

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 24, 2020, 10:30 AM
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everyone. I want to begin today with a very heavy heart and tell you about the passing of David Dinkins. I'm feeling a lot right now. Chirlane's feeling a lot. This is someone who meant so much to us and was a guiding hand in our lives in so many ways. But what he did for the city, I think the way to say it is he simply put us on a better path, and he did it with heart and warmth and love. He was animated by love for people, all people. And David Dinkins believed that we could be better, he believed we could overcome our divisions. He showed us what it was like to be a gentleman, to be a kind person, no matter what was thrown at him, and a lot was thrown at him. And he always tried to answer the hate would love. It was remarkable serving with him in this building, to see that no matter what was going on out there, he always had that joy that he found, and it was particularly for children. He loved children so deeply, and he did something about it, creating those amazing Beacon afterschool programs that continued to stay, that we've actually been expanding to reach more and more kids. This is something he believed in so deeply, everything that we could do for our child. And he had a wisdom, an ability to stay steady, no matter how choppy the waters, it was just extraordinary.

And it's hard to be that patient and that kind when there's so many troubles all around you, but he did it. And he made things happen for this city that he's really never gotten the credit for, including putting us on the pathway to becoming a much safer city with the Safe Streets, Safe City program, and all the affordable housing that he launched and the generation of really devoted public servants that got their start. And Chirlane and I are humbly among that generation that we would never have had the opportunity to serve our city if it weren't for David Dinkins. And I'm speaking now to the hundreds and hundreds of people who were part of a team in the years 1989 to 1993. And just saying to all of you, I'm expressing my love to all of you, how much we miss David Dinkins right now. And yet we still have each other and that's the way he would have wanted it. He really worked constantly to nurture the next generation. And whenever he's around, you felt reassured because he was there for all the right reasons. So, I'm feeling something painful in my heart right now. I'm feeling like a loss and an emptiness because he's gone. But I also really feel his guidance still, his presence. And we're going to keep going. We're going to continue his fight.

He used that phrase, gorgeous mosaic. That was sort of his signature phrase. And I don't want anyone to miss the meaning of that because if you were around it, he would say it. And he felt that he felt that deeply. It wasn't just like a throwaway line and some people would mock it, but they weren't paying attention to the truth. He meant to say, first of all, how much he just loved people. He loved humanity. He saw the beauty in New Yorkers. He saw the gorgeous reality of the city. Even when it was tough, he still saw the good. And mosaic meant every one of us, every one of our communities, our cultures could shine through. There didn't need to be a contradiction

or a conflict. We could all add up to something greater. And at the time a lot of people didn't use that phrase. They liked to say melting pot, which suggests taking away our unique features and culture. He didn't see it that way. He thought each beautiful strand should shine through and it could lead to something greater, and it did. So, David Dinkins, God bless you, we miss you already. But we all learned a lot. We all became better because of you. And we're going to carry on your work, and rest in peace.

Everybody, we can talk about the great people we've lost, or we can do something even better, which is to honor them and follow their lessons. The one thing that Mayor Dinkins always cared about was uplifting other people and helping people. And so now we come into this holiday season, and it's a time that's supposed to be about joy. This year, it's also time we have to be really careful. And the way we uplift each other is to protect each other. Right now, it's about protecting each other and it's about realizing that the most beautiful thing we can do for someone we love is make sure they stay safe, make sure they're alive for next year when we get to celebrate in person again. So, today we're going to talk about several things. We're going to start with the idea that for lots of families, instead of travel, they have an opportunity to stay connected virtually. And it's not the same thing. I'm not here to tell you it's the same thing. I'm not going to see some of the people I love the most. I normally traveled almost every Thanksgiving. I'm not doing that. And I'm going to miss people just painfully. But for the folks who are in other places I'm going to connect with them virtually, and it won't be as good. I'm not going to lie to you, but it will count. We'll feel it.

So, the first thing we want to talk about today is a major new development, which is something that will allow more and more people to stay connected in times like this, obviously, or with the people they love, even if they don't live here or stay connected to the world and to the things they need and to the opportunities they deserve. We've had a digital divide. We've had a huge disparity of who gets access to the internet and who doesn't, who gets reliable, fast broadband service, who doesn't, who can afford it, who can't, but more and more, we understand that we have to create a society in which everyone has equal access. And so today we have a major announcement. After a lot of work by many City agencies we've come to an agreement that is going to require Verizon to build out its Fios footprint to reach now an additional 500,000 households here in New York City. This is going to be a requirement of this agreement. 500,000 households that do not get this service now have to be reached. And the priority will be put on the communities that have been most underserved. And there's a specific guarantee that each building in public housing, every NYCHA building, will be reached with this service, will be part of this Fios footprint. It has taken a lot of work and there's been some real struggle here and some real challenges, but we've gotten to a point where something real and tangible is going to happen for people, particularly working people and folks who have been left out and many people worked on it, but no one worked on it with more passion and resolve than our Corporation Counsel. So, I want him to speak to this. My pleasure to introduce Corporation Counsel of the City of New York, Jim Johnson.

Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson, Law Department: Good morning. And thank you, Mayor. This morning, most of us participating on this call got our news from a high-speed connection to the internet. We may have spoken to a family member in a video chat, or even helped a family member get online for a meeting or class. And that's not been so easy for many New Yorkers due to a lack of franchise investment in our least connected communities. And so, in 2014, the City began these proceedings against Verizon because Verizon had failed to meet the terms of its

cable franchise agreement that had been inked during the Bloomberg administration. And the goal of that was to build out its network. But the City's goal is to make sure that the digital divide is shut down, closed. And so, we brought this case and we now have resolved it so that more New Yorkers will have access to this vital tool. And the pandemic has only underscored how critical this need is. It's needed for us to draw close together with family members, it's needed for children to study. This resolution could not be more timely.

Many of the neighborhoods that have the most to gain from the settlement are those that were hardest hit by COVID-19. Those are the ones with low, median household incomes and the fewest options, sometimes no options for affordable broadband. At a minimum Verizon will make connections available to 125,000 additional households in those community districts, just in those community districts. And more importantly, overall, the settlement ensures that a half-a-million households that previously lacked Verizon broadband access because of their corporate failure to invest in the infrastructure, they'll now have the option of fiber broadband. And it will also create critical cost competition in areas where today only one provider exists. And when there's a monopoly, there's often higher prices and we want to drive the prices down. The settlement also ensures transparency. The terms of the settlement call for Verizon to report on a quarterly basis on how they are making progress. And the City is going to make public the list of newly eligible households so people will know when services come to their part of their community. This is an important settlement because it highlights the City's commitment to holding franchisees accountable, to meet their commitments to the public. It also contains enforcement terms, and we will both monitor compliance and ensure enforcement as we go forward. Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Jim. Everyone, now, as we think about this new announcement, again, it goes back to the fact that even though we're working to get everyone the access they deserve, thank God, a lot of families do have that access. And that means they have the opportunity to stay in touch virtually. And boy, has that been important during this crisis. So many people – that's been their only way to stay connected. And, particularly for a lot of our seniors, it's been absolutely crucial, who couldn't go out and could expose themselves to this disease. And so, we want to remember that as we now approach the holidays, that, again, it will not be easy, but we've got to stay safe. And I'm going to keep telling people, please, if you do not need to travel, don't travel. Unless there's a really, really crucial reason, don't travel. It's just going to only add more exposure to this disease, more chance that you might get it, your family might get, it might be brought back here inadvertently. So, I'm asking everyone again, please avoid travel, celebrate with your loved ones and other places virtually. And here to amplify the things that we need to do to protect each other and stay safe in this holiday season, our Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thanksgiving is two days away. I know many New Yorkers are making tough decisions about how to connect with family, friends, and loved ones. Let me start by saying clearly, it is not too late to cancel your travel plans. Now is the moment to make a difference in this next wave of the pandemic. COVID-19 numbers are rising across New York City and throughout the country, but New Yorkers know how to work together. Because of New Yorkers' hard work and care, we've flattened the curve before and we can continue to slow the spread now. It is so important that New Yorkers follow our new guidance for the holidays – stay safe, stay home, do not travel this holiday season if it can be at all avoided. Stay safe, stay home is our clear message

to New Yorkers this season. You'll see it on ads that will run on subway live boards, Link NYC, the Staten Island Ferry and on social media all the way into January. And, look, I understand this isn't easy. The holidays center around togetherness. My wife and I usually host Thanksgiving for our extended family. I have fond memories of our Thanksgiving from last year, which was the first time that my daughter tasted solid food surrounded by many dotting relatives. Just as an aside, her first solid food was a Korean sweet potato because she is, after all, a Queens baby. So, I am sad that this year's Thanksgiving will be different – mostly virtual, like so much else, but it is necessary. We know gathering in groups, even small groups, is causing the virus to spread. Please be cautious and stick to your core groups of family members and select friends. Here's one way to think about it. You bring everyone you've been around with you to your holiday celebration.

Now, while the holidays may look different, there are ways to keep their spirit alive, particularly at a time that is so difficult for New Yorkers. We have collectively suffered during this pandemic with the loss of family members and neighbors, separation and economic hardships. First and foremost, I urge you reach out to your friends, family, and neighbors, particularly those who you may have noticed are struggling. A simple phone call goes a long way. And we can be creative in how we connect with our friends and family. We can, of course, still enjoy the holidays together. You can take a walk in the park or go for a bike ride, enjoy the fresh air, relax and try to get in some exercise. You can plan a virtual trivia game or plan to cook the same family recipe, even if you're doing it in kitchens that are in different states. But for all of these activities, please remember to practice the same-old new rules, wear a face covering both outdoors and indoors; keep six feet of distance and gather outdoors whenever possible; wash your hands frequently; and stay home if you're not feeling well. And get tested, particularly if you plan to travel or to gather with others.

This Thanksgiving, as the Mayor said, the best way to express our gratitude for our loved ones is by keeping our celebrations small. And finally, I want to salute our health care heroes and our essential workers, many of whom will be working over the holidays. Do your part to help keep them safe. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much doctor. And now, we've given you all our best guidance. Everything that the science and the data, the health care reality is telling us, but we know people sometimes will have to travel. And we do understand in those cases the most important thing is to do it safely, to really follow the guidance, follow the rules. And we're going to make sure that people are reminded constantly throughout this whole holiday season if you travel, there are very clear rules you have to follow. And you're going to see the presence of the City of New York when you travel, particularly through our Sheriff's Office. You're going to see that there are really clear rules to be followed and they will be enforced. And you're going to know that if someone does not follow those rules that there are real penalties, substantial financial penalties that will be applied. No one likes that, no one wants to do that in the holidays, but we will do it to keep people safe. So, here to tell you about all our efforts to make sure people travel safely and follow the rules that will keep us all safe, our Sheriff Joe Fucito.

Sheriff Joseph Fucito: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, everyone. And happy holidays. As the Mayor stated, the City of New York provides tremendous support for people, tremendous education, but there has to be enforcement in order to keep everyone safe. So, I'll go over just some highlights of how we're going to be keeping enforcement regarding the compliance with

the travel quarantine and the standing emergency orders. Sheriff teams will be out in-force as the holidays approach. There will be vehicle checkpoints at key bridges and crossings throughout New York City. Sheriff will also be conducting checkpoints at curbside drop off bus stops – so, out-of-state buses coming into New York City, when they drop off at the curb, they will be met by sheriff teams. The T2 team and the sheriff would also be serving Department of Health general orders for travelers arriving in New York, advising him of the quarantine and what they have to do in order to comply with the quarantine. In addition, the Sheriff's Office will be sending out emails. We'll also include robocalls and text messages if you sign up with the New York State traveler website.

If you violate the travel quarantine, there will be consequences. Violation of a self-quarantine travel regulation may result in deputy sheriffs serving you a mandatory quarantine order issued by the Health Commissioner. In cases of violation, Deputies could serve you with a civil summons that carries a \$1,000 fine. As a practical matter, and as the Mayor stated previously, the Sheriff's Office would be concentrating on large-scale gatherings. Our actions in the last several months have reinforced this point. Deputy sheriffs are investigating massive events that violate a panoply of criminal, fire, building, health and other regulatory laws at locations such as illegal fight clubs, underground raves, and illegal gambling dens. These activities were illegal and sometimes deadly before COVID-19, and the public safety hazards regarding them have been amplified exponentially by the pandemic.

In a city of 8.3 million people, the best and most pragmatic method for deputy sheriffs to save lives is to maximize enforcement at these types of dangerous gatherings. That is the overall view of how our enforcement is going to be moving forward in the months to come. And I give it back to the Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you so much. I want to thank you, Sheriff Joe Fucito, and your whole team for what you have been doing. It's been absolutely crucial and we really appreciate the way you've been out there, no matter what, keeping people safe. And I know you're going to continue to throughout the holiday season.

Let's now talk about our indicators for the day. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 patients – today's report 113, with a positivity level for COVID of 40.83. So, again, seeing pretty stable reality there. That number is higher than we want it to be, both the positivity and number of patients, but we're not seeing the huge expansion that some of the other numbers might suggest. We're keeping a close eye on that. That is a very interesting and important factor. Number two, though, we see something that's exactly the opposite of what we want, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold 550 cases – today's report 1,476 cases. Again, we have to do everything we can to turn this around. And that depends on every one of us. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent – now, today's report on the daily, that information is still not ready. The number that came out today was clearly artificially high because it was based on very limited test results. So, that number is going to be updated as more results come in. We'll get the accurate number out later on today. But the seven-day rolling average we have confidence in, that is 3.17 percent. I'll say a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Sheriff Fucito, by DoITT Commissioner Jessie Tisch, by Corporation Council Jim Johnson, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today, it goes to Juan Manuel Benitez from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Good morning, Juan Manuel. How are you?

Question: Very good. Thank you. If there was one lesson you learned from Mayor Dinkins, can you tell us what the main lesson was?

Mayor: Thank you for asking, Juan Manuel. The power of love. He really loved people. He loved children, in particular, and he would always show children that, he would show them they were loved. I remember he would, when was around groups of kids, particularly kids of color, he would say to them, you know, you can be mayor. You know, he had become mayor and he would tell them, you can become mayor too. I mean, really was trying to encourage them. And, you know, he would, he would try and treat people with love even when they were treating him with hate. So, I think what I remember is his extraordinary ability to summon the love he felt and put that forward no matter what was thrown at him. Go ahead.

Question: So, this morning on the radio, Mr. Mayor, you said that when we get into December, we're going to start working to reopen our schools. Can you clarify? That means that you're going to start the process of thinking of how to reopen the schools in the city? Or that you are really going to start reopening a specific number of schools in the month of December?

Mayor: Juan Manuel, I spoke to this yesterday, I'm going to say it again. We're going to be in an orange zone in December. The orange zone rules for opening schools are clear, they're very stringent, but we can meet that standard. It's going to take a lot of work. And, as I said, parents are going to have to be really involved, but we can do it. We're going to start with the special education schools, the District 75 schools, work our way up – Pre-K, 3-K, and elementary. It's going to take a lot of work that we've never had to do on this level before. So, we're going to be shifting a lot of testing resources over. But we will keep reopening schools and we want to fight back this second wave and especially as we fight it back successfully, we'll be able to speed up that process. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Matt Chayes from Newsday.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Matt. How are you doing today?

Question: I'm doing okay. I wanted to ask you briefly about David Dinkins? Can you discuss his legacy with regards to the Crown Heights riots?

Mayor: Yeah. It's so interesting Matt, that you say that because just yesterday I was in Crown Heights just by sheer coincidence, doing something that really, I know David Dinkins would've loved. Which is, you know, providing the support to open a new educational facility for Medgar Evers Prep, for a wonderful high school. That's going to be – that is there on the campus, is now going to have a kind of home that it deserves. And Richard Green was there. He was one of the heroes of the years after those horrible days in 1991, when the community in the years after found its way together again. People of different backgrounds really worked hard. I want to, you know, say every community participated in Crown Heights. And Richard Green was one of the great leaders of that reconciliation. So it's so interesting. He was there yesterday and I greeted him. And I think back on the pain of those times, Matt. It was a very, very difficult time and it was a real perfect storm for sure, how that all happened. But I also think there is a heroic story that has not been told of what people in the community did thereafter. And brought a unity to Crown Heights today that is actually affirming of what people can do when they overcome their divisions. Go ahead, Matt.

Question: On another topic, last night in your interview with Errol Louis, you said that you're going to be checking on people constantly. And this was a quote, and if people don't follow the quarantine, there'll be substantial financial penalties and we're going to make that very vivid. So my question is how will enforcers decide whom to check in on among those returning from out of town travel?

Mayor: Well, I'll start and I'll see if the Sheriff wants to add. The idea here is – or Dr. Long may want to add as well. The idea here is it's quite clear that you have to follow out, fill out excuse me, that traveler form. That the only way to not participate in quarantine is to follow the State rules and do the testing before you come back and the testing after you come back. But if you don't do that and you don't succeed with that, you have to be in quarantine. And so what we're making very clear is we're going to be constantly monitoring people. If they're not in quarantine when they're supposed to be, we have to apply penalties. This is not, you know, this is not a drill. This is not a test. This is the real thing, what's bearing down on us and we have to be stringent about it. So let me see if the Sheriff or Dr. Long want to add?

Sheriff Fucito: Yes. So the Test and Trace team does a significant amount of outreach to people and follow up. They make sure that people are following the quarantine. They do other types of investigation. And then if they feel that there is a violation, they may ask the Sheriff's Office to get involved, to look a little bit further. And then in the last several weeks we've been issuing, we've been serving mandatory quarantine orders. So if the Test and Trace team feels that you violated the quarantine and they have evidence of it, then they'll elevate it, that it will be a mandatory quarantine. And if you violate the mandatory quarantine, then there would be a legal action taken against you. Most likely civil action, where you'd be served with a civil summons. But we have made arrests and charged somebody with a misdemeanor for violating the quarantine.

Mayor: And why don't you just help people understand what the kind of financial penalties are there?

Sheriff Fucito: Sure. So the financial penalty for the civil violation is a thousand dollars. So if you violate the quarantine and every time you violate the quarantine, you could be fined a thousand dollars.

Mayor: So that means each day?

Sheriff Fucito: Each day, each day.

Mayor: Okay. Dr. Long, you want to add?

Executive Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps.: Yeah. Thank you, sir. I just want to make two additional points here. And this is reflecting what you said just a moment ago. We want to do everything in our power to help you in order to quarantine. We've made 2.9 million calls to New Yorkers offering services, including our free hotel program. And in addition to that, the only way to not serve the 14 days of quarantine, which is the right thing to keep New York City safe, is if you get tested before you come back, that's negative. And then on the fourth day, when you are back. In order to help you do that, we're doing something innovative. At JFK today at the Jet Blue terminal we are handing out self-test kits to you, as you get on the plane that you can use before you come back to make it very easy for you to test out of the quarantine requirement. And to prove that you're negative to keep New York City safe. So, we're doing everything that we can in order to help you to get through the quarantine. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you. And to emphasize if people test out because they had a negative before they came back and they had another negative when they got back, that's ideal. That's wonderful. But if people test positive, they're going to be in quarantine. If they don't follow the testing regime, they're going to be in quarantine. If they violate the quarantine, you just heard what the Sheriff said, there will be financial penalties. And there'll be repeated if people violate multiple days. And we don't want to see that happen, but if it has to, it will. And we're going to be very clear about those consequences and what's going on with them. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Gwen from WNYC.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, how are you doing?

Question: I'm doing all right. Thanks so much for taking my question. You know, I wanted to ask a follow-up about this wedding in Williamsburg? When specifically, did the City learn about this wedding? Was it before it happened? Was it during, or was it after? And you know, it's right next to an FDNY fire station house. There were thousands of people here. Was the FDNY not aware that it was happening? Do you think \$15,000 is enough of a deterrent? And can you and the Health Commissioner give us specific –

Mayor: Wait, wait, lots of questions. Hold on. Let's stay where you were. You can, you'll have a follow-up,

Question: Alright, I know. I have many question.

Mayor: It just is we can't do justice to so many at once. We'll find out – well, I know, okay. Let me say what I do know. We did not know before or during, that much has been established as we've investigated what happened. I don't have a full answer on if folks in the firehouse knew.

We also don't know the final number of people. The reporting suggests a certain number. I'm not sure that is the number. What we do know is unquestionably it was too many people. Whatever that number, whether it was hundreds, thousands, it was too many people. And it appears that there was a very conscious effort to conceal what was going on. And that's what makes it even more unacceptable. A \$15,000 is a very serious fine, a cease and desist order has now been placed on that building. If there were further inappropriate activity, that is the precursor to the building being shut down permanently. We don't want to see that happen to anyone, but we need to be very, very clear that if folks are doing something dangerous we can't allow it to happen. Go ahead. Can you hear me Gwen?

Question: Hi. Hi again. Sorry about that. Can you give New Yorkers specific examples that your Health Commissioner has found of large indoor gatherings like this that have led to confirmed cases of COVID? Can you give us examples of those?

Mayor: So I'll start and Dr. Choksi, Dr. Long can jump in. Let's be clear that we've had enforcement on large gatherings. I want to thank the Sheriff and his team. They've been very aggressive and effective at breaking up large gatherings. But over the last week or two, we've been asked a lot of different questions about what Test and Trace has found. What they're finding is a much more diffuse pattern of where tests are coming from. That they're not at this moment coming from the larger gatherings, as far as we're seeing. Now, you go back some months, we definitely saw some connection to larger gatherings. But even if we're not tracing specific cases back to the larger gatherings right this minute, we know how dangerous they are. We know they have the potential to spread the disease really intensely and quickly. And that's why we have to protect against them. And by the way, it's the law. Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Long, you want to add?

Commissioner Chokshi: Yes, sir. Well, the Mayor said it well. I'll just add our goal is always focused on prevention. The more that we can ensure that large gatherings do not happen because there is very clear cut scientific evidence of how large gatherings can spread the coronavirus. That means we can interrupt further transmission. The Mayor is right, there have not been, you know, large, super spreader events in recent weeks. And I think that is in large part because New Yorkers are heeding our guidance and because our law enforcement colleagues are doing their jobs well. But my plea is, as we see more people becoming infected, more people who are coming into our emergency departments and hospitals, it is unconscionable for people to have those larger events when we know that they facilitate spread.

Mayor: Dr. Long, anything to add? Dr. Long, can you hear us?

Executive Director Long: Yes sir.

Mayor: Okay.

Executive Director Long: If you can hear me now, yes.

Mayor: There you go.

Executive Director Long: Thank you, sir. So the only thing I would add, I think you actually said it, the important point. Which is that we've not seen large events, we've seen a series of smaller events. It's important as Dr. Chokshi said to prevent those from happening in the first

place where people are exposed. But one point I want to make is that contact tracing is forward-looking. And as we've detected these smaller events, we've been able to effectively intervene to break the chains of transmission by reaching out to the people at the events. We just announced our recent numbers yesterday for our contact tracing across the city. Despite having cases that have gone from around 200 a day to now 1,300 plus a day, we're reaching 95 percent of every single case across New York City. And completing interviews and getting all of the information we need to do contact tracing for 81 percent of all cases across New York City. New Yorkers are coming together, getting tested and participating. And that's making an incredible difference and is how we're doing, how we're holding the virus at bay as a city. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: A quick programming note before we go forward, we're also joined by Chief Technology Officer John Paul Farmer. The next question goes to Nolan from the Post.

Question: Good morning everybody.

Mayor: Hey Nolan, how are you?

Question: I'm all right. If I could just follow up on Gwen's questions about the wedding at the shul in South Williamsburg. The fines is \$15,000. The building has the capacity for 7,000 people. That's two bucks ahead. How has that truly at deterrent?

Mayor: I think a \$15,000 fine gets people's attention, but I think the cease and desist order is crucial here. From this point on, if there's any further illegal activity in that building, the building will be closed down. I think that's a pretty clear deterrent. Go ahead.

Question: And on the larger question of enforcement, you've been depending on the Sheriff's Office, on the Sheriff's department and your Office of Special Enforcement to do much of the work of enforcing social distancing regulations around the city. We have a wedding where thousands of people showed up apparently without City Hall getting wind of it. We have a party seen as so rampant, New York Magazine splashed it on their cover this week. What does that say about enforcement in the city? It kind of feels like a joke.

Mayor: Well, Nolan, it's been very, very consistent. It's a big city, over eight million people. It's a huge geography to cover and yet consistently when there's been a problem, the Sheriff's Office, Office of Special Enforcement, they've done outstanding work. They've shut down lots of events. I think it's quite clear, you know, you're going to see some things that unfortunately still happen, but overwhelmingly I give them a lot of credit. They've been able to identify things and act on them quickly.

Moderator: The next is Andrew Siff from WNBC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Mayor Mike Mulgrew is now saying that he does not believe that mayoral control of schools should continue. I'm wondering what your reaction to that is?

Mayor: I haven't seen the specific comments, but I can tell you what mayoral control has allowed us to do, and, you know, look, I didn't agree with Mayor Bloomberg on a number of things, but I think it was a really important achievement. I give him credit because it allowed for progress to happen in our schools that had not happened for decades, and between his time as Mayor and my time as Mayor, the graduation rate has gone up 50 percent. We've been able to get so much more to happen in schools. We could never have done a Pre-K for All without mayoral control. We could never have reopened our schools, and even though we're all in pain now that they're closed temporarily, they'll be coming back, and we had two full months our schools were open, could never have done that without mayoral control. It's the only way to move things forward because there's actual accountability to the people, and the other systems that were tried in the past did not provide that. So, there'll be a big discussion on it, debate on it, but I think the people of the city will see that they want our schools to be better all the time and they need to hold someone accountable and that should be the Mayor. Go ahead.

Question: Issue of reopening schools are, I know you've talked about the phased reopening, starting with the special needs kids then pre-K and 3-K, then elementary school. How soon could we see that happen? Could you start reopening special-ed schools as soon as next week? And if not, why not?

Mayor: Right now, Andrew, is something I'm going to talk through with the State, with the Governor about the – right now, the rule is we would have to wait for the orange zone to be designated. We all agree. Governor said, I've said it, orange zone is coming to New York City. No one's happy about it, but the numbers are very clear. That requires a very specific approach to school reopening. We can start that clock when the orange zone is declared. I'm going to talk to Albany about whether there's any way to speed that up in light of the fact that we're already shut down now. But whatever way you slice it, once we have satisfied the State's time requirements, we'll be opening. In the meantime, we are going to get that testing in place because it's a big endeavor. You have to test the school community in advance of reopening and you have to do regular testing in the school. So we're going to shift in a lot of our testing resources into it. That's why we need that phased approach also, but we're going to do it. Our schools are going to come back and as I said, I believe from December on each month should get better. As we get past the holidays, as we start to feel the effect of the vaccine, and we'll be able to keep opening up more and more, and then hopefully more and more days per week for kids as we go along.

Moderator: The next is Yehudit from Borough Park 24 News.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: I'm doing well. How are you?

Question: Great, thank you. So among the crimes two nights ago in Brooklyn, seven people were shot and one person was killed at one apartment building, another 17-year-old boy was wounded by a drive by shooting, and there was also an early morning stabbing yesterday in Borough Park. So last week the New York Police Department reported that shootings in New York City have increased by almost 95 percent last year, but the number of arrests police have made has actually fallen by 13 percent. So, I was wondering what kind of plans you and the NYPD have to decrease crime and an increase arrest?

Mayor: Yeah, thank you for the question. Look, we're going to overcome this. This is all been caused by the massive dislocation of this coronavirus crisis and I keep saying it's a perfect storm because it has been a perfect storm. We've seen everything possible go wrong at once. People lost their jobs. Schools were closed. Houses of worship are closed. You name it. We are now fighting back. In fact, the number of gun arrests continues to climb. The NYPD is getting more and more guns off the street. The problem with the city, the problem with this country, there's too many guns out there to begin with, but we are fighting back and we will overcome it. There's no question in my mind. The NYPD is moving the resources where they're needed most, and as we recover more and more, we're going to be able to fight crime back down. We've done it before. We're going to do it again. Go ahead, Yehudit.

Question: Also, yesterday you were talking about the great health that the federal stimulus would be and last week we were reading about how the MTA is currently \$1.4 billion in debt. And so, in addition to waiting for a federal relief package, other possible solutions the board's considering are cutting weekday subject subway service in half and eliminating the jobs of more than 9,000 transit workers. Some say to raise fares and tolls and some actually say to lower fares and tolls to increase ridership. I was just wondering if besides for waiting for the federal aid package, what steps do you think that the MTA could do to get out of debt and maintain service at a level that New Yorkers need?

Mayor: Well, it's such a powerful question, but I have to say, I don't think anything replaces the federal stimulus. This just the – the sheer cold math at all. There's no way the State can come up with the kind of money the MTA needs to avoid some of the problems it's facing. We're all struggling right now because, you know, certainly I can say from the city perspective we're constantly spending more and more to protect people, to get them health care, to get them food. There's so much need, the State is struggling as well. So we need the federal stimulus. If we don't have the federal stimulus, I fear you will see less MTA service and that just won't be good for the city, but I also appreciate the MTA has a horrible situation. And I think this is why we should remember, stimulus equals recovery, stimulus equals economic recovery, that's why we need it. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Paul, how you doing?

Question: I'm well, sir. Thank you. I just had a question regarding hospital capacity on Staten Island, with the State reopening the field hospital, I just wanted to see if the city had any intention of providing assistance to hospitals on Staten Island?

Mayor: Yeah, Paul, absolutely. I mean, I'm very concerned about the situation on Staten Island, and I know Staten Island went through so much in the spring. We focused, of course, in getting the PPEs to hospitals in the spring and working with both hospitals regularly on their needs. We've got to be very careful this time to make sure that Staten Islanders get what they need. So we'll be talking to the hospitals about their PPE supply, about staffing, whatever it is they need, we'll work with the State as well to make sure Staten Islanders are safe. This time is much as we

are deeply concerned about a second wave, one thing we can say for sure, Paul, is all our hospitals learned a lot from the painful experience in the spring. They're all better positioned to fight the coronavirus this time, but we will definitely – the city will definitely be there to help Staten Island's hospitals in any way we can. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you. And with the dangers of this upcoming weekend, I'm just curious what role the NYPD will play in enforcement?

Mayor: Look, we are going to constantly remind people that if they're traveling, they have to follow the rules we just talked about. That's going to be primarily the Sheriff's Office handling that. We're going to be very careful about large public gatherings, the kinds we were talking about a few minutes ago, with hundreds of people, anything like that. We will obviously intervene to stop. You know, just think about it, as it gets colder and colder if people are indoors by the hundreds or thousands, that's just unfortunately a breeding ground for COVID. So, we'll be out there, but again, never – we understand that each individual family is going to make their own choice. We've given them the best guidance. They're going to make their choice. There's certainly not going to be any enforcement in terms of families. It's going to be travel and it's going to be large events that we're watching out for.

Moderator: Last question for today, it goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, first, I want to thank you for your kind words about Mayor Dinkins.

Mayor: Thank you, Gersh, I think you observed his career and you know what a good man he was.

Question: And at the bottom line, very much so. Anyway, if we could get back to a Commissioner Trottenberg's resignation. When Vision Zero was announced in 2014, the goal was to eliminate all traffic deaths by 2024. Now Oslo, Norway did it, Helsinki, Finland did it, zero road fatalities last year. Now they're smaller cities obviously, but in New York City, overall deaths have dropped from about 250 a year when you took office to about 220 so far this year, following last year, which was also a very dangerous year on the road. So I – simple question, why are so many people still dying on the roads of New York City?

Mayor: Well, we definitely have more work to do. I mean, look, we – you know, over the course of the seven years we had some moments were able to have really extraordinary success and we've had some setbacks too, but the basic concept works and it will continue to work. It will continue to deepen. What I hope, Gersh, is that the success of Vision Zero will be amplified not only this next year while I'm Mayor, but by the next Mayor as well, because every single street redesign helps, all the enforcement helps, all the speed cameras help, we just got to keep doing it and it does change behavior. And then ultimately continuing to build out mass transit to give people that much better options. So I'm, I am certain, this is the model that will protect people in the future. Go ahead, Gersh.

Question: Right, slightly different question. You know, I think we can all agree, even I think the Trump administration agrees at this point that the election of Joe Biden actually happened. So, I

wonder if you will ask the NYPD to remove the barricades from many streets, which they closed off on the grounds that there might be post-election violence?

Mayor: Yeah, my strong impression, I'll check with the Commissioner, but that process has been going on already. That the whole idea was to continually reduce the use of barricades. I'll check for the current status, but I think it has begun to happen and will happen even more in the coming days.

With that, let me just close, just one more reflection on Mayor Dinkins, because it's such a painful and poignant day and look, everyone, I want to express my thanks. I want to express my thanks to all New Yorkers for everything you've done to fight your way through this crisis. I want to express my thanks to all my colleagues who do this good work on your behalf, but I'm really particularly thankful this moment for Mayor Dinkins. I'm thankful he was here to show us a better way. Just his decency and his humanity. What a contrast to some of what we've seen over these last few years in our national life, you know, just a reminder that you can be decent, you can be kind, and that actually is what moves us forward. So, I would just ask everyone this holiday season, practice that kindness, practice that decency. David Dinkins showed us such a fine example of it and it's a time for everyone to look out for each other and express some love to your fellow New Yorker, and that's what he did, and we will be forever grateful to him for that. Thank you, everyone.

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