

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Holds In-Person Q-and-A

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Video available at: <https://youtu.be/7m3S1ePhNJE>

Mayor Eric Adams: I told Fabien, I was in Albany yesterday, and I told him I came down, that I missed the press. I felt lonely. So after I finish my meeting, can we see if we can do a gaggle, so I can talk to Michael and all the rest of you? I didn't realize how absence makes your heart grow fonder.

Mayor Adams: And so, we had an amazing, historic meeting today. During the campaign, I watched on the ground, the number of leaders in the Muslim community and other faith based communities. And I watched the hard work, the dedication and commitment. And then, I started to see a pattern; when the labor was extremely difficult, I started to notice who was on the front line. And on the front line, I started to see over and over, women. Women. When it was time to celebrate, there was an absence. And I made up my mind then, and took a note in my journal that when I become mayor, we are going to assemble women here at City Hall, in the room we call the COW, Committee of the Whole. And just out of curiosity, how many of you have not ever been in that room before? If you have never been in that room before, raise your hand.

Mayor Adams: So it's about opening this building City Hall and Gracie Mansion is what we call The People's House. That's what we call Borough Hall, and we're calling this building The People's House. It can't be a strange place where people don't feel as though this is part of the extension of the resources that they're providing. There were some unbelievable ideas that came out of this body. They will help us in getting information out to their constituency, such as Earned Income Tax Credit, childcare, domestic violence shelters, education, dealing with crime. What we have learned is that communities that are readily identified are often the targets of violence. The hijab, which is a symbol of respect for their religious belief has far too often turned into a tool of

violence for those who want to identify Muslim women. And it's a real issue. And they talked about it in a very passionate way.

Mayor Adams: And so, we are hoping that this is going to be a series of conversations we are having with the women of this city, to find out exactly what are the issues that they are facing and allowing them to have the voice to speak on behalf of their constituency. And we are proud of the many Muslims who are in our administration. We're proud of the relationships that we have developed and will continue to develop, but the goal is to diversify this city. And not only have those who are receiving services, interact with government, but those who are delivering services should be able to communicate on the ground in a real way, with the people who they're delivering services to. So I thank these women for allowing me to host this meeting, and it's one of many that we're going to continue to have in the months and years to come.

[Applause]

Question: I'll ask if someone, I mean, there's a lot of the others who want to step up and ask, but the mayor mentioned how you've never been in this role and government never been in the COW. You want to talk about, especially people who've been advocates for a long time, what it's been like with previous mayors in terms of outreach and listening to the needs of your community? And then how you hope it will be different with Mayor Adams?

[...]

Debbie Almontaser: As-salamu alaykum, greetings of peace. I want to say that what happened today was historic. Historic that the mayor of the City of New York called Muslim leaders from all five boroughs to hear what their issues and concerns are. A full hour was dedicated to giving us voice and a place at the table. The first time that any mayor of this city has actually been deliberate in saying, "We need to hear from you." And today we all felt heard. So some of us are not strangers to the COW, but many here today were. And today is a new day that says, "You have a place at City Hall. And what you have to say is important to us." And we want to thank Mayor Adams for taking this opportunity and also ensuring each and every one of us today is not the first day. This is an ongoing conversation that we will work with him to make the changes that we seek to see for all New Yorkers, not just the American Muslim community.

Mayor Adams: You want to say something?

Ilesha Sekou: Well, I just wanted to say mayor one, peace and blessings, As-salamu alaykum. I've been a long-time advocate and activist here in New York City, and this City Hall is not new to me, but I want to say one word that defines how I feel today, and that is hopeful. That is hopeful. When Mayor Adams was running, I said, "I will stand as your accountability partner." And here I am. And here I am amidst other Muslim women having voice. Because sometimes women are made to be wrong when you use your voice. And what I'm hearing is women are being made to be more right in using their voice and not seen as adversarial. So for me, having the conversation that we had today was powerful and empowering. I'm leaving here, feeling lighter and hopeful. So I want to say thank you, Mayor Adams, I'm looking forward to continued conversation, and I love that the issue of public safety with Muslim women, which has been a great concern is included in this conversation. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Almontaser: As-salam. Thank you so much.

Mayor Adams: Appreciate it. Thank you sister.

Almontaser: You're very welcome.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to ask you about the city entering the high alert for spread of COVID and whether you're now prepared to reinstate a mask mandate, specifically in schools as the system recommends?

Mayor Adams: No, and I'm proud of what we are doing and how we are not allowing COVID to outsmart us. We're staying prepared and not panicking. When I look at the hospitalizations and deaths, the numbers are stable. When I look at what our school system is doing, we are really changing the game of using testing, so people are staying home. But also I look at, we have all of these tools that we did not have when we first

set the color coded system. The fact that you can now call up and get your medicine delivered to you, the amount of testing we're doing. And so, I'm just really impressed with how we are operating as a city.

Mayor Adams: Variants are going to continue to come. It appears as though there's a new norm that is settling in our city and our countries. Variants are going to come. With every variant that comes, we move into shut down thoughts. We move through panicking. We're not going to function as a city. And so, I feel extremely pleased, based on my analysis in the morning with my health experts, that we are being extremely strategic and we are fighting COVID with, not only the tools that we didn't have before, but we are also fighting COVID using the intelligence we need to win in a COVID environment.

Question: Mr. Mayor, could you tell us more about your trip to Albany yesterday? Did you get any commitments about either a two to four year extension from mayoral control? And also, did you ask for anything else, like anything specific to criminal justice, especially in light of the Buffalo massacre and also continuous shootings in New York City?

Mayor Adams: Well, good meeting, great meeting. I did not realize how much I missed those people up there. I enjoyed being with my colleagues. We tease each other, joke, laugh. I think there was some growing pains of the new administration, new electeds, but there was just some good energy and I respect their role. They respect my role and our goal is to do what's best for the children. I was up with my team, my chancellor and other leaders, First Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo, Strategic Partnerships Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, and we were able to just spread out and just tell them the good product we have. Once we do that, then it's their role. That's just the way this business is.

Mayor Adams: Now, as I shared with them, we sold, we displayed our product, what we want to do. It is now your role to determine if we are going to have the continuation of mayoral accountability, that's their job. I did my job of going up and having real conversations and now it's up to them. We talked about the land trust. We talked about public safety items, other than not only bail reform. I don't know why everybody's just stuck on bail reform, but there's other public safety items that I continue to say that I am focused on. We talked about affordable housing, we talked about so many other topics outside of mayoral accountability, which is very important to me. I need mayoral accountability to continue to work that we have done in the last few months, and I think

there's an appetite to give us the mayoral accountability that we need. And they will make the determination, and no matter what determination they make, I'm going to operate and do what's best for the city. So

Question: Was there any consensus on how many years it would be extended?

Mayor Adams: That's not how they flow in Albany. They hear what you have to say. They go back to their caucuses and they have a conversation and I respect the process because I was part of that process.

Question: [Inaudible] the metal detectors? If the city finds that it's a suitable option after this week's trial, what does the rollout look like? Where will they go?

Mayor Adams: Okay, when you came in today, those are not metal detectors. And sometimes people get them mixed up. Those are not metal detectors. They detect guns. That is what they detect. Many of you remember my good friend, former colleague in the Police Department, James E. Davis was shot with a nine millimeter because someone brought a gun inside the building. We're going after guns. And that's what those devices are. It's a pilot project. The taxpayers are not paying anything for it. We're seeing how it operates, and we are looking at, we are going to try all new forms of technology. I tried many forms of technology as a borough president, as a state senator, I look for technology to keep people safe because that's my obligation. And so, we're going to look at this. If it's great, we're going to bring another technology and try it. We're going to try technology to keep New Yorkers safe... Sup, Mike?

Question: How did you come upon that company, that the gun detective you were talking about now?

Mayor Adams: If I recall, there was a shooting or something happened with an emotionally disturbed person, a person was going through mental illnesses. And I went online, started looking around and I told my staff at the time to go take a look at it. And they were able to find out, I was asking all over the place. I said, "There has to be a better way to deal with people who are dealing with mental health illnesses." There was too many shootings, too many deaths, too many problems. And that device came up. There was some type of presentation that came up online, and we reached out and thank God, we were able to find a product and other products. There's other products out there that we want to continue to look at. I pushed the cameras on tasers. That was

something I pushed, a product. I did a test up in Albany with cameras on tasers, so that people can see what happened. I pushed the number of good public safety products using my former law enforcement, my role as a law maker and when I was borough president. But that's how we came in contact with him.

Question: Just one follow up on the question about the status alert. I talked to Dr. [inaudible] health advisor and his opinion was that, by kind of creating that system, the administration has kind of boxed itself in. That, by committing to it, now you have to thought, and I'm wondering, do you regret setting that up because it limits your flexibility of how you react? And of course, you're getting questions from us about it now the past few days?

Mayor Adams: Nah, listen, I don't mind the questions. Listen, you have a job in the role to do, to ask the questions. I'm going to be judged on my success in navigating the complexities of these days that we are facing. And I thank the doctor for his role under the former administration and for what they did, but we set a policy in place, not a law in place. I follow laws. I make policy. That was the policy we put in place based on the information that we had and the tools that we were available. And so. I'm hoping the doctor will respect my role as being the mayor of this city and there's a new Department of Health and Mental Hygiene commissioner. I'm hoping he would respect that and not constantly weigh in, and allow us to do the job that we supported when he was the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene commissioner.

[Crosstalk]

Question: I wanted ask you, I talked about it in the past, but can you confirm how many of your paychecks you've received in cryptocurrency and have you invested in any other currency or stocks it? And I know you're going to say it's [inaudible] question, but I know you were going to talk about the payment for the plane in November. Just focusing, I guess, on crypto-

Mayor Adams: The payment on the plane on which November?

Question: [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Are you kidding me? I'm so past that. Listen, three checks, that's a wrap. What's the next question? Yes.

Question: Do you have any other investments at all?

Mayor Adams: I'm not talking about my investment portfolio. I invested to crypto to raise that New York is going to be the center of technology. And I'm going to be looking at blockchain, I'm going to be looking at the gun detector. Listen, we are going to be the center of technology. That's who we are, and it's difficult sometimes, because we're so used to doing things a certain way, but you know what? We can't be afraid of the future. I'm excited.

Question: Mr. Mayor, we reported about Frank Carone's former clients at his law firm, about 40 that have business with the city. Just wondering how you thought about that when you selected him for the chief of staff job? And are you satisfied that he has avoided any confidence of interest?

Mayor Adams: Listen, he has gone beyond the call of duty. Think about it for a moment. Frank was a reasonably successful attorney. If you... he was a good attorney. If I said he was extremely successful... You know, he did his job. He had a lot of clients. And so, if he had a lot of clients, then just about every area, he's going to have clients in no matter, you know? I have several attorneys on staff here. I have several people that are not attorneys. I'm happy that he's operating as a professional. Frank has gone beyond the call of duty when it comes down to recusing himself, he's doing what is supposed to be done. We are extra careful, that's why our chief council looks over this stuff. He engages us.

Mayor Adams: So, I think that there's no way you are going to be an attorney and not have clients. And so, the goal is to make sure you have that right firewall when you come into government, because Frank is not the first attorney that was in private practice and they to come into government. Now, we go through every one of his clients or his associates' clients and say, "Well, okay, he had this person as a client." I just think that's an overreach. Frank is doing a great job as a chief of staff. I'm glad he's on board. It's hard coming into government, trust me, you under a lot of scrutiny, his successful law practice, you got to walk away from it. You have to put your life on hold, you're constantly monitored. And so, I really commend him for doing this because he believe in the mission of what we're trying to accomplish.

Question: Mr. Mayor, on 421A, did get to talk about that at all, get any commitments about renewing it or replacing it?

Mayor Adams: Yes, we did. We did have conversations about that and hopefully, they can come to an understanding that we need to even, we could extend it. I'm hoping that we could accomplish and come to an agreement of I think 421A, or a version of it is going to play a vital role and continue to watch us deal with the housing crises that we're facing.

Question: On the mayoral control issue a report by the nonprofit Advocates for Children says your administration should not be spending millions on a data portal to increase attendance among children in homeless shelters. As you look for mayoral control of the school, what steps has the DOE taken to improve attendance in this group?

Mayor Adams: And I think that I respectfully disagree with them about data portals, dashboards, analyzing. That's part of the problem we're having in the city. You know, remember my mother said, "You don't inspect what you expect, it's all suspect." We have not been in real time, analyzing what our issues are, how to deploy resources, how to put people in place. I think we have about 117 people that are responsible for going out, for getting young people, finding out why they are out. We do this correctly and build the right portals, the right dashboards, we can deploy people better. So sometimes, you don't fly a plane without a cockpit filled with instruments to tell you how you are flying. We have been flying this complicated piece of machinery called New York, in the blind. I'm not going to operate this city that way. And so the goal is for us to, while we are using those 117 people to go out and find students and get them back into school, we need to build out a system that better analyze how students are doing well in school. If they're out, finding out their issues. This is going to be a very complicated piece of apparatus to better identify the issues our students are having.

Question: Have they been trained on it in the homeless shelters? Do they know how to use the system?

Mayor Adams: Not at this time, we're going to do that. And that's part of the process that we're doing right now, but still those 117 people are out identifying those children that are out. We need to get those children back in school. First of all, if you're homeless and your child, the numbers are clear, you're less likely to graduate from high school. And if you don't educate, you will incarcerate, I said this over and over again. So the

goal is to get them into permanent housing. That is the goal not to leave them in homeless shelters. You know, about 110,000 children are in homeless shelters; we don't want to leave them there. They need to get in permanent housing. And there are many factors that's preventing that we want to zero in on.

Question: Is there a scenario where we could see the mask mandate returning to schools?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry?

Question: Well, you could see the mask mandate returning to schools?

Mayor Adams: If we do, we'll announce that after our meetings in the morning. As soon as I get off the calls in the morning, I make the determination what announcement we're going to send out. And when we make that determination, we'll announce it as soon as we get off the calls in the morning.

Question: We're coming up on two years after George Floyd, where do you think the city stands on implementing the police reforms that you and that so many others called for in those Black Lives Matter marches?

Mayor Adams: You said come up on two years since...

Question: After the murder of George Floyd.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: How do you think the city stands on the implementation of changes that you called for and that others called for?

Mayor Adams: Well, number one, there were many changes. You had changes saying, "Defund the police." I didn't call for those. So we are saying which ones I called for and others called for. I need for you to pinpoint on which ones I called for, because there are many calls that came from all over the place. And some of them, I don't support. I support police accountability. I also support police support. We need to be there for law

enforcement officers. You heard me say this over and over again, and the small number that are not suitable to be police officers, they need to expeditiously be removed from our department because they hurt our police department. And so, there's some specific reforms I call for. I can give you a timetable on those, but others that call for them, they may be reforms that I don't think are reforms. I think they could hurt public safety and I'm never going to do anything that's going to hurt public safety.

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