

THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. It's a great day, because in just a little more than 24 hours we'll be able to say President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris and so much is going to change for the better for this nation for this city. It's an exciting moment. And there are so many reasons to be excited, the one I want to focus on is President-elect Biden's very clear, powerful pledge to vaccinate Americans at a record rate. He's calling for 100 million doses to be given in his first 100 days. I commend him. That's the kind of goal we need. What a clear departure from what we have known. And that's the kind of commitment that's going to help us here in New York City to get the vaccine we need, because the central message today is we are vaccinating people faster and faster, it's getting better and better, and just now we are running out a vaccine and we need it desperately. A new president, I think, is going to make all the difference.

So, let's talk about what's going on with our vaccination effort here. It's extraordinary. Last week, we set a public goal of 175,000 vaccinations. We surpassed that goal this last week, ending Sunday, ending up the week was about 220,000 – over 220,000 vaccinations in New York City. So, the pace of vaccination is going faster and faster. Look, these numbers keep growing. What it meant – as of Sunday, that a New Yorker was being vaccinated every three seconds. That's what was happening in New York City. Every three seconds a New Yorker got vaccinated as of Sunday. As of today, since the beginning of the vaccination effort, 455,737 doses have been given here in New York City. Later today into tomorrow, we'll go get to half-a-million doses having been given since the beginning. Look, the good news is we have the ability to do this faster and faster. We're setting a goal for this week, assuming we have the vaccine – and I'll talk about that in a moment – if we have the vaccine we needed, we could vaccinate 300,000 people this week we're in right now – if we had the vaccine. The problem is, right now, we don't. So, right now, we had a small supply come in – today are coming in – today, 53,000 doses, leaving us with only 116,000 for the week ahead. Look, at the race we are going, we will begin to run out on Thursday – this Thursday, two days from now. And we will have literally nothing left to give as of Friday. What does that mean? It means if we don't get more vaccine quickly, a new supply of vaccine, we will have to cancel appointments and no longer give shots after Thursday for the

remainder of the week at a lot of our sites. We will not get on the current schedule resupplied again until next Tuesday, which means for many of our sites we couldn't vaccinate again until the day after next Wednesday. This is crazy. This is not the way it should be. We have the ability to vaccinate a huge number of people. We need the vaccine to go with it.

So, right now, it is up to the federal government, it is up to the State, it's up to the manufacturers to do everything they can to get us the maximum supply, because we are proving that, literally, every passing day, we can reach more and more people. Again, I'm very hopeful the Biden Administration is going to fix a lot of this. They are just coming into office, of course, it's going to take time, but their commitment is there and I appreciate that deeply. Right now, in New York City, capacity, growing every day – four 24/7 sites open right now, 15 Health Department hubs, new 24-seven sites coming, including the Empire Outlets in Staten Island, a Citi Field, which we've talked about before. Yankee Stadium, coming soon – and we're excited about that. Thank you to the New York Yankees. But all of this is what we need, but it won't work without vaccine. There are so many people ready to be vaccinated. We need the vaccine to reach all the New Yorkers who, right now, are ready to put their arms out and get the shot.

Now, I want to talk about what it's going to take, going forward, to get this right. Supply, of course, but let's talk about the approach we need. So, we're putting forward today five principles that really should govern what we do from now on. If we're going to get this right, if we're going to make it fast and smooth and really hit the huge numbers we need over the coming months, these are the five principles that should govern our actions. One – supply, bottom line. Federal government and the manufacturers, working with the State, maximize the supply to New York City because we have shown a trajectory, we have shown what is going to be – what's going to be possible in terms of vaccinating – hundreds of thousands of people. Again, the goal this week, 300,000 people, we're confident we can make it if we have the vaccine. Next week, even more. Get us the vaccine. So, that's one. Two – if we put together more and more sites, the vaccine has to be there to meet the sites. So, the bottom line is, we want maximum sites, we want this to be as decentralized as possible, we want this to be as local as possible. That's what's going to encourage people. You know, we talked a while ago about all the hesitancy out there. Well, we see that hesitancy is reducing and more and more people want the vaccine, particularly older New Yorkers. But if it's hard to get to, that is going to slow things down. We want as many sites as possible, as local as possible. Number three, cut the red tape, keep the supply flowing. Federal government, State government have a variety rules. Some of those rules are making things go a lot slower than they have to. We have to reduce those bottlenecks. We don't need complexity. We need simplicity at a moment like this. So, the idea is, the better we know what kind of supply we're going to have that we can rely on, it is moving fast, we understand exactly what we can depend on, the more people we can vaccinate, the more lives we can save. Number four – again, the importance of localness. We want people to trust this process. If they're going to a local site, if they're going to a site staffed by local people, if local organizations are involved in that site, that is going to engender trust. So, hesitancy is clearly still out there. There's still trust issues that have to be addressed, but those issues get mitigated if more and more local people are involved, trusted people, trusted organizations and the site are of, and by, and for the community with community-based providers involved – that's the direction of the future. That's what's going to help us to reach millions and millions of New Yorkers. And then, number five, let's keep it simple – let's recognize that we need all of the folks who should be vaccinated to have the right to be vaccinated. We need the freedom to vaccinate a whole variety of people in the same site for just pure efficiency. And we also have some folks who still don't qualify. It just doesn't make

sense. Let's look at our Sanitation workers – we absolutely depend on them, they've been heroes throughout the coronavirus crisis. I want to thank all the men and women of the Sanitation Department that you don't get the credit you deserve a lot of time, but I feel deeply for what you do. And I thank you every chance I get. You should have the right to be vaccinated. We need you. You should have the right to be vaccinated. We need you on the job. We need to protect you.

But there's other folks too – and I want to talk about our court system, our DA's, our grand juries. Look, right now, in addition to the coronavirus crisis, we've got a lot of work to do to address what's happened in our neighborhoods as a result of this perfect storm of the COVID crisis. So many things afflicting so many people simultaneously, and that created real issues in our neighborhoods. If we're going to fight back some of the challenges we've had, we need the criminal justice system to be working nonstop. It can't be bogged down. Therefore, it makes all the sense in the world to say, look, folks who work in our court system, folks who work in our District Attorney's offices, the folks who are presenting the cases that help bring justice to help protect communities, the folks who are going to step forward to be jurors. If you get a notice to join a grand jury you should know you can do that safely. So, I want to thank some of my colleagues in government, District Attorney Melinda Katz, of Queens; District Attorney Cy Vance, in Manhattan – they've been raising these issues to me. Clearly, we want people to serve on juries. We want them to be safe. We need those juries to happen reliably. That's part of how we intensify our efforts and safety in the city. Everyone who participates in a jury should have the opportunity to get vaccinated so they know that they can do – they can participate safely. It's going to be an encouragement. And that's how we get rid of this huge backlog of cases. Our criminal justice system, it's almost been a year since it's functioned normally. Let's deal with that backlog. If everyone's vaccinated, then they can have the assurance that they can come forward and do the job.

Okay. So, that is a lot of what we need to do. Those principles govern what we need to do, going forward. That's going to put us on a real war footing, where we can really vaccinate people on a huge level. That's going to make sure that folks who need the vaccine first are getting it. That's going to make sure that effort is local and powerful and reaches people. That's all a strong, clear path forward. Now, I mentioned the court system in particular, and now I want to link it to another important issue. Again, we've got so much to do in the year 2021, to bring our city back, to speed our recovery. We've got so much to do to make our communities safe, both in terms of the health front and public safety in general. The best way to do that, of course, get everyone vaccinated, but another crucial part of the equation is deepening the relationship between police and community. We know we have work to do, and we're committed to doing that work. That's what neighborhood policing has been about all along. The NYPD in the year 2021, is going to redouble its efforts to gain trust and understanding and mutual respect at the community level. There's a lot of ways you do that. Neighborhood policing tells us that one of the number-one ways is just communicate, a lot of person-to-person communication locally. And that's been a really clear, strong element over the years that's helped us a lot. And the vast majority of our officers do their job, do it well, do it the right way, but some officers do the wrong thing. When they do the wrong thing, one of the things communities demand is fairness and consequences, really clear consequences and transparency. It makes sense.

So, last year in the first half of the year, a process was developed to start to rethink our entire approach to police discipline. And then in August last year, a proposal was put out publicly. A

lot of great public comment came in and it culminated with the publishing on Friday of the new NYPD discipline matrix. This is an extraordinary document, everyone. And I want you to take a look – if you care about the relationship between police and community, if you care about public safety, if you care about reforming police and changing police culture, read this document. It is powerful. You can get it at [nyc.gov/disciplinematrix](https://nyc.gov/disciplinematrix). This will revolutionize the way we discipline police officers who have done the wrong thing. Now, again, we hope and we pray that as very few officers, but one of the ways to ensure it's very few officers is clear consequences. So, here you will see for the first time in NYPD history, each specific offense and the specific consequences that will occur if someone commits that offense. Everybody deserves due process. We believe in due process across the board in our society. But if that due process system says guilty, you did that offense, then the specific penalties are outlined right here – the minimums and the maximums. And what it says clearly is, for many offenses, particularly those involving the use of force, it is clear the ultimate penalty is termination. And I want to emphasize, it's not just use of force. There's a variety of other offenses that, if someone has done them, that indicates very clearly that they should not be a member of the NYPD. And I want to particularly focus here on hate speech, racism, white supremacy, anybody who utilizes speech and has beliefs that do not conform with the values of this city and this nation can't be a police officer. So, if we have an instance where someone expresses on the job racist beliefs, and exclusionary beliefs, and white supremacist beliefs – it's quite clear in this matrix, if they're found guilty of that offense, they will no longer be a member of the NYPD. That's the kind of thing we have to do forcefully and clearly, and now for the first time in our history, we have a clear public transparent template that will govern how discipline occurs, and that is for the good of all.

Okay. Before we wrap up here and turn to our indicators, just want to note, I started with the positive point about what's going to happen tomorrow in Washington D.C., and something, obviously, that will be a celebration of our nation and our democracy. But, tonight, we're going to have a more somber moment all over the nation – 5:30 tonight, the COVID Memorial, where we're going to, all together, as Americans, remember those we've lost. This is something that President-elect Biden, Vice President-elect Harris, asked everyone to participate in together as a show of unity and respect for those we've lost and for their families who are always in our thoughts and prayers. So, at 5:30 tonight, you're going to hear a church bells ringing all over the city. You're going to hear – you're going to see buildings lit up to memorialize those we've lost. I'm going out to the Statue of Liberty with Chirlane. We're going to have a ceremony there to remember the 25,000 of our fellow New Yorkers we've lost. And I think everyone out there, you know someone who we've lost or a family who lost someone – this has touched every one of us. So, tonight, let's join together in true unity and give our hearts to those families who have lost loved ones and never forget them and resolve to move forward as a city and a nation.

Okay, let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's number is 255 patients. We know that is too high. And the hospitalization rate continues to grow 5.05 per 100,000. Again, despite this very real challenge New York City hospitals are doing remarkably well. They have learned so many important lessons in this crisis and continue to save lives in a remarkable fashion. But this does mean more and more pressure on our hospitals. It's something we're watching very closely. We're communicating with the State about closely. This is something to watch. This is, as the Governor has talked about the single most sensitive factor. We're going to keep an eye on that closely. New cases, daily number of cases – new cases of COVID-19 seven-day average, today's number. 5,009. A very, very high number. And then, current testing percentage of New York

City residents testing positive, seven-day rolling average 8.23 percent. Again, way too high. Everybody we vaccinate, however, let's bring it back to where we started. Every single person we vaccinate changes the reality, and we're vaccinating the folks who are most vulnerable and most in greatest need. First, this is why the supply of vaccine is so crucial. With the numbers we're putting up now 300,000 people in a week, come on. That is a game changer. That starts to affect the overall environment, if we have the vaccine to go with it. So that's what we're going to talk about incessantly until we actually get the deliveries we need here in New York City. Few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

**Moderator:** We will now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Dr. Katz, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today, it goes to Narmeen from PIX 11.

**Question:** Hi, good morning, Mayor and to everyone on the call. How are you all doing?

**Mayor:** Doing well, Narmeen. How are you doing today?

**Question:** I'm doing well. Thank you. I wanted to ask you, specifically about the variance. The Governor talked yesterday about being in this foot race, a race to essentially get more people vaccinated as we start to identify more variants. While the State only has identified the UK variant, the South African and Brazilian variants also on our radar. And I'm curious to know what you and your health officials are most concerned with, with that being out there? What do we know about it? And what do we possibly do to understand it a bit better?

**Mayor:** Thank you, Narmeen. Very important question. I'm going to turn to Dr. Varma first and then Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Katz, as they want to add. Look, I think the first thing to understand is any variant that is more infectious, that spreads more quickly creates that race against time. That our numbers are just going to go higher and higher, which means more and more people are vulnerable unless we get more and more vaccine. So, when we're at the kind of pace we're going to be at this week, 300,000 New Yorkers in one week, and that number can keep growing in the following weeks, we actually have a legitimate chance to outrun the new variant. But if we don't intensely grow our supply of vaccine, we have a real challenge on our hands. Dr. Varma? Dr. Varma, are you on?

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** Thank you for the question. So, a couple of really key points here, the first to really emphasize and double down on what the Mayor just said. The single most important power we have against new strains of this virus is the power to prevent infection. And we have a couple of ways of doing that. The most powerful one we have right now is vaccination. So, if you are eligible to be vaccinated, we absolutely want you to be vaccinated. The second power is if you're waiting your turn to get vaccinated, you can do all of the things that we know work, wash your hands, watch your distance, wear a mask, and make sure you're getting tested frequently. So those things still remain very powerful. And we know this works because the only way that these new strains emerge is from infecting humans. So, the fewer

humans that are infected, the fewer viruses, new strains will emerge. So that's really the single most important point. The second point to keep in mind is that we do need to make sure that we're increasing our monitoring of these strains. This is actually a very difficult technologically test to perform. And that's why all of the estimates you see from CDC and from other places, all emphasize that we know we're only capturing the tip of the iceberg. And we are working very hard in New York City, both at the city level with our academic partners and with the State to increase the knowledge that we have about these strains. And we'll continue to report out that information as we get it. But just to really emphasize that everything we know right now is that we can prevent it with vaccinations and with all of the measures that we know. And that's really the most important message.

**Mayor:** Dr. Chokshi or Dr. Katz, anything to add?

**Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Nothing to add, sir.

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, Health + Hospitals:** No, sir.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead, Narmeen.

**Question:** Sticking with the strains for just a moment. On the UK variant, there are UK studies showing that in terms of children, they can spread it a bit faster with the new strains. Does it force us to think a bit ahead on our schools? Just because we know it's out there and we should be future planning as much as possible when it comes to if it hits our schools?

**Mayor:** Look, I think the – I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi who obviously focuses on this issue all day long. And I always like to remind everyone, his wife is an assistant principal in our schools so he thinks about this from a very, very personal perspective. What I would say is the achievement we've seen in our schools, the achievement of everyone that works in our school system, working with our health team to ensure that New York City public schools are the safest place in New York City, it continues to be true. We are testing every week, every school and the numbers keep showing extraordinary safety in our schools. That will continue no matter what, especially as more and more people are vaccinated, it will affect. Again, the overall environment in our favor if we can really put this vaccination effort into overdrive. So, I don't see anything right now that changes our trajectory on schools. We're always watching because this is about health and safety first. But as of now, we have not seen anything change and schools remain safe. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And you covered the most important points here, which is just as Dr. Varma said about the variants in general it makes it even more important for us to follow what we know has worked to interrupt the spread of COVID-19. That's true whether you're in a school, whether you're in a hospital, whether you're in the community. And those core public health precautions become even more important in the context of the variant. But the layers of safety that we have put in schools you know, starting with ensuring that face coverings are being worn, that people are keeping their distance. But then layering on testing, as well as making sure that people appropriately isolate and quarantine when it's indicated. All of that helps to ensure the safest environment possible. And now we're adding on another layer of protection which is ensuring that school staff are prioritized for vaccination.

And we've seen just in the past week you know, thousands of educators who have lined up for vaccination as well. So, all of these things we'll have to continue redoubling our efforts on to achieve what is, you know, a race against time against these variants.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next is Juan Manuel from NY1.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good Juan Manuel. How are you doing today?

**Question:** Very good. Thank you. So, Mr. Mayor, do you have any commitment from the incoming Biden administration when it comes to resupplying New York City with the appropriate number of doses of the vaccine? Or are you relying on Governor Cuomo on dealing with the federal government and the pharmaceutical companies to increase the number of vaccines allocated for New York? Because when we – when you warned people that the city is going to be running out of vaccine, who are you trying to send a message to?

**Mayor:** Juan Manuel, everyone is the answer. The manufacturers, the federal government, the State government, everyone has to be a part of the solution. There've been a number of conversations with key members of the Biden team. What is most powerful is that they've made a public commitment to a hundred million doses in their first a hundred days. That unquestionably is going to help New York City. I believe that they want to use the Defense Production Act much more aggressively than the current administration in Washington has. That's what we need. We need every conceivable manufacturer who could be a part of this effort, maximizing the creation of the vaccine supply. So, so far what we're hearing from the Biden administration is very promising. We're going to keep working with them to turn it into action. Go ahead.

**Question:** Today 344 public school buildings are closed due to multiple COVID cases in the building out of only about 850 elementary and District 75 schools that were open to begin with. This appears to be a record high since the City started to release this data. And it is a number that has been climbing steadily since schools reopened on January 4th. How concerned are you that these numbers will keep going up? What do you say to educators and parents who are worried about the safety of schools and to families frustrated at the unpredictability of these frequent and often last-minute closures?

**Mayor:** First of all, the vast majority of our schools are open right now and have been since we came back in December. As someone who was a public-school parent, I certainly feel for all parents and all kids when there has to be a closure. Now, a number of those closures are very brief. They're 24 hours or 48 hours. Now the longest closure is 10 days because the rules changed with the CDC. No one likes it. And we want to be absolutely sure when that kind of closure has to happen, but we take a better safe than sorry approach here. And that is what has kept our schools the safest in the country and the schools being the safest place to be in New York City. So, from a health and safety perspective, this approach is working. We obviously look forward to the day soon when closures will be much less common because more and more people are vaccinated. As Dr. Chokshi said, thank God more and more of our educators and

school staff are getting vaccinated. So, I do feel for parents, but I know we're going to make progress in the coming weeks as more and more people get vaccinated.

**Moderator:** The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everybody on the call.

**Mayor:** Good morning Rich. How are you doing?

**Question:** Oh, I'm doing okay. I'm doing all right. So, do you expect soon to be ex-President Donald Trump to continue to spend time at Trump Tower? And is he welcome in New York City?

**Mayor:** I do not expect him to spend time at Trump Tower. Not because I've heard anything specific, just because I think he's gotten the memo that there's tremendous discomfort with him in New York City. I certainly do not consider him someone welcome here. But he has a right to be here if he chooses to, I just don't think he's going to be here. I don't think he thinks this is an environment for him. I think that's why he formally changed his residency to Florida. And I just think the message has gotten to him and everyone around him that the people of New York City have rejected the hatred and the negativity he's purveyed, particularly after the horrible role he played in inciting the insurrection at the Capitol. Go ahead, Rich.

**Question:** And there's a report that on the list of Mr. Trump's possible pardons, we don't, I guess we don't have the list. But Shelly Silver might be on that list. How would you react to that if he were to do that?

**Mayor:** Rich, I can't make heads or tails of what the President is up to with pardons. It seems like an incoherent process, so I'm not going to comment on that at all, the people or the approach. I don't know what he's doing or why he's doing it. That's the bottom line.

**Moderator:** Next question goes to Jillian Jonas from WBAI.

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

**Mayor:** I'm doing well, Jillian. How you been?

**Question:** I'm fine. I'm sorry I missed being able to comment when Steve Cohen was there, especially because the Mets opened up Citi Field before the Yankees opened up Yankee Stadium, just for the record.

**Mayor:** You are observant. You are observant Jillian.

**Question:** Yes well, when it comes to the Mets, yes. I was even going to ask you to ask him to save certain players, but I'm going to pass on that. So, in a segue to that, I asked you another question from – sorry, from September, following up about a letter you received from Council members urging you to renegotiate leases for sports venues from those so-called sweetheart deals. They wanted you to you know, raise the property tax values, pay the City an appropriate amount to rent City land, increase pilots. And this is for Barclays, Yankee Stadium and Citi



Field. And then kind of revoking the MSG tax breaks because they hadn't paid since the 1980's. So at the time you hadn't read the letter, but you agreed in theory with what the substance was. Have you read it? What's the status and can it happen in your last year?

**Mayor:** Right now, I have believed for a long time, you look back to the time I was Public Advocate, I think the Madison Square Garden situation doesn't make sense anymore. I think the way the deals were structured in the Bloomberg administration around the stadiums don't make sense. We have to reevaluate the whole thing. We're going to do that as part of our budget process and see what we think is real. So, we'll have a more detailed answer on that before we come out with the executive budget in April.

**Question:** Okay, thanks for that. Last week two bills were reintroduced into the Senate, the repeal of the stock transfer rebate and the carried interest loophole. I've heard the Governor and his team basically say, they're not interested in closing that loophole, even though it's on the record, it's on the books. If it passes the Senate, what do you think he'll do? Have you talked to him about it and what kind of support do you have for it?

**Mayor:** I think it's a really important question, and thank you for asking it, Jillian. First of all, carried interest, I mean, this got a lot of attention three or four years ago, I talked about this a lot. This is something that makes no sense that folks in hedge funds, other financial institutions don't pay their fair share of taxes. So, absolutely closing that loophole is crucial. Stop transfer tax, the way it's been approached, I think has been arcane. It's – look at what Wall Street is going through. They are – it's booming. Stock market is booming. Finance industry is making money hand over fist, while the vast majority of working people are suffering because of a pandemic, a stock transfer tax absolutely is the kind of thing we should be looking at for more revenue, as well as taxing the wealthy at a much higher level. I would urge the Legislature to look at all of those and whatever package makes sense, the bottom line is there's a lot of revenue there that would simply be a matter of wealthy folks paying their fair share. And remember just a few years ago, they got a vast tax cut from the Trump administration. So, this is – talk about something that makes sense to ensure that people have health care to ensure that working people are able to get back to work. It absolutely makes sense for the Legislature to take these actions.

**Moderator:** The next is Jenna DeAngelis from WCBS.

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor de Blasio.

**Mayor:** Hey Jenna, how you doing today?

**Question:** I'm doing well. Thank you. So, last night we saw what I believe was the first big demonstration since the attorney general suit and the DOI report, which was critical of the NYPD's actions during protests. So, I want to know what's your take on what happened last night. How do you think the NYPD did handling the protests?

**Mayor:** Jenna, I've only seen a few videos, so I can't give you a bigger comment, but look, it was a small protest. It was in close proximity to City Hall, and that was obviously a concern after what happened at the Capitol just 12 days ago. But the bottom line is a host of changes are happening right now at the NYPD, and again, what we published Friday, this discipline matrix, this revolutionizes police discipline. Again, anyone interested really should read it carefully

nyc.gov/disciplinematrix. This is the way we change the culture and change the reality foundationally. Go ahead, Jenna.

**Question:** So, based on that report that you spoke about with the discipline reforms and what you saw last night, do you think any officers could face disciplinary action?

**Mayor:** Again, I don't have the details on everything that happened. I think the good news is this now creates a very straightforward process. If there is an allegation, of course, again, every officer deserves due process just like every American deserves due process, but it makes clear depending on the offense, what the consequence is. And it's literally – there's a minimum, there's a maximum. It's really clearly stipulated. And I think that is going to give the public confidence. And I think it's also going to send a message to everyone who works for the NYPD to do things the right way. And I think that's going to really be good for the trust between police and community.

**Moderator:** The next is Matt Chayes from Newsday.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

**Mayor:** Good, Matt. How you been?

**Question:** All right. Thank you for asking. I'm wondering if you will instruct the NYPD to disclose to us today, the specific factual and legal basis for each of the 29 arrests last night near City Hall. And that means more than just legal boilerplate. And if the answer is anything but a simple yes, can you explain why this is an unreasonable request?

**Mayor:** Yes. I don't think it's unreasonable. Go ahead, Matt.

**Question:** Okay, excellent. And second, can you detail how the events and the moments leading up to the arrests and the arrests last night were policed any differently in the aftermath of the DOI and Corp Counsel and AG reports and your videotaped apology?

**Mayor:** Yeah. We'll certainly get an accounting to folks, again, emphasizing the proximity to the seat of government was a concern, especially after the recent events of the Capitol. But yeah, I think it's really helpful to tell people what happened and why it happened. We'll certainly do that.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more for today. The next is Reuvain from Hamodia.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. My first question is for the doctors. The CDC says that vaccination should be offered to persons regardless of history of prior COVID infection. But it also says that since reinfection is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection, people who had COVID may delay vaccination until near the end of this 90-day period. So, my question is considering you keep mentioning what a shortage we have of vaccines. Why not say that people who have had COVID recently should not be getting it now, even though the antibodies are not guaranteed, they're not guaranteed to give immunity forever, but we have to make choices now. And wouldn't it be smarter to say to people who have had COVID in recent months should not be getting vaccines while there's a shortage?

**Mayor:** Reuvain, that's a very fair question. I'm going to turn to Dr. Chokshi but let me just make a simple point. We have been trying to build up a fast efficient mechanism, and again, this last week ending Sunday, over 220,000 New Yorkers vaccinated this week, on track to do 300,000. We like having a very fast mechanism that doesn't throw up so many roadblocks to folks, and we are hopeful that as early as tomorrow, we're going to start to see changes in how the vaccine is distributed nationally that will allow us to stay on pace. But if we knew for the long-term that we were not going to have enough vaccine, I think we're going to have to reevaluate some of the approach. So, I think your question is very pertinent going forward. I hope we're not in that kind of scarcity dynamic for a prolonged period of time. Dr. Chokshi –

**Commissioner Chokshi:** Thanks, Mr. Mayor. And that's exactly right with the big picture as you've laid it out. You know, the most important thing for us, even as we get through these initial days and weeks of the vaccination campaign is to think about the long-term as well where we want to get as many New Yorkers vaccinated as possible. And we have to set up our systems now to be able to meet that larger goal. Let me just fill in a couple of the clinical details with respect to your question, Reuvain. First, I want to make sure everyone knows that if you have recently been diagnosed with COVID-19, meaning you've had symptoms and, or a positive test, you should not get vaccinated while you continue to have symptoms or while you are in the 10-day isolation period. So, that's very important, and that is a period where we are not recommending that people get vaccinated. Beyond that point up to that 90-day window that you've mentioned, it is okay – we agree with the CDC recommendations to defer vaccination, but that's an individual choice as to whether to do it or not. And so, people can choose to get vaccinated during that period and this is really important when we connect it to that larger goal, which is to have a system that is as seamless as possible, that is as clear and simple as the Mayor has said, to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Reuvain.

**Question:** So, as you open up the vaccine to more and more people I'd like to ask, Mr. Mayor, you said that you'd be taking another look at that list of the neighborhoods that were most affected by COVID. That list was made after the first wave and there were a lot of people in neighborhoods that were hard hit that were wondering why their neighbors are not on the list. I'm wondering when you will be issuing the updated list.

**Mayor:** Yeah. We're going to be talking about that later this week. Again, when you look at the most sensitive issues, obviously, number of cases and number of cases per capita, but also tragically the number of deaths, a lot of what was in that original list still holds, but we are definitely, in the process of the last weeks we've definitely been going through and updating. We'll talk about that later in the week. And the bottom line is we want to reach everyone. We want to make sure that folks who need it the most have it absolutely available, but we want to reach everybody. And we're going to be doing outreach in all communities. Go ahead.

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

**Question:** Hello, everybody. Hello, Mr. Mayor, thank you for taking the call.

**Mayor:** How are you doing today, Gersh?

**Question:** Well, I'll be honest with you. I had a colonoscopy yesterday, Mr. Mayor, and I urge everyone over 50 to have one.

**Mayor:** Gersh, you are a public minded citizen. Thank you for sharing that.

**Question:** Well, I hope [inaudible]. Anyway, this morning, the Union Square Partnership which represents some of the wealthiest real estate interests in the city put forward a \$100 million dollar plan to remove cars from Union Square and create nearly a hundred thousand more square feet of public space and better transit for your busway, by the way. So, first, what do you think of a plan that would repurpose public space for the larger public beyond mere car drivers?

**Mayor:** Well, I'm definitely interested. I have not seen the plan. I look forward to seeing it. This is something, again, we had an extraordinary experience in 2020, despite the pain, despite the challenges, we moved to the Open Streets model. We found it to be very successful, obviously, particularly in combination with the Open Restaurants. We're now looking at that model on a broader level, for sure. So, I want to see this plan and I'm happy they've put it forward. Go ahead, Gersh.

**Question:** So, let me, I'll take a follow up on that. So, you know, whether it's Times Square, Union Square, Flatiron District, or other commercial areas, initiative for these kinds of car-free public seems constantly to be coming from exceptionally wealthy business improvement districts, which represent corporate interests first and foremost. So, meanwhile, the statistics show that every year, literally thousands of people are rundown and either killed or seriously injured by cars in the lowest income communities of your city. So, most of those neighborhoods don't have well-funded business improvement districts. So, given the Union Square Partnership plan is being promoted as being good for Manhattanites, what will you do this year to make grand car-free public space or even a complete bike network for residents of say, East New York or Jackson Heights or the South Bronx?

**Mayor:** Gersh, we're going to be talking about, in the coming weeks, a lot of what we have to do in the year 2021. And again, what we found was the Open Streets approach worked really, really well. It's a big piece of the future of New York City. It will be permanent. And as you know that is an approach that we put into all different kinds of neighborhoods, all five boroughs, neighborhoods that happen to be wealthier and neighborhoods that happen to be not. So, we are going to approach this with a lot of energy, because I think we learned something powerful in 2020 that this kind of approach really helps communities in a variety of ways. And we're recommitting ourselves in 2021 to Vision Zero, going deeper with it. So, a lot to come, but again, we have learned something really extraordinary from our experience, the painful backdrop of 2020, something that we're going to use to be a positive going forward when it comes to Open Streets and deepening Vision Zero.

Okay, everyone, look, just finishing where we started – an extraordinary moment in just about 24 hours, a new administration in Washington, one that I think is going to be right there with us in fighting back the coronavirus. And an administration – I give Joe Biden a lot of credit – that's already put out an audacious goal, a hundred million doses will be given in the first hundred days. And New York City can help lead the way we just need the vaccine to do it. I want to hit that 300,000 goal this week. I want to reach 300,000 New Yorkers this week. I need the vaccine

to do it. A week is a long time. If the vaccine arrives at any point later in the week, we will put it into action immediately. So, let's keep fighting to make sure we have the freedom to vaccinate, and the freedom to vaccinate now means having enough vaccine for all the folks who need it. Thanks, everyone.

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