



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 16, 2018
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. It's Monday, and that means my first guest tonight is Mayor Bill de Blasio. Good evening, Mr. Mayor, always good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good to see you.

Louis: I'd like to pick up right where we left off. Buzz Feed released 1,800 disciplinary records. Some of it lesser, some of it of greater importance or severity in concern. What is your take on this? Not so much the releasing of the information. I mean it's public information, if it's inaccurate; I guess I'd like to hear about that. But now that we know what it is – have you had a conversation with Chief O'Neill about what this all implies?

Mayor: No, this is obviously just happened today. I have not seen the full report and have not spoken to the Commissioner. Look, I think the most important thing to realize here is this is exactly the type of information that should be legally available by changing that law in Albany known as 50-a. And that's what I believe in, and that's what Commissioner O'Neill believes in. We have to follow the State law, but we fundamentally believe we would all be better off if the law were reformed. But look, I believe it's quite clear that disciplinary infractions are taken very, very seriously by this Commissioner. They were taken very, very seriously by Bill Bratton. There's been real consequences, real follow through – a number of people have left the force in one form or another if they did the kinds of things that merited that. I have not seen the specifics and obviously I'll let the Commissioner speak to that. But I believe we have a stronger disciplinary system than we've ever had at the NYPD.

Louis: Okay, I guess we'll pick it up another time after you've been thoroughly briefed by the Commissioner. In the meantime, let me ask you about this – you did sort of a press event the other day. Neighborhood policing in subway –

Mayor: Yes –

Louis: And I know one of the stations happens to be one that I go through every day. And I was just scratching my head. I mean I understand neighborhood policing. I gone out with some of the guys in the 7-5 Precinct, totally get it – have some guys in the same sector to the people from the

community groups, and from the local businesses and so forth, but in the subway system, Jay Street, Downtown Brooklyn – thousands of people just kind of rushing through there. How does it work?

Mayor: Well, okay. So you're asking the right question. It's the same question I ask any New Yorker who spent a lot of their life in the subway as you and I have would ask that question. When I saw the idea actually laid out, it blew me away. Here is the idea. We typically ride the same lines, right. For me for many years it was the F-Train, and the R-Train, that's what I was on all the time. You see of course you know the station agent, the people who work in the stations. You often see a lot people from your neighborhood on the subway when you're going in and out of work whatever it may be. Well, why could you – so if could you have that kind of direct connection and you have those relationships why couldn't you also have an officer or a pair of officers who work that train on a regular basis, get to know members of the community just like they do above ground, get to know the people who work in each station, build those human relationships. So what we're announcing – which is amazing as you know, you're going to be at your station and you're going to see a poster up with the pictures of your officers who are going to be working there each day, their contact information if something is wrong.

Let's say you see something that makes you feel unsafe. Let's say you witness something or you see a recurrent problem. Right now, where would you turn? Honestly, where would you turn? But now, you'd actually have a name, a face, an email address, and ultimately someone who would build a relationship. And you know Chief Monahan, the Chief of Department who is one of the architects of neighborhood policing, he talked very passionately about this last week. He said when someone emails to the transit district, they're going to get a follow up from the officer who works that specific train, the officer is going to then stay in touch with that person from that point on. Anything else that comes up, they're going to know exactly who to turn to.

Louis: So now, I mean are they linked to the line? Or are they linked to the station?

Mayor: Yes, they're linked. They have a very specific geographical area just like you would if you were a cop on the beat in a sector, so much so that again – for example in Brooklyn the F-Train – you're going to see the names, the email address for your officers for your train. And if anything is going on in your train where you want to follow up with someone, you're going to know exactly what to do, who to reach out to. And the amazing thing is I think what we found with neighborhood policing above ground, we're going to find underground, it brings out a whole different type of information than we had before. It's reassuring to straphangers, I'm sure just like it is to people walking the streets, to see an officer regularly, to know them but very practically what we found about neighborhood policing that's so powerful is the flow of information stops crime, the flow of information help us to solve crimes. It's a huge force multiplier. You now take a whole group of people from the neighborhood and they are force multipliers for the police and it's also tremendous for creating a real bond between police and community.

Louis: One of the other parts of neighborhood policing that I saw above ground was the idea of having cops who could sort of cross some of the other – some of the jurisdictional lines that will often will sort of split up a precinct right? So they will do a little detective work, they will

respond to some 3-1-1 calls and so forth. In the subways in particular the occurrence of people who are emotionally disturbed –

Mayor: Right.

Louis: Or seriously mentally ill or both. If they are on the train in that station, is this going to be something we should tell the new neighborhood coordination officer about?

Mayor: Absolutely and I think this is a great example. I want to give you a human vignette that I think makes the point and then make the point about homelessness. When we did the announcement the other day two officers were there, partners, they were in the Bronx the last snow storm we had, they were at a station in the Bronx – I think it was 180th Street – and there was a guy in a wheelchair who couldn't get out of the station because everything was, you know, blocked by the snow or the ice – a guy in a wheelchair alone, he had a mile to go to get to his home. These two officers helped him out of the station and literally wheeled him the whole way home.

Louis: Oh boy.

Mayor: So very human, very personal, direct, helping someone in need. But I will tell you that is amazing unto itself but also spreads to everyone in the neighborhood to think about our officers in a different way – certainly in terms of the homeless as well. What we are finding is to get people out of the subways, off the streets for good, we need to build a human relationship and the trust and the connection. The officers are going to get to know if there is a homeless guy who goes to the same station for example, they are going to get to know that guy. They are going to be able to call in the homeless outreach workers, get really focused attention on that individual, try and win the trust that then gets them in. Remember we have 1,500 people we have gotten out of trains, off the streets, into shelter who have stayed in shelter. We need to do a lot more of that. But this is also going to help bond the work of the NYPD with homeless services to get help where it is needed very quickly.

Louis: Okay, let us switch education – there is a new lawsuit that is accusing the City of not doing enough to lower class sizes. It's partly a logistic question – it's partly a financial question. Do you think that class size is something that requires a lot of immediate attention? I mean you will have to pay it some attention at least as far as the lawsuit is concerned but is it one of your education goals to lower class size?

Mayor: It is something we'd like to – we have been making some progress on, we'd like to make a lot more progress on but as you said we are constantly grappling with really fundamental logistical issues and financial issues. We have devoted over \$4 billion now to new school seats, to create a whole lot more capacity where we have overcrowded areas in the city. That's going to help in terms of addressing class size challenges.

We also have to just constantly look for opportunities to get the resources that we deserve from Albany. And I keep coming back to this, you know, we had a disappointing reality in the State budget with the education funding this year, but one day I fundamentally believe, the Campaign

for Fiscal Equity decision by the highest court in this state will take effect. That will mean a lot more resources for New York City public schools, by the way for upstate cities and for rural areas as well – all the places that got underfunded. That’s also going to be a big step in allowing us to bring in more personnel to address class size so with current resources we are making progress, one day I would like us to see a lot more if we got the proper funding we deserve.

Louis: Okay, I have got more education questions and some other stuff we need to talk about but right now we are going to take a quick break, I’ll be right back with more from Mayor de Blasio.

[...]

Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall where we are speaking with Mayor Bill de Blasio, A question that I asked the new Chancellor, Mr. Carranza, I’ll put it to you as well. Something like 60 percent of the early childhood teachers or instructors are with community organizations as opposed to DOE. They have complained somewhat bitterly that they are on a sort of fundamentally lower and different pay scale. They feel like they are carrying the burden of a successful City program and not getting the benefits of it. I understand there are limits to what the City can or might do but is it a goal to try and get some parity between them and the DOE employees?

Mayor: It’s a goal to do better consistently for them and we have taken major steps to give them more compensation. We want to continue to do that. They – obviously, look, it’s a different history, different unions, etcetera. But we do want to increasingly improve their situation.

Louis: What are the tools that are available to you and might this come up in the executive budget?

Mayor: Well, it’s look – it’s something also that has to come up in labor relations in general and we do have to be mindful of the ramifications of all we do. But we’ve already taken steps and we have invested in giving them more support and we intend to keep doing it. Don’t have all the details in front of me but we will – I am committed to seeing a better outcome for them.

Louis: Okay, let’s talk politics. The Working Families Party – going through some real changes. They’ve endorsed Cynthia Nixon. They have lost, as a result of that, some of their major union support which I guess could financially threaten the very existence of the organization. What’s your take on this? And I don’t mean as a WFP candidate, but as just somebody who kind of knows and cares about –

Mayor: Sure.

Louis: The politics involved here.

Mayor: Well, it’s been 20 years. I was not deeply, deeply involved but around in the beginning and certainly supportive of the creation of the WFP and I’ve been supportive ever since. I think WFP’s does a lot of good in this state and pushed a very effective, progressive agenda, certainly achieved some of their goal of helping the Democratic Party become more progressive.

I think they've played a really important role and I hope they will continue to do so. That said, when they started out, they started out in very humble circumstances. I believe they'll find a way. It may be a different kind of approach, more of a grassroots approach. But that's certainly a viable option in today's politics.

But they stand for something and they played an important role and if you have meaning, if you have, I hate to use the word, brand, but if you have – if you stand for something that people can identify and they care about it, there will always be people who support that.

Louis: Is this at least partly generational? I mean, I – we know a lot of the people involved. And the union folks frankly tend to be a little older. Many of the activists tend to skew a little younger. Is that where some of the cleavage comes from?

Mayor: I don't know. I think what is certainly true is all movements, parties, unions, everyone better refresh their leadership and their activists because the world is changing very rapidly and we saw with Bernie Sanders' campaign and we're seeing with all sorts of efforts around the country right now whether it's the teachers, whether it's what we've seen with the students all over the country who are fighting for gun safety. There's a whole new generation of activists coming out of the scene, and they'll be looking for a home.

So, the one thing that's obvious is, you know, the WFP should really be mindful of that and connect with that. But I don't know all the nuances of what each union may feel. I would certainly say, you know, for any political party or movement, the most important thing is not which institutions are around you but how the grassroots feel about you.

Louis: I understand you're not on the ballot this year, you know –

Mayor: Thank God.

[Laughter]

Louis: In some ways –

Mayor: I've done that.

Louis: In some ways, this is not necessarily your fight. You can't – it doesn't keep you up all night, maybe part of the night. But I think back to 1980, right. You have Jacob Javits who's on the liberal party line. You have Elizabeth Holtzman on the Democratic line, and it kind of opens the door for a conservative Republican, Al D'Amato, who becomes the U.S. Senator. Do you have any sense of whether or not the left wing of the Democratic Party and the WFP are running that same kind of a risk this fall?

Mayor: Well, the first thing I'd say is I think what's happening all over this country is progressives are demanding a new Democratic Party and a different Democratic Party. We don't want a corporate-dominated or corporate-funded party. We don't want a moderate or

triangulating party. We want a party that's going to represent the core progressive values and have a clear platform related to economic change.

I always say, it's real simple. A progressive Democrat is someone who's going to say out loud, we need to tax the wealthy more and make them pay their fair share in taxes. That is happening all over. I think that's very healthy for the Democratic Party. I think what's going to come out of that is a reinvigorated party, a more progressive party, a party much more deeply connected to the grassroots with a much bigger activist base.

If only the Bernie Sanders supporters alone felt more comfortable with the Democratic Party, right there that would magnify the party's strength all over the country. So that's what I think is happening big picture.

I think the other thing to talk about – I mean it's way too soon to judge anything in the general election. We don't know who the nominees of each party are going to be. But one thing we can say is – 1980 was a wave-year, very sadly from my point of view, a wave-year for Ronald Reagan and Republicans.

Knock on wood, this year appears to be a wave-year if ever I've seen one for Democrats. I think Democrats in New York State are going to do very, very well across the board. It's going to be a strong situation whoever our nominee is.

But look, as to any other nuances, it's just too early to even think about that.

Louis: Okay, fair enough. I wanted to ask you about the Fair Fares proposal. The Speaker of the Council says that they are going to – as we get closer to the City budget being settled – they want discounted rides for low-income New Yorkers. From everything I know about you, your administration, your politics, your proposals this sounds like something that's like a “de Blasio special.” But there seems to be hesitance coming from your side of the building.

Mayor: It's a great idea with a big price tag – \$200 million. And we're having some real fiscal challenges now because the State budget took away a lot from New York City. Look, here's what I think is the right solution and it's a solution that now has more currency than ever.

I obviously believe in the millionaire's tax. A lot of people like to say, oh the millionaire's tax, can that actually happen? Well, what I announced with Senator Gianaris and Assembly member O'Donnell was a millionaire's tax that included the support for the Fair Fare. So, we got long-term financial help for the MTA and the Fair Fare long term. Not one shot, ongoing.

Here's what you need to know. Quinnipiac Poll last month – 75 percent of New Yorkers supported the millionaire's tax. The second thing you need to know – last week, the Democratic Party took a major step towards reunification. More to happen in that drama, as you know.

But let's imagine in a matter of months, a real Democratic majority, a functioning Democratic majority in the State Senate for the long haul. If you take that plus the popularity of the idea of the millionaire's tax, that becomes very viable and I think that is the best way to get it done.

The challenge at the city level is there's a lot of things we're not going to be able to do this year simply because of financial pressures, largely because of Albany – the hit we took from Albany. But the Council is calling for something very good, very well-intentioned – something I would love to see happen. I just don't think we agree yet on how to make it happen.

Louis: This is isn't one of these budget dance things where somebody pretends to walk away and the other pretends to chase them and you kind of already decided at some point you're going to figure this out.

Mayor: No, I can say with assurance, again, I believe the Council is coming from a good and noble place with the proposal. My argument is we're having a bigger fiscal challenge than I think has yet been recognized. We've identified immediately something very different because when I put out my preliminary budget we did not expect the hits from Albany to be as bad as they ended up being.

Obviously, we're paying towards the subway action plan. That was not a given back then. We have some other big issues up ahead. NYCHA's an obvious one which is going to have a serious price tag attached. We have to account for all those things.

Louis: Okay. We will see. Today in fact – this week being tax week, I took my hit today –

Mayor: My condolences.

Louis: I think you're going to find that there's at least a little bit more than you expected as far as my household is concerned.

In our last minute, the Charter Revision Commission that Corey Johnson wants to establish is somewhat open-ended and I understand there's a long history of mayors kind of putting forward theirs in part to sort of block the Council and sort of push theirs off to the side. Is that what's going on here?

Mayor: No, I've been very, very clear. I believe fundamentally in the changes that I called for in my State of the City address. We need public financing of elections. I think that is a game-changer. I mean even with a pretty good campaign finance system in this city, you still have a huge amount of time and energy that candidates spend raising money including particularly from people who have money –

Louis: But you can do all of this through legislation and it would amend the City Charter the same as the Commission would –

Mayor: You could. You could. I have real confidence that the public would support it and in fact that public mandate would make it very, very strong. I don't know what the Council would do. I think some people would like it, some people might not in the Council.

But I think the way to make sure it happens is to bring it to the people. That's an example of something I wanted to see acted on that I thought had here-and-now ramifications. That's why I called the commission.

Look, Speaker Johnson suggested a commission that looks at the whole big picture of City government over a longer period of time. I respect that. I'd like to work with him on that. Let's see where that goes. But this is about a here-and-now need to put some things on this November's ballot.

Louis: Okay, we're going to leave it there for now. We will see you next week.

###