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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As we mentioned at the top of the show earlier today, Mayor de Blasio proposed the final budget of his tenure. The \$98.6 billion fiscal plan is the largest in our city's history. And the Mayor is calling it a recovery budget. Meanwhile, we've got some breaking news this afternoon about the census and the declining fortunes of New York State when it comes to political representation. Mayor de Blasio joins me now from the Blue Room inside City Hall to talk about that and much more. Welcome. Good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good to see you, Errol. How are you doing today?

Louis: Just fine, thanks. I have just an observation. I have not gone through your executive budget, but you have had the most remarkable budget luck of any Mayor of the six that I have covered. Meaning –

Mayor: It's karma – karma, Errol.

Louis: You have never had to deal with a serious economic downturn.

Mayor: Well, hold on. Last year we dealt with a horrendous downturn and one of the biggest crises in New York City history. But thank God, Joe Biden got elected and the people of Georgia sent two Democrats to the U.S. Senate. Otherwise, we would be having a very different discussion right now.

Louis: Right. It was an unlikely save, but you got the save nevertheless.

Mayor: Yes.

Louis: There were some questions that were put to you, were along the lines of should you perhaps bequeath to the next mayor a little bit more in the way of reserved funds? Yours come to, I think a little under five percent.

Mayor: Well, look, we've got \$4.59 billion in reserves. It's a hell of a lot more than Michael Bloomberg bequeathed to me. You know, we just had \$1.8 billion more to reserves in this executive budget. And we're going to keep working with the Council to see if there's more we should do. But it's a very strong reserve number by any measure in New York City history, it's a strong reserve number. So, I think what we have here is a budget that protects the future of the city, but most importantly, invests in our people right now where they need help as part of this recovery. This recovery goes right, we are going to see a hell of a lot more revenue. We're going to see the city economy come back, OMB predicts 400,000 more jobs. That changes everything

going forward. And so what I want to hand off to the next mayor is a booming economy, a lot more City revenue, and people who are feeling the effects of this investment as they personally, as their families recover from the shock of this pandemic.

Louis: I mean some of the expenses, and again, I haven't gone through it in detail. It only came out a few hours ago for us. But do all of the items to your satisfaction, deal with sort of non-recurring revenues? As you suggested some of this is a one-time windfall or could be treated that way. That we can't necessarily expect another infusion from the federal government, the way we got this year, nor would there necessarily be a cause for one. Are you, when you hire, say new teachers for pre-K, those are permanent obligations, those are long-term obligations. Do you have the right balance between one-time infusions of money and long-term expenses?

Mayor: Yeah. I'll tell you – first of all, we're talking about some things that we absolutely need in this city, like early childhood education. I'm really excited that in two years 3K will be absolutely universal, will be a right for every three-year-old. In fact, very poignantly, the kids born during the crisis in 2020, will be the first ones to get full day 3K for free, every single child. That's an investment in our future. That's the way to make everything better for families, make our schools stronger, et cetera. And that's the kind of thing we can do, because we do have recurring funds from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision and the actions of the State Legislature. That's going to be \$1.1 billion every single year, going forward once it ramps up. So, that's the one piece to remember. There is a recurring piece of that. But remember with the stimulus funding, we are obligated rightfully, to use all of it. It has to all be used in the next three years, to bring back the economy, to bring back the city. A number of the things we're doing are built to have a short-term impact and then they can be modified easily. But I want to remind you, we think we're going to get the 5. – excuse me, 4.5 million jobs this year. Projections then in the years ahead is that we will surpass our all-time high of employment. A lot of revenue is going to come with that. And that will start to fill in for the stimulus money once it runs out in the next three years.

Louis: Okay. So, the budget is the good news today. The other news of course, was the announcement by the Census Bureau that it looks like our state will lose a congressional seat. Which could have been avoided if only 89 more people had stayed in the state or been counted in the state. And I'm reminded of a quote that you gave last August, where you said, and I'm quoting, I'm not going to beg anybody to live in the greatest city in the world. Would you rethink that stance in light of how close this ended up being?

Mayor: Well, this is about the count. We all know a huge number of people go uncounted and that's the thing we have to defeat each year. I'm very proud of what we did in the city because we're in the middle of a pandemic and we launched a massive grassroots effort to get people counted. And we managed to reach the same level of 2010 when there was no pandemic. I mean, that is a miracle. And that meant that the city actually got counted more strongly than almost any major city in America. What's troubling to me is the State of New York clearly did not go that extra mile. They did not put the resources in, they held back money. They should have devoted it – I mean, for God's sakes, if the State had invested in the census, could you have found 89 more people to count? Sure. Easily and many, many tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands more potentially. So, this was a lost opportunity by the State government to get the count, right. That's what I'm seeing.

Louis: Well, some of this is just reality, right? I mean, California spent way more than New York and they lost a seat just like we did?

Mayor: Well, look, I think the fact is we know now, unfortunately it's very, very sad to me that the State of New York missed by so little. We clearly – the State could have made up that ground with a better effort. So, that's just sad reality. If more people had been counted, a modest number more people, we'd have an additional congressional seat.

Louis: I mean, I just look, there's seven seats that shifted. Texas is going to get two. Colorado is going to get one, Florida, Montana, North Carolina, and Oregon. And I've talked with leaders of several of those states and they have just a very different attitude than what you see in New York. They lay out the welcome mat. They want people to come there. They want businesses to relocate there. North Carolina, just got announced today as a site of a huge deal where Apple is going to build a gigantic campus and possibly create 20,000 jobs. And the contrast with New York could not be greater.

Mayor: I think you're mixing two different concepts, respectfully. I think the quality of the count would have unquestionably preserved that congressional seat. So, I think you're raising a different point, which to me is a very important discussion, but it's a different matter than how we could have saved that seat. In terms of the welcome, I mean, we just announced, for example, a \$30 million effort to bring tourism back to the city. We're bringing our City workers back to offices starting next week. And we're going to do it in a safe, smart manner. A huge amount of investment in cleaning New York City, City Cleanup Corps. I mean, all the things that the business community has said really, really matter. We're focusing on doing things to make this city strong. And, you know, I talked to business leaders about what they say makes New York City a place that works for them. You know, number one thing they always talk about is the schools. Making the schools better, making sure the schools are available for kids. This city led the nation in terms of bringing schools back in the middle of this pandemic. So I think, you know, that's a different question then, does a state go out and court a specific company? I mean, look, what's happened with the tech sector in this company, excuse me, in this city. The tech sector in the city has been booming and continuing to grow, even during the pandemic. Life sciences -- we're putting a huge investment – talk to people in life sciences, when they look at New York City investing hundreds of millions of dollars to make it a better place for life sciences. A lot of people say that's exactly what New York City needs to do to win that industry over more. I think we're doing those kinds of things.

Louis: Yeah. But I mean some of this goes beyond your administration. I mean, we've been losing congressional seats since 1953. The thing that I'm getting at, which I just find stunning is you can never get a New York official of any prominence in power like you, to say we need to do something different. We can't keep losing political power and the billions of federal aid that goes with it year after year, decade after decade, census after census?

Mayor: Well, I think Errol, it is a really good question. I mean, first of all, we all know we don't get our fair share of federal aid compared to what we put in. That's been going on for decades and decades. You'll remember Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to lay that out each year. That's a separate matter that needs its own action and should be fixed. But I would caution – I mean, this, the country has been evolving for, you know, 50 years or more. It's not shocking that people for a variety of reasons want to go to someplace like the Sunbelt. The question is, do we have a strong,

vibrant economy and are there people who always want to be here, want to stay here, want to come here? Well, New York City has never had a problem in recent years attracting people who want to be here. We've had our all-time high of population in recent years and until the pandemic, an incredibly booming, diverse, effective economy. And we're going to get that back. So, I think there's different things, different realities around the whole state. And I understand that for much of the Northeast, Midwest has lost people to the Sunbelt for a variety of reasons, but there's lots of factors in that. The question for New York City is have we been in an incredibly strong position in recent years? Yeah. All time highest population, all time highest jobs. We have a booming, diverse economy. People love it here. People come here from all over the world. I think there's a lot to like here.

Louis: Okay. Let's take a short break here. Stand by Mr. Mayor. We'll be back with Mayor de Blasio in just a minute. Stay with us.

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Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall where I'm once again joined by Mayor de Blasio. And Mr. Mayor, I wanted to talk with you about the violence that the city is grappling with. We had our bloodiest week so far this year, 50 people shot over the course of a week. We've asked this question many times, but I guess to be blunt about it, at what point is the body count so high that you conclude that your well-intentioned efforts are not succeeding?

Mayor: Yeah. Errol, I appreciate the bluntness, but I don't think that's a fair characterization at all, respectfully. This city just went through something unbelievable, a global pandemic, a perfect storm of problems, and we are working our way out of it constantly. You can see the recovery before your eyes. When we get jobs back, schools back, houses of worship, everything comes back, it changes the equation. The NYPD is out there doing their job, highest gun arrests in 25 years. We're finally going to get the court system back next month. And I really want to emphasize it's hard to get things to work in criminal justice without a functioning court system. Thank God it is coming back fully in the course of May. We have prosecutors ready now to finally prosecute gun cases, get people off the street, the small number of people who have been doing this violence, and once and for all change the trajectory. This was a horrible, horrible scenario we went through, but we are working our way out of it. And I do believe you're going to see real change as these pieces come together.

Louis: Well, in particular, I'm curious, what numerical metrics are you using to measure the efforts of violence interrupters, sort of, the community side of this? You know, you talked about diverting or spending more money to support them in this new executive budget. I personally know a lot of the folks on the ground. I consider some of them to be friends. I have talked with a lot of the criminologists and the activists who created this model years and years ago. And I just, I don't – I can't put my hands on any number that suggests that it's working, and it seems to be counterproductive to pretend otherwise.

Mayor: My experience is really different than yours, Errol. I have seen numerous situations where we've seen long stretches of time without a shooting or without a murder in places where we previously saw, unfortunately, a lot of problems. And the presence of the Cure Violence movement, the Crisis Management System absolutely correlated to a reduction in shootings and murders. There's no question – I mean, the NYPD has looked at this and has come to respect the

impact this can have. It's not every time, always the same, but this is something we've looked at and we do see a profound value in it. And especially for stopping cycles of retaliation where credible messengers can do things that police simply can't do. Because they are of and by and for the community, they can interrupt some of these cycles that otherwise could be really deadly. So, I think we have strong evidence. I don't even think this movement has begun to reach its full potential. I think that's coming in the future, which is why it's smart that we're investing. President Biden's investing billions, literally, in community-based solutions to violence because violence cannot just be addressed by police. There's other factors here.

Louis: No, no, understood. I mean, I'm just going by the fact that the CompStat revolution is based on the idea that you can't manage what you can't measure. Right. So, I'm wondering what numbers the NYPD is using to measure that particular strategy.

Mayor: Well, again, in some cases, the measurement is really clear – what was the trajectory and what were the numbers before the presence of the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System and what was it after. There's some very notable examples. Queensbridge Houses had some legendary examples of this. Last year in Southeast Queens, we saw some powerful examples with just the pure comparative numbers. But I think there's an X-factor here too, which is if it wasn't there could things have been worse. And I think the answer is, yes. We've seen so many specific instances where, for example, a retaliation was averted. You know, you have to also factor in – I think this is very consistent with CompStat – the what-might-have-been if you didn't put these strategies in place. So, I'll tell you, I feel very good that this is a smart investment. It's also just beginning in the sense that this is still a very new movement, which I think is figuring out more and more how to prevent violence and how to consolidate work with communities. And it's been one of the missing links, which is to have authentic community voices, helping to stop violence.

Louis: Let me move to a somewhat related topic, which is, you announced today that there'll be an NYPD – a brand new approach in every precinct, after you ran a short trial in three precincts, to make sure that civilians would be responding to more emotional distress calls. And I wanted to bring up Kowalski Trawick. This is somebody who lived in a supportive housing development, meaning by definition people have disabilities, there might be emotionally disturbed persons there. He's confronted in his home by two officers and killed in less than two minutes. Nearly all of which was captured on video. And these are officers who have been through de-escalation training. So, how do we go from that kind of a situation to something fundamentally different if the training that you've already given doesn't seem to be taking hold.

Mayor: Yeah. I am looking into that case to understand better what happened there, and I'll be – really do want to respond to it when I have all the facts, but I want to look at the big picture because I think it's pretty profound. Since the entire police force was trained in de-escalation and there's been persistent progress also – and you talked about numbers before, the numbers are very, very striking how few gun discharges there are in recent years compared to previous years. The numbers have plummeted as part of a consistent training effort and de-escalation training. So, I think, again, here's a case where we have some hard facts. De-escalation has led to less use of guns. It has led to a lot of instances being diffused that might've otherwise become more conflictual. Now this case I need to know more about, and I'm not saying it's – the strategies are perfect, but you know if you're training people, I mean, we see these horrible videos from around the country, where clearly there's not a hint of de-escalation. There's not a hint of restraint in

terms of reducing use of force. Thank God here we've made some real progress in terms of turning the approach to policing towards what's the least force that can be used.

Louis: In the case of Mr. Trawick, if you haven't seen the video, it looks comparable to the worst of what we've seen elsewhere in the country. And the only reason we found out about it, the NYPD stonewalled on releasing any of the video for years and they had to be sued before they gave up any of it. I mean, that is part of the problem as well.

Mayor: Well, look a lot has changed in the last year, and I'm very happy about that. We now have a situation where there's so much more transparency about all police discipline matters. We have clear rules we agreed to with the CCRB about their access to video, when they're looking at cases. A lot had to be improved. And the fact is that the reforms made in the last year create so much more transparency and also empower the CCRB. One of the things we announced in the budget today was additional resources for the CCRB to aid their efforts and their ability to get information out. So, I want to – again, I am real concerned about this case. I want to see all the facts and I want to speak to it publicly. But I do think the underlying question you're raising, you're right in the past there were too many times when information was hard to get. I think we have real, tangible evidence of changing that and getting this information out differently now.

Louis: This is – this does go back to something you and I have talked about many times. I think my organization is still suing the city just trying to get any permission to see any of this body cam footage. Your administration has dug his heels in, gone to court, fought every single step of the way against ever revealing anything that doesn't make the NYPD's narrative look good.

Mayor: I just obviously don't agree with your assessment, respectfully. There's plenty of times where releasing body cam footage, that is not one side or another, it's just what happened. And if there's more we have to do, we'll keep looking to improve that system. But there's clearly lots of situations where there's been release of footage including in situations that showed critical dynamics where the NYPD needed to do better. And that's – we have now with the discipline matrix, with the MOU between the NYPD and CCRB, I mean, we have a much more developed and specific system for follow-through where there is something wrong. So, you know, this keeps growing. If there's something more we have to do, we're going to look for the next thing we have to do as part of the reform.

Louis: Okay. Release of those videos is definitely one of those things that needs to get done. I mean, you can't find the wrongdoing until two or three years later because the NYPD won't show you any evidence. I mean, that's kind of where we're at right now. But we'll have to pick this up another time, Mr. Mayor. Thanks so much for joining us.

Mayor: Thank you, Errol.

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