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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. Yesterday, beginning of phase two, and, by everything that we're hearing here at City Hall, a great start for this city. A lot of excitement out there, a lot of energy as New York City takes a big step forward towards our recovery. So, phase two began. I celebrated with Chirlane last night, we went to Melba's Restaurant in Harlem. It was amazing to – I have to tell you – to be, once again, connected with the life, the energy, the culture of our city, through our restaurants. And a beautiful night, and outdoor dining, an amazing experience. Thank you, Melba. And thank you to the whole team at Melba's. You were wonderful, wonderful hosts. And look, this is the beginning of something very big. As of this moment, 4,136 restaurants have applied for and been immediately approved to do outdoor seating. That number is growing all the time. And, as Melba told me, it took her something like five minutes to complete the application successfully. So, to all the restaurants out there looking to get going again, bringing back thousands and thousands of workers and starting up their livelihood again, it is fast and easy. Please jump on board. And we know that hundreds of thousands of people are now back to work and families are going to have a paycheck again, and life is going to be so much better for them. We also know that people are finally going to get to do a lot of things we've been waiting for. Some of us have been waiting for a haircut for quite a while. So, this week we can able to go back to barbershops, beauty salons. It's going to be a great, great feeling.

So, a very good start to phase two. As always, you know, when we celebrate the good things happening and we really need to take time to do that, we also recognize the challenges. We also recognize that we're dealing with so many problems simultaneously in this coronavirus crisis. So, we know our families have been cooped up. Young people have been cooped up and we know that on beautiful summer nights like we're having now, unfortunately some young people are turning to the wrong approach, and that's illegal fireworks. And we have concerns about this from all over the city. This is a real problem. It is not just a quality of life problem, and a noise problem. And it's certainly that. And it's all five boroughs, and we take that seriously, but it can also be dangerous. So, we need to make sure that young people know, all people know, some of it's adults too, that illegal fireworks are not only illegal, but they can be dangerous. We need to get that message across. And that's what we intend to do. And we also intend to go to the root cause. And that is the people who are supplying the fireworks. The folks who are profiting off of illegal fireworks. We're going to start a huge sting operation to go and get these illegal fireworks at the base. Meaning everywhere they're being sold around New York City, and even where they're being sold in surrounding States that we know are flowing into New York City. The Sheriff's Office, the FDNY, the NYPD have come together in an illegal fireworks task force. We will have over 40 officers from each of those three organizations, including 12 FDNY fire

marshals. The NYPD Intelligence Bureau will be a part of this effort to help us track down where the fireworks are coming from to begin with. Deputy Sheriffs will be out there addressing this at the root. So, what do we do? We go at the suppliers. There'll be all sorts of actions taken. Undercover buys, sting operations, finding where the supply is and cutting it off at the knees. And there's going to be a big public safety campaign to led by the FDNY. The FDNY has done amazing work, educating New Yorkers on so many ways that they need to stay safe, whether it's smoke alarms or the ways to avoid setting a fire accidentally, the FDNY is going to take the lead. Public service announcements, social media aimed at all New Yorkers, but particularly young people to help us root this out. This is a beginning there's a lot to do, and we have to do it quickly, but this is an issue we can confront. It's not entirely new. It's more than we've ever seen it and earlier, but it's not entirely new city agencies have been able to root out this problem in the past. We're going to go at it hard now and address it immediately.

So, those are the fireworks we do not ever want to see the illegal fireworks, but let's talk about something more positive. Let's talk about something that brings us actually a lot of joy. And that is the professional fireworks. The ones that we wait for each year that Macy's gives us. A wonderful thing Macy's does for the people in New York City, every July 4th, the fireworks display is something people look to all year around here in the city. And it's actually looked at all over the nation, all over the world. And this July 4<sup>th</sup>'s going to take on added meaning. We've all been through so much and we are finally making sustained progress. Knock on wood. We got a lot more to go, but every one of you who has worked so hard on the social distancing, the shelter in place, the face coverings to get us to this day, we're celebrating you. We're celebrating this city. We're celebrating this country at a moment where we all need to take stock and be proud of what we have done together. So, we need this, and it's going to be done by Macy's and thanks to everyone's everybody at Macy's. Jeff Ganette, the CEO has been a great partner in this, and I know for him and everyone at Macy's, this is a labor of love. They really care about New York city, and they want to do something special. So, this year is going to be different. Let me start with that crucial point. It will not be like the past where there's one big giant show. We do not want a lot of people out watching. There's not going to be a single focal point. In fact, we're only going to let out information about specific points very close to the actual moment when these shows happen. it's going to be a series of shows, only five minutes each. Why? Because we want to get the shows around the five boroughs where people can see them from their own homes, from their own rooftops, from nearby parks, but not something where people go to a single location in group, in large numbers. This will be happening this coming Monday, June 29th through Wednesday, July 1st weather permitting.

So, the idea is very brief bursts, brief, but mighty. And this is not like what you see with the illegal fireworks. You'll know this is a very professional, beautiful show. People get a moment to experience it, feel good about it, and then it'll all be pulled together on Saturday, July 4th in a show. it'll be live on NBC with the different pieces of each night together on tape, but also music from leading cultural figures. There'll be tributes to our heroes who got us this far, the healthcare workers, the first responders, everyone who fought through March, fought through April all the way to today to make this city come back and something very special that night at the empire state building as well. So, people will be able to see different pieces at different points. It's going to be something that's going to be special for the city different, but very special, very powerful,

very moving, but also very safe. And again, thank you to everyone at Macy's for being such great partners.

Now, we think about the things that, you know, we need to be inspired at this difficult time. The things that remind us, we can come back. We are coming back. We think about those things that give us hope, but at the same time we think about what people are going through every single day. And I'll tell you something from the beginning of this crisis, one of the things I've said, and all my colleagues here at city hall have said, we understand that people are not only hurting, families hurting, families who have lost loved ones, but folks have lost their livelihood. They don't have money for the basics. And that begins with food. This needs more attention that millions of New Yorkers have suffered from food insecurity. That is not normal in this city. So many people have had to worry where the next meal is coming from. And no New Yorker gracing the world, no New Yorker should ever have to ask the question, where am I going to find my next meal? So, what we've said from the beginning is we're going to go right at that, with everything we've got. The city of New York to make sure that anyone who needs food gets it when they need it, where they need it distributed so far. This is an amazing number. The city of New York has distributed 70 million meals since March for free to people who need them in New York City. We're now doing approximately 1.5 million meals per day – again, for free. Whether it's meals that people pick up at sites or meals delivered right to the door of a senior who can't get out, but needs that good, healthy food on a regular basis. This has been an unprecedented effort and everyone involved has done a remarkable job. And now there's going to be an additional element of this effort for the summer, because we will not let anyone go hungry this summer. And here to talk about it, our foods czar, and she and her team have led the way throughout this crisis. Our foods czar, Kathryn Garcia. Kathryn?

**Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. You know, we really have made a commitment to make sure that no New Yorker is going hungry during this crisis. And so many of you have asked about our plans for the summer. Does this continue as we move into different phases? And so, I want to talk a little bit about what our plans are for the summer. So, I am thrilled to be able to announce that we will continue the grab and go meals at over 400 sites, both schools, and also there will be some in parks recreational facilities through the entire summer. I really just want to thank the Department of Education staff who have put this together and who have continued to be committed to this city in this time of need. So, they are open to anyone from 7:30 to 1:30, and you can take meals for your kids. You can take meals for your parents, but everyone is welcome regardless of income, regardless of documentation status. So, we really want people to feel that they can come and get a meal there.

So, as the Mayor said, we have distributed or delivered over 70 million meals, which is really quite astonishing, probably bigger than any other city or state has ever tried to do in the history of this country, probably outside of the Great Depression. And this has only been possible because of the deep partnership that the Department of Sanitation has had with the Department of Emergency Management, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Parks Department, the Department of Transportation, it was literally all hands on deck and we will continue to be committed helping New Yorkers during this unprecedented time.

So, one of the fun things for summer and feeding out of the grab and go sites is that we will be adding pizza kits, so that you can get the meals that are prepared as well as be able to take home pizza to make it. It can be made in a stove, in a microwave, in a toaster oven, so it should be accessible to all. And for more information, you obviously can text or go online to find the closest sites. And just to reiterate that we will continue the kosher sites as well as at every other site, there is a both regular vegetarian and Halal options.

Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you very, very much, Commissioner. Congratulations to you and your team. And pizza kits, this is good news – there is nothing New Yorkers love more than pizza, so it will be a very nice thing for folks to get pizza kits as something special, especially for kids in this city. And look, we are so clear about the fact that we have to do everything and anything to help bring this city back this summer is going to be a time I'm hoping and praying, and I'm knocking on wood again of transitioned towards a much better situation. Again, phase one has gone really well so far, phase two has started well, phase three could be, as soon as two weeks away, we are moving forward aggressively. And this summer will be a time when we get our footing back more and more people come to work. I'm really looking forward to a very, very new reality in the fall, if we all keep to what we need to do, excuse me, as we restart this city.

Now, we also are in the process of recovery, and I've said many times the recovery is not just go back to the city that existed in January or February and call a day. No, the recovery means we're going to do things differently. We have to change the status quo on the biggest issues of fairness and justice, and right down to the everyday issues, the kitchen table issues, the issues that affect you and your neighborhood on your block. And this brings me to an issue that so many New Yorkers care about, and it is a very important every-day issue – once again, alternate side parking. So, here's the reality, alternate side parking has been done the same way for a long, long time, and, like so many New Yorkers, I've experienced it over and over again, trying to find that place to move the car to sometimes forgetting, getting that ticket. It is frustrating, it is difficult, it doesn't have to be this way. So, we're rethinking alternate side parking and I want to thank everyone who's been a part of the effort. We've made the decision throughout this crisis to very rarely have alternate side parking on. So, a special thank you to a Deputy Mayor Laura Anglin; to, in her other hat, Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, their teams; Department of Transportation, Polly Trottenberg. Everyone's been working together to figure out how we could give some relief to folks, and we've done that by having very few times and alternate side parking was in effect, but as I said, we have to rethink the whole model. And one of the things that has frustrated me for years as a New Yorker and as a public servant is the streets where people had to move their car, not once a week, but twice a week, two different days, a super hassle, and one to me that bluntly didn't seem necessary and it wasn't fair to people. This needs to change. So, we're about to make the biggest change in alternate side parking in the last two decades. We are now going to have a new rule where New Yorkers will only have to move their car once a week when alternate side parking is in effect. Now, sometimes, as we've seen, it won't be an effect, but when alternate side parking is, in fact, no New Yorkers should have to move their car more than once a week. So, where do we stand right now, right now, suspended with alternate side through Sunday, this Sunday, June 28th, we're going to bring it back for one week, starting on Monday, June 29th. We've got some cleaning up to do, we want to reset the equation,

we want to make sure that the streets are clean. Some restaurants are going to be able to pick up some of that space for outdoor dining, and we're going to take stock of where we stand. But when it comes back next week, if you live on one of those blocks, that right now you'll have to move the car twice a week, you will not have to do that. You should only do it once a week and it will be on the latest day posted on your street sign. So, if you unfortunately have to currently do it twice a week now, starting next week, only the later day in the week will you have to move your car. And, again, we're going to do that for one week, see how it goes. And we're going to watch this in the course of the summer, as we get on towards Labor Day and see if this is something we can make a long-term new rule. I like it, I hope this will prove to be as common sense as I think it is. That'd be something we can institute long-term, and again, we'll only turn on alternate side parking when we need it during this crisis, but I want to make it easier on people when it is in effect.

Okay, let's talk about the thing we talk about every day, this is the essence of everything we're focused on the health of our people. What do our indicators tell us? Today is a very good day, that's what our indicators tell us. Indicator one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, the threshold is 200 and today's report only 45. Indicator two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICU's – threshold of 375, today only 320. And indicator number three, percentage of people positive for COVID-19 – citywide threshold of 15 percent, today's report, once again, only 2 percent. Excellent, excellent report today. Congratulations to all of you. And you know, I'm going to say next, keep doing what you're doing, let's keep tight, disciplined, focused, so we can keep these numbers down and keep reopening and restarting.

A 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:** Hi, all just a reminder that we have Foods Czar and Commissioner Garcia here in person, and, on the phone, we have Sheriff Fucito, and Senior Advisor Varma. So, with that, I will start with Juliet from 1010 WINS.

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

**Mayor:** I am doing well, Juliet. How are you?

**Question:** I'm good. Thank you for asking. My question is about the increase in shootings and homicides. I know you have expressed concerns about the spike in these numbers. What is the effectiveness of the Cure Violence and your crisis management program when shootings and homicides have been up dramatically?

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's a great question. Juliette, look, why I know that Cure Violence program and the Crisis Management System work is that I've been watching now for six years, the steady growth of that approach. And I've seen extraordinary results Queensbridge Houses, largest public

housing development in all New York City, in all of America went a whole year without a single shooting. That was unheard of for decades in this city, that was because of a vibrant grassroots effort, a movement of people in the community stopping violence before it happened, mediating disputes, stopping retaliation. I have seen it with my own eyes over and over again, I was out in Southeast Queens a couple of weeks ago at life camp with Erica Ford and all of her colleagues talking to young people who were in gangs, who left the gang life because life camp presented them with a better alternative and a peaceful path forward. When you see that Juliet, when you see young people could have ended up being involved in violence could have lost their life. And instead they're now preaching peace and they're helping get other kids out of gangs, I mean, it's amazing to see. And that's something honestly that the government can't do, the police can't do, that takes grassroots effort, that takes real everyday people and trusted people in communities, credible messengers, to do that work. Absolutely convinced of its value, we need to do more of it. But to your question about why we've seen the uptick Juliet, the uptick clearly is in part related to the coronavirus. It's related to the fact that people have been cooped up, it's related to the emotion and the tempers that have come with that. It's certainly profoundly related to the fact that the criminal justice system is on pause and that's causing a lot of problems for all of us. There's many underlying factors, but what is obvious Juliet is this uptick in shootings is something that should worry all New Yorkers and we have to address, and we've got to stop it in these coming weeks before it becomes something much worse.

**Question:** I do have, yes, I have a second question for the Mayor.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, given the history of Gracie Mansion, I'm concerned that Archibald Gracie was a slave holder and that Robert Moses renovated the house for mayoral living quarters. Would you move out?

**Mayor:** You know, Juliet, we have to look at that whole history and I know that the commission we're putting together on racial justice and reconciliation is not only going to consider Gracie Mansion, it's going to consider everything associated with the City of New York, the government of New York, and figure out what should be the future approach. Whether it is the name or how we talk about it and explain it to our people, what this history means, what we do to address the history, most importantly. You know, I care a lot about the historical and cultural factors and the meaning and what it has done to our perceptions, but I care most about what it's done to everyday people in their lives. So, I want to get to the material and tangible work of changing what we do in this city, redistributing wealth in this city, changing policies that are racist and discriminatory, changing structures that are inherently institutionally racist - breaking them down. There's so much we have to do and that commission will lead the way. Obviously, our internal task force on racial inclusion and equity is already doing a lot of that work in the here and now – immediate policy changes. So, I want that work to continue. I think the, the future of Gracie Mansion, what it should be, what it should be called, how we should address it, that's something that needs some real careful thought because it also is a place that beyond a troubled past does represent the whole of the city and we have to think carefully about its future.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Julia from the Post.

**Question:** Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Happy day two of phase two re-opening.

**Mayor:** Happy day two, phase two. I like that. We'll have a new greeting.

**Question:** So first on the fireworks, I understand the importance of, of cutting off the supply at the root, but are police going to do anything to go out and potentially, maybe confiscate fireworks from those who are, are setting them off in neighborhoods and really causing the disruption and the danger to New Yorkers every night?

**Mayor:** So, Julia, I'd say a couple of things. The most important thing is for the NYPD to work on the most important issues and right now, given the other challenges we're facing, I want them focused on the most fundamental issues of public safety. So, I'm concerned first and foremost about addressing the shootings problem we're having. That's where the central focus of the NYPD needs to be on reducing that violence and they're making very important moves to address that. The fireworks can be unsafe. I'm not for a moment missing that, but the challenge a lot of times with fireworks is that particularly young people fire them off and then leave immediately; so it's very hard to find them and address it in real time, in a way that actually would make a difference. But anytime NYPD has the ability to intervene, whether it might be a threat to human life, of course they will. We take that very, very seriously and have to. I think the more profound issue is going to be going to the root cause, just cutting off the supply and the city has had some success in the past and we're going to go very hard at that. And I do think the education efforts are going to make a difference. I think a lot of young people have to be reminded of the dangers. I think a lot of parents and family members have to be reminded of the dangers and start talking to their young people and I think that will, that will affect a lot of the reality as well.

**Question:** Okay, thank you. And then on a different topic, I wonder if you agree with Commissioner Shea, who testified before Attorney General James yesterday, that the cops who drove into a group of protesters in Brooklyn last month, didn't violate the Department's use of force policy?

**Mayor:** Well, you know, Julia, I want to see the results of that entire investigation, both what Internal Affairs Bureau comes up with on that, but also the independent investigations; what the Attorney General is doing, what our DOI Commissioner, and Corporation Counsel are doing. I want to see all those facts. I never want to see that happen again in New York City and I want to make that very clear to everyone and very clear to the NYPD – that should never ever happen again in this city. But as to what happened in that specific instance, let's get the full investigation and then we can pass judgment.

**Moderator:** Next we have Henry from Bloomberg.

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

**Mayor:** Good Henry, how are you?

**Question:** I'm good. My question goes to the fact that, or at least the reported anecdotes of people leaving the city. We have uncertain future on schools, what they're going to look like in the fall. We've got these fireworks exploding all over the city, people complaining that it's destroying their quality of life. We've got shootings going on. There's no theater, none of the amenities that New Yorkers have loved are open and a lot of people are looking elsewhere and I'm wondering whether you're concerned about this and whether there's anything you think you can do to staunch the exodus that we keep reading about?

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's a great and important question, Henry. First of all, as Mayor, of course, I'm always concerned if there's anything that's causing anybody who lives here to feel uncomfortable, whatever it is and that's true when we're not in the middle of a pandemic – just any time that there's a quality of life concern, if there's a concern about safety, it's our job to address it. Now, as of February if you look at everything that was going on in this city, the most jobs we ever had, the lowest crime we ever had. In many ways, our quality life greatly improved compared to the past; people voting with their feet in the sense of the amount of investment that people were making here, 67 million tourists a year, none of that can be forgotten. That was not even six months ago. So, we have to take a little bit of a big picture view here, Henry. We're going through a rough patch, the world's going through a rough patch, the country is going through a rough patch. It's very tough, but this city has extraordinary resiliency. So, do I think there are some people of means who are going to decide to go elsewhere? I do, I also think there's a lot of people of means who are going to stay right here. I think there are some people who are going to come in here because they sense re-birth and opportunity and I think the re-birth is going to be happening steadily. Look last night was very telling to me; one little vignette, but very meaningful, you know, when Chirlane and I went to Melba's Restaurant in Harlem, if you looked at the scene going by, people reconnecting, you know, folks wanting to come back to the amenity of a neighborhood restaurant, folks greeting each other, the sort of the warmth of the situation it did not feel like a defeated city by any stretch. So honestly, people in neighborhoods, everyday people, working class people, middle-class people – long history of standing by and fighting for New York City no matter what. And Henry, I remember how bad the seventies, eighties, nineties were, and people fought their way through and made the city greater and greater all the time. I am absolutely convinced that will happen here. The theater will come back. The amenities will come back. It starting right now with the restaurants, you're going to see a lot more. So I have no question about what happens in the future of the city because we've seen this time and time again, the city always comes back and we will again.

**Question:** Yeah, can I follow up a little bit because one of the central issues for these people, the central question really is the schools. What are the schools going to look like in September? Are they going to be open? Are they going to be closed? Half open, half closed? A lot of people are going to have to base their decisions on math.

**Mayor:** Yeah. Henry, first of all, again – every-day New Yorkers – so I want to talk about the millions and millions of people, not the privileged few, but the millions of millions of people who deal with often tough realities; hardworking people, one job, two jobs, folks who have a long way to go to work and back, who juggle a lot of responsibility, single moms, union members. There are millions of New Yorkers who every day deal with struggle and they fight their way through and they make something happen. Those people, the people who sent me here



to represent them; they're going to stand and fight. They are going to find a way back. You know what, I've talked to so many people, parents, teachers already about September. Folks are smart, they understand we're still dealing with a lot of unknowns. But the answer to your question is the goal is to have the maximum number of kids in their classrooms for the maximum number of days. So, if we have a situation where kids can be constantly in the classroom every single day, that's the ideal. If it has to be some kind of alternating system, we'll do that. But, Henry, I think the thing to remember is we are all waiting to see the direction of this pandemic. If we continue to reduce the impact, that's going to open the doors wider for more and more in-person education. If we have a setback, we're going to deal with that. We all know – I've had this conversation with so many parents, teachers, everyone knows it's not even a secret, it's out in the open that the vaccine is going to be the crossing-the-Rubicon moment. When we have a vaccine, very rapidly you're going to see a quick resurgence in so many parts of this city. We don't have it yet. Some people say it's this year. Some people say it's next year. But that will be the ultimate difference maker. In the meantime, look at these indicators, thank God they've been moving in the right direction. And that means to me, we'll have a lot of kids in their school buildings in September. And so, I think most people are ready to deal with that. Most people are ready to embrace that and move forward.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Reuvain from Hamodia.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Based on your comments of cracking down on the suppliers of fireworks and your response to Julia that you really don't want the NYPD doing anything to reduce fireworks use, it seems still that if the police come across someone using it, they're not supposed to do anything. There've been videos of cop cars driving by, as kids were shooting fireworks at each other, they haven't done anything. There's a sense that you're unwilling to use the police to vigorously enforce the law and that the quality of life of law-abiding New Yorkers is less important than the idea of using police as little as possible. So, I'd just like to ask plain and simple, if New Yorkers see illegal fireworks, should they call 9-1-1? And if police see people shooting them off, should they arrest them? Are police being instructed to stop this or to let it go?

**Mayor:** Okay, Reuvain, respectfully, you can editorialize all day long in your question. I don't think the best way to get at the truth is to simply present a worldview and act like that's the way things are being interpreted. What you said is not consistent with what I said, with all due respect. What I said was we have a situation where if anything is a matter of life and death, you know, of course the NYPD is going to intervene. But if you listened to what I said just a short while ago, we have a situation where a lot of the times kids set off fireworks and leave immediately. It's very hard to do effective enforcement. And we have a lot of other serious things the NYPD needs to focus on right now. If anyone hears fireworks and they want to complain about it, they should call 3-1-1. Absolutely. If they think something is an immediate matter of life and death, as always, call 9-1-1. I don't accept this frame of, like, you have a video of one thing that happened and that means everything is the same way. No, I just don't buy that. If any NYPD officer thinks that something needs to be intervened and that's part of their professional discretion to make that decision. But the focus right now is on dealing with serious and violent crime. That's where we need NYPD resources focused.

**Question:** Again, you said life and death, but I'm asking is quality of life not enough for a police officer to intervene? Is it only if it's life and death?

**Mayor:** No. Again, what I said is – Reuvain, you can miss my point if you want, but I'm trying to make it really clear – where there's an opportunity to act effectively and where there's a sense that there's a danger, of course, they're going to intervene. But in a lot of cases, you can't intervene if someone shoots off a firework and then they're gone. It just is a – it's not a good use of police time and energy. The way to go at this is at the root, cut off the supply, and engage parents and families telling them they have to step up here too, to help us get kids to stop doing this because it's not good for anyone and it's not safe.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Shant from the Daily News.

**Question:** Yeah. Good morning, Mr. Mayor – on the fireworks policy, I understand there were people protesting outside Gracie Mansion, honking their horns in protest over the fireworks yesterday. Can you say if that influenced your decision at all today?

**Mayor:** Not in the least – obviously, Shant, this is something that was being worked on before that.

**Moderator:** Shant, do you have a follow up?

**Question:** Yeah. I mean, switching gears a little bit, I wanted to get your thoughts on voting today. It sounds like there are problems all over the city. I mean, just anecdotally I'm hearing a school in the Bronx was unable to process votes because their Wi-Fi was down. And that's just one of maybe a dozen instances I've heard of. What's your read on how voting is going. And even though the BOE is an independent agency, any thoughts on how they can do a better job?

**Mayor:** Shant, I have not gotten the kind of reports that allow me to give you sort of an overview yet. It's obviously early in the day, but as we get more information, we'll give it to you. Look, I think, you know, I don't think the Board of Elections should continue in his current form. I think it can't do the work the way it's constituted. We need a modern agency. I think it should be a mayoral agency like any other, but if someone's got another structure, that's great. But the way it's set up now, it just isn't effective enough. And we assume each year there will be problems at poll sites. And we assume that there will be mistakes. And I don't want that. I want us to assume that the voting will be easy and smooth and, you know, user-friendly, and that people are going to have a good experience, not brace themselves for a bad experience. So, we'll get you more information as the day progresses, but I just don't think the Board of Elections should exist in its current form. This is something that's been screaming out for reform for years, decades. I think it's time for the Legislature to act.

**Moderator:** Next, we have Duncan from Gay City News.

**Question:** Good morning, Mayor. Thanks for taking my questions.

**Mayor:** How you doing, Duncan?

**Question:** I'm okay. I'm hanging in there. Are you doing okay?

**Mayor:** Yes, sir.

**Question:** Good, good. Glad to hear it. So, I have a question about the culture in the NYPD and the implications of that for reforming that agency. Historically we have examples of senior officers in the NYPD whose misconduct in various forms did not prevent them from advancing into command positions in the NYPD. I've spoken to people who say that that culture no longer exists at the NYPD. And they'll concede that it once did, but it's no longer there. Obviously, attorneys who represent plaintiffs in lawsuits brought against the NYPD have a different view and present their own evidence, insisting that the culture is still there. What are your thoughts about this? Does a culture that ignores or perhaps even rewards misconduct on behalf of police officers still exist at the NYPD? And what are the implications of this for reforming the Police Department?

**Mayor:** Duncan, thank you. I've known you a long time, and I appreciate this question because I think you're getting to the root of the matter. The culture of the NYPD, the culture of policing in America has to change. Now to be fair, and to really appreciate how much has changed, I'm not even going to go back to what the NYPD was like in the 70s or 80s, and how profoundly different it is from then, or how profoundly different it is since CompStat started. I'm only going to look at the last six, seven years. We have found that the culture can and must change. That was de-escalation training, implicit bias training, body cameras, obviously, making the police force look like New York City. It is now a majority people of color police force. It is becoming more and more a police force that people who live in New York City. All of this needs to keep growing, but is a proof positive to me, the NYPD culture can and must change. Now, have we gone far enough? No. And I am very concerned about this particular issue.

Why are some officers still on the force who should not be? This is an area we have to do better. I think honestly, Duncan, the vast, vast majority of officers are in it for the right reasons, to do the right thing, but there are still some who should not be in the force. We need to improve the methodology for getting cops who should not be cops out of the NYPD, and for making sure that if someone has a history of doing the wrong thing, that they cannot advance within the NYPD to a leadership position. The leadership today is much more reform minded than I've ever seen in the history of NYPD. I mean, I've been looking at the NYPD for now 30 years closely in different roles in government. This is the most reform minded leadership I've ever seen. They are constantly changing the organization. They know a lot more change has to happen. I think Sunday bears witness to this, Duncan. I think it's really important. Absolutely unacceptable that an officer used a banned chokehold. Within hours, the body camera tape was out, the officer's suspended, and the larger disciplinary process for that officer had begun. I've never seen that previously in all my time watching the NYPD something like that happen so quickly.

So, it proves that change can come, but we need a lot more change. So, one of the things we're going to be working on going forward is making sure there's a much better mechanism for weeding out the cops who should not be on the force and for bringing up a leadership from the grassroots that represents all New York City and represents a more reform minded view of

policing because we have to break what's still wrong in that culture. We have to move it forward, but I am very convinced we can do it, Duncan.

**Moderator:** Duncan, do you have a follow up?

**Question:** Yeah. I'd like to ask about a specific instance, and that's Terence Monahan, who is currently Chief of Department. In 2014 – and you've actually praised Chief Monahan repeatedly, I think, during these recent protests over the George Floyd killing – he had punitive damages assessed against him during the RNC cases in federal court in 2014. After that he was promoted twice. I mean, does – should that tell us that, in fact, this culture is, you know, perhaps largely unchanged because a senior member of the force who, again, was assessed to punitive damages, still got promoted and now is Chief of Department?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Duncan, I do appreciate the question. And I think that anything like that today is being looked at very carefully compared to what it was back then. 2004, Michael Bloomberg was Mayor, Ray Kelly was Police Commissioner. They took a very different view of police discipline than I take or Commissioner Shea takes. And I don't know the details of that, but I do know Terry Monahan really, really well. And so, he has been one of the primary architects of neighborhood policing. He has been one of the chief agents of reform in recent years in the NYPD. In terms of moving it from a punitive entity in the sense of heavy emphasis on arrest and stops to a police force that has consistently not only used a lot fewer stops, used a hell of a lot fewer arrests. And this needs to be talked about, I don't care if it's not making the front pages, I'm going to keep talking about it – 180,000 fewer arrests in 2019 than 2013, the last year of Bloomberg.

You talk about the movement to end mass incarceration. You talk about the school to prison pipeline. If you really want to change things, you got to arrest people – you got to stop arresting people the way we did in the past, you got to reduce arrests where it's not necessary, and under Terry's leadership, and obviously Dermot's leadership, we have seen that happening while still fighting crime where it exists with more modern strategies. During these protests – and I'm the first to say, we need to look at everything that happened at these protests, if anybody did something wrong in the NYPD, there needs to be accountability. We need to make sure going forward that if people come out to protest, they know they will be respected and protected. We have to do better going forward. But Terry Monahan diffused a very tense situation in Washington Square Park, and when the protestors asked him to take a knee – and this is very important. This is not just an average cop, this is not the chief of department of any police force in America, this is the highest uniform officer in the biggest police force in America. He took a knee with the protestors out of respect. He said, none of the officers here, none of us could possibly accept what happened in Minnesota. It was wrong. It can't happen again. And that's an incredibly powerful statement. So, I know him, I know his heart. He is doing a whole lot and only to keep this city safe, but to change the NYPD and if you look carefully, what he's done, you look carefully at what Commissioner Shea has done, they're moving that reform agenda, and certainly as you've seen in recent days, they're moving an agenda of clear accountability when an officer does something wrong.

**Moderator:** Last two questions for today. Next we have Yoav from The City.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask you about what you said on NY1 last night about gun and a gun offense enforcement by the various DA offices. You expressed some concern and said it sounded like the prosecutions are a bit uneven. And I'm just wondering if you can be a little more specific, is there a particular DA's office that you're concerned about and what are those concerns?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Yoav, it's a great question. And I want to present this in a more systematic manner. What I said, I believe deeply, and I think it's the kind of topic that needs to be more in this city. The folks who carry weapons and endanger their fellow New Yorkers, it has to be addressed better than it is now, and the DA's play a crucial role. So I don't want to just speak from the generalities, in the coming days I want to lay out systematically what we see going on, because if we had more effective gun prosecutions, our local DA's, federal government, et cetera, if we could have a more consistent, effective approach to gun prosecutions, it would help us get a lot more guns off the streets and protect everyday New Yorkers. There are too many shootings right now, Yoav. I do not like what I see. We have to throw every strategy we have at it. And so this is something I want to speak about more, but I want to lay out all the facts when I do.

**Question:** Okay, on another issue I wanted to ask you about the report on police killings of civilians in New York City, that the Health Department has been compiling, that the New York Times wrote about. What's the status of that report? Are you planning to release that publicly? And if so, when?

**Mayor:** Whatever is there will absolutely release publicly. My memory is that whatever was being looked at by the Health Department, I didn't honestly remember a very consistent effort there because my message to them of course would be if they see something we need to understand better, you know, let's pursue it, but something that has not been brought up by the Health Department at all recently, I can say that much. Whatever it is, we'll release it, and we'll release it quickly. I'll get to an exact date, but very quickly.

**Moderator:** Last one for today, we have Sydney from Gothamist.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question.

**Mayor:** How you doing Sydney?

**Question:** I'm good. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good.

**Question:** Great. Yeah, just regarding the fireworks issue, I'm wondering, could you detail a little bit about the education part of this and campaign to speak to people who are using fireworks and will community-based organizations be involved in this and or neighborhood groups? I know other elected officials have talked about getting the Cure Violence groups and the Vulcan Society involved, particularly, as there's a desire from some people to reduce police

enforcement in certain situations. And so could you detail how exactly and if you plan to involve community organizations, and the education, and neighborhood conversations part of this?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Thank you. Excellent question Sydney. Thank you, I'll start, and then our Sheriff, Joe Fucito is here. So, I'll start Sheriff, and then if you want to jump in on education or any other piece of the effort would welcome you in, but Sydney, I want to see not only the public service announcements and the social media effort that the FDNY will do. I definitely want to see the Vulcan society involved. I definitely want to see community-based organizations involved. And I definitely want to see Cure Violence Movement involved. We're asking a lot of Cure Violence Movement right now. The first thing I want, the Cure Violence Movement, the Crisis Management System to focus on is stopping shootings, which is what their origins are, the reason they exist. So that's the first and most important thing. They're also doing great work right now in terms of addressing social distancing, educating folks, giving out face coverings.

We're funding them on both those pieces, you know, additional resources to do the social distancing work, but also additional resources that we announced a couple of weeks ago to deepen the anti-violence efforts. But any time they can participate on the issue of fireworks too, I want them to. So yeah, we're going to be doing all of the above, but I think the crucial piece here is engaging families to understand they need to take as much responsibility as humanly possible with their kids, and I say that as a parent, engaging community based organizations deeply, absolutely, public information, and then the enforcement that goes at the root cause, the people making money off of this, that people are supplying the fireworks to begin with. So Chief, do you want – I'm sorry, not Chief - Sheriff, do you want to speak to the education effort, the enforcement effort, anything you want to add there, Sheriff?

**Sheriff Joseph Fucito:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, Sydney. So, let's start with the education, because that's the most important part. We want to make sure our message is out there to everyone, parents in particular, that they have to be good neighbors, setting off fireworks at night is not necessarily a good idea, especially during a pandemic. We want to get community groups involved in the education process. That's part of the spreading the message and the police department does an excellent job of doing that. The fire department does an excellent job of doing that. The Sheriff's Office will continue in that vein to try to get the message out that we have to do this as a community. As far as enforcement, as the Mayor indicated, we want to use the similar strategy that we've used with a tobacco enforcement and other types of contraband. We want to look out of state as the people that are making profit or for selling fireworks causing us grief.

So, we want to send teams into other jurisdictions to observe the sale of fireworks, gather evidence, stop and interdict the movement of fireworks into the City of New York, and also provide evidence to the City of New York that outside entities may be profiting from this type of behavior. And if necessary, maybe even institute legal actions. The City of New York has done that before in the areas of tobacco trafficking and firearms, they brought legal action against entities outside the City of New York that have caused this type of disruption within the city. So that's, that's pretty much our overall strategy at this point.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Sheriff. Go ahead, Sydney.

**Question:** Thank you. Thank you. And my second question, which Sheriff you were getting at just a bit, but I'm hoping you can detail what exactly a supplier means. Like a lot of these fireworks it appears are coming from outside of New York City, like you mentioned, and I'm wondering is the goal to focus on these out of state suppliers and organized groups or companies, or would a supplier also mean just one person selling them out at the back of a truck?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'll start and I'll pass back to the Sheriff. So you know, this is a classic situation in Sydney, we want to go after the big fish. We want to go after those who are making the biggest impact. We know there are suppliers outside of New York City where a lot of this is coming from. Again, we're going to combine the efforts of the Sheriff's Office, which does a lot of very similar work focusing on the supply of illegal contraband coming into New York City. You've got the Fire Marshals who have a lot of investigative capacity. You've got the Police Department Intelligence Division. Anyone out there who is profiting in a big way outside of New York City and sort of the major suppliers, we're going to throw all that at them and go disrupt and work to cut off that supply. But then within the city, again, we're going to start from the biggest operations, not focused on, you know, the kid on the corner. We're focused on the people really profiting and really distributing a lot of fireworks and causing this problem for so many New Yorkers. So, Sheriff, you want to flush that out and explain that more?

**Sheriff Fucito:** Certainly. Sydney, so what we see, oftentimes the person selling the item out of the back of the van didn't just acquire it in a small way. They actually went to another jurisdiction and made a significant purchase, let's say \$10,000 or more in some type of contraband that is illegal in New York City. So we're looking at these organizations that are selling this type of product to individuals from New York and allowing this type of problems to continue. We like to focus on those types of networks, shutting down the network is one of the best ways that we can stop the flow of contraband into the city. So that means the source product, with the source that's generating the product, and also the traffickers themselves that are moving the product, usually in some type of medium to large scale into the City of New York.

**Mayor:** Okay. Thanks very much Sheriff. And we'll certainly make sure if people have other questions for the Sheriff later day, we'll make him available. So, let me wrap up, we've talked about a lot of different topics today, but I want to come back to the very, very important one. The one that underlies who we are as New Yorkers, as Americans, and that is our democracy and voting. Today is Election Day, Primary Election Day, a lot of important decisions that we made today, all over the city, want to encourage everyone to participate. So, like a lot of you, I voted by mail, Chirlane and I got our absentee ballots and sent them in. A lot of people did get absentee ballots still haven't used them, you can up to midnight tonight, as long as you get it, postmarked, go to a post office. If you have your absentee ballot, you can go to any post office, drop it off there, that'll get it postmarked today. You can go to a poll site and drop off the absentee ballot or just vote in person at the poll site. If you go to your poll site, if you're not sure where your poll site is, go to [nyc.pollsitelocator.com](http://nyc.pollsitelocator.com). And look, the lot of precautions have been made to make sure that voting will be safe. So, you have the option either way, get out there and vote, get your face covering if you're going to a poll site, the most important thing is make your voice heard. This is – we're dealing with some of the most unprecedented biggest challenges in the history of New York City right now, and the leaders of today and the ones who will be

elected today are going to have to grapple with these challenges, not only in 2020, but for years and years to come. So choose wisely, but most importantly, cast your vote today, and that will help us all move forward. Thank you, everyone.

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