happen in this city, and I think a lot of what people are saying who are protesting respectfully and positively is they want to see that continue. There is a small group that has been disrespectful, that has been disruptive on purpose – that don't want to see things work, that actually would like to see all of our efforts fail – and their politics is a more destructive politics. That's a small, small subset of the protesters, and what they've said in many cases has been vile and provocative on purpose, because that's their goal. But I don't like when that small group is used to paint what is tens of thousands of people who actually comported themselves properly. And if you want evidence, talk to the leadership of the NYPD, who has handled these demonstrations and is the first to say the vast majority of the participants have been peaceful and appropriate.

Question: Do you have in mind specific [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think some of the folks who are going to be protesting today have been, you know, unfortunately, have been associated with some of those very inappropriate actions and statements.

Question: As public advocate, you were big on kind of FOIL and transparency reform. I just wanted to ask you about the NYPD, which continues to be one of the few agencies I think in the universe to only take requests by snail mail, and I'm wondering if it wouldn't be within your power just to snap your fingers and make them accept requests by email, like every other agency, and whether you would be willing to do that?

Mayor: We're – we're working on, on an ongoing basis, trying to improve the FOIL process across the city government, and there will be additional announcements about that coming up. I'm not familiar with the nuances of the NYPD policy. I do know for sure a lot of the subject matter is very, very sensitive, but we'll certainly continue to talk to them about the best way to approach it, but this is something we'll be working on on an ongoing basis.

Phil Walzak: Thank you, guys.

Mayor: Thanks, everyone.

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