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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. A lot going on today, we've got a lot to talk about, and so much of it is about New York City coming back, New York City recovering faster all the time – ahead of schedule, in fact. And here is some evidence – if there's one thing we love as New Yorkers – now, he's not from New York City, okay, I'll admit it, but a lot of songs are about New York City, and I know he loves this place so deeply. Bruce Springsteen is back, New York City – coming back to Broadway, and that means Broadway's back earlier than expected, ahead of schedule. This is amazing. He's reviving his show Springsteen on Broadway not September, not August, not July – June 26th the show opens on Broadway. This is amazing news. Broadway epitomizes New York City. Broadway coming back means New York City's coming back. Broadway coming back means our arts and culture are coming back, the life of the city coming back, jobs coming back, tourists coming back. Bruce Springsteen, June 26th on Broadway. This is an amazing sign to all of us. And, listen, New York City, you earned it. You earned it by going out there and getting vaccinated and all the other things that everyone did to get through this crisis. So, that's really good news.

And I've been saying, this is going to be the summer of New York City. It's going to be absolutely amazing. The arts, the culture, the activity, so many things happening. I predict a Nets championship parade as well, among other things – lots going on. And one of the things that's going to make this summer great is our City Artist Corps. This is a new initiative, patterned on one of the great initiatives of the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, New York's own. We know that artists in the city went through so much. We know what a tough time it has been for artists. It always is, but especially during the pandemic. We want to help them, give them work, give them employment and opportunity, but also bring their incredible talents to bear all over the city to bring us back and to bring joy to the people of the city. So, City Artist Corps grants, now available to New York City artists. And if you are a New York City artist and you want to make an impact on this city, we need you. Calling all artists, apply today – musicians, performers, everyone – go to nyc.gov/cityartistcorps and apply today. And you're going to help bring New York City alive, the streets in New York City alive with arts and culture this summer.

Now, speaking of the streets coming alive, we have an amazing thing happening this week in New York City. This week, the premier of *In the Heights*. And remember, this was Louise – excuse me, Lin Manuel Miranda's first hit Broadway musical. Lin Manuel Miranda is a hero to so many of us as New Yorkers – a true New Yorker who loves this city, who told the story of the city in the incredible play *In the Heights*. Now, a major motion picture premiering this week right here, and New York City is partnering with Warner Bros. to launch a tourism campaign to get tourists to go to Washington Heights and experience the amazing, amazing energy of that

neighborhood. Go see the movie, of course, but go see the real thing. Go to the restaurants, feel the culture of the incredible people of Washington Heights. So, there's going to be opportunities through this campaign to get people to know one of the great neighborhoods of this city. You going to nycgo.com for more information. This is a really important moment in our comeback and Lin Manuel Miranda wanted to make sure that In the Heights really was something for everyone. The community is going to be involved in the premiere, it's going to be very, very exciting.

And at the same time, as we're promoting Washington Heights, we have another crucial tourism campaign called the Latino Experience in New York City. It is a five-borough campaign to spotlight the heritage, the culture, the arts, the music, the food all over this city and to get tourists who are coming back more and more now to come engage our Latino communities and experience everything that we have to offer. I wanted to hear from someone who is even more excited than me that In the Heights is premiering and that we're going to direct tourism and energy towards the beautiful neighborhood of Washington Heights. He represents that neighborhood with passion. My pleasure and introduce Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Council Member. And I want to tell everyone, Quisqueya Plaza is a magical place in Washington Heights and one of many amazing things that you should see if you haven't experienced it. What I want to urge all New Yorkers is, go visit neighborhoods you haven't yet experienced. But, also, if you have friends coming to visit, family coming to visit, take them to places like Washington Heights that are the heart and soul of New York City today. This movie is going to bring such wonderful, positive attention on the community. I know, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, this is going to be a real powerful moment of pride for you and for so many people in the community. Now, let's get this whole city and this whole nation to understand how great Washington Heights is. Thank you so much. *Muchisimas gracias*.

Now, we want New Yorkers to experience New York City more than ever. We want people from the tri-state area to come into New York City. We're talking about all the amazing things that are going to happen this summer. But when you think about tourists, and you think about tourists coming into New York City from all over the country, all over the world. I think a lot of people thought, well, it's going to be a long time before we see that again. Obviously, our hotel industry has been through so much, so many people lost their jobs, it's been very painful. And I think expectation was, you know, how many years and years and years would it take to recover? Well, guess what? The recovery is happening a lot quicker than anyone imagined. As of last weekend, 72 percent of New York City hotel rooms were occupied. So, this is new information, showing a faster resurgence than what was predicted. 72 percent of New York City hotel rooms occupied last weekend and growing. And the summer New York City is going to amplify that, because people are going to want to come here to be part of something absolutely magical. We talked about our homecoming week coming up in August. Obviously, Bruce Springsteen coming back, people are going to want to come for that. The In the Heights premiere has got to be a beautiful love letter to New York City sent all over the nation. Mark my words, people are going to flock to New York City to be a part of the Summer of New York City. So, this is very good news for

so many New Yorkers who work in that industry. And we need to give them a chance to really have a recovery for all of us.

All right. Now, recovery – the foundation of recovery is vaccination. We give you an update all the time. It's amazing, the numbers keep growing, particularly among younger people. This is great news. So, first of all, since day-one, we're now past 8.5 million vaccinations. This is really, really good news. More vaccinations have been given in New York City than there are people in New York City – that's a great, great sign. So, as of today, the number of doses from day-one, 8,559,566. And we are doubling down, we're bringing vaccine to the people. Starting on Wednesday, we're going to bring mobile vaccination vans to libraries all across the city to reach families, to reach young people. There'll be there throughout June. Libraries have done such important work for this city. They have been at the frontline, helping us out with testing, with vaccination, really helping through people through the pandemic. I want to thank everyone in our library systems for everything you have done to help New York City. Those mobile sites are really going to help get more and more people vaccinated, particularly young people. We also, of course, have started vaccination sites in our schools, we're going to keep building on that. We held block parties to encourage vaccination, barbershop listening sessions. We've had vans and buses with vaccination efforts at parks, places where people are, young people are, and here's the update. We had Youth Vaccination Week, it worked. During that week, we administered 34,000 doses to New Yorkers age 12 to 17 across the five boroughs. 34,000 doses for the youngest New Yorkers. We want to protect them now. Amazing number – 156,000 12- to 17-year-old New Yorkers have received at least one dose of the vaccine. And we know people get one dose, they come back for the second. 156,000 and growing, that's how we achieve a recovery for all of us.

Now, vaccination is the foundation. But to keep building recovery, keep bringing back the life, the energy, the jobs, of course, we need this city to be safer and safer. We have work to do. And I've said many times, recovery will help the city become safer. Recovery equals public safety, public safety equals recovery. We have been doing this work, the City of New York, the NYPD, the Cure Violence Movement, the Crisis Management System, community groups, block patrols – everyone's been out there doing this work. And I said yesterday, we can do so much here, but we can't do it alone. We need help from the Congress and the federal government. We need help from the Legislature in Albany. Those efforts are continuing. But, today, we want to highlight some very good news about an unprecedented collaboration, an unprecedented partnership between the NYPD and the federal ATF. This is crucial. Everyone agrees, the number-one issue is guns, getting the guns off our streets. And we all know that the proliferation of guns during the pandemic was unprecedented and troubling, and, therefore, we have to double down on getting guns off our streets. We know how important it is to work with our federal partners. We know that federal courts are a crucial part of the equation as well. ATF is where it all comes together. The federal bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives – this is the leading edge. This is the part of the federal government that finds the guns, gets them out of the hands of bad guys, and keeps communities safe. We know that gun trafficking must be attacked on a national level and the ATF leads the way.

Now, this is the first time in this country that the ATF has partnered with a local police department in this manner. And it means we're going to have ATF agents directly embedded in the NYPD, working together to find guns and quickly act on the information that they find to

stop the flow of guns. It takes information, it takes partnership. It takes the ability to quickly act, that can only happen when the federal government and the NYPD are working, literally, side-by-side here in New York City. So, this is an important and exciting moment for the city as we fight back. The person who spearheaded this effort for the federal government, and I know is someone who truly believes in doing things in a new and different way so we can fight the problems of today. He's here with us, it's a great honor to have him here with us, and I want to thank him for his service to this country and for what he's doing for New York City. Special Agent in Charge of the ATF New York Field Division, my pleasure introduced John DeVito.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, John. I like your statement. It's not a matter of if, but when you'll come calling – I think that's a very clear and powerful statement, that anyone trafficking illegal guns will be caught. I really want all New Yorkers to understand this, the great work of the ATF, the work of the NYPD, it is more than any time in history a matter not of if but when that criminals are caught, particularly those who are creating such danger to New Yorkers. So, that's really good news. On a lighter note, I want to say, John, I admire you for many reasons, but I also want to say to everyone, remember his name is spelled D-E not D-I – there's a big – there's a big issue out there. You know, D-I is the majority out there in the Italian-American community, but we stand up with the D-E proudly, and I'm honored to be on your team. And thank you for being on our team and working so closely with us.

Now, John has a great partner in the leadership of the NYPD someone – I want you to hear this about John Miller, as I introduce him. He's a modest man, John Miller, but he really has so much to be proud of and I'm so appreciative for him. For eight years, he has led the way, protecting New York City from terrorism foreign and domestic. And he's also in the last few years really oriented his division to focus on a number of domestic challenges, whether it's hate crimes, or ethnically-focused violence, or, of course, the scourge of illegal gun trafficking. A lot of New Yorkers are alive today because of the work of John Miller and his team. So, it's my great, great pleasure to introduce our Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence and Counterterrorism John Miller.

Deputy Commissioner John Miller, Intelligence and Counterterrorism, NYPD: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And also, thank you for those kind words. So, we threw out a couple of acronyms here the CGIC, which is the Crime Gun Intelligence Center, but also HIDTA, which is the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program. That's where the CGIC sits with ATF and NYPD. And that's run by your good friend, Deputy Commissioner Chauncey Parker who brings federal and City resources together in law enforcement in one place. So, the New York ATF Gun Intelligence Center is a key new program for us. It's an incredible partnership that allows a seamless flow of information that we haven't seen before. It allows us to get to the sources of those guns. Where are they coming from? What are the states? What are the outlets? Who are the licensed firearm dealers? It helps us identify the traffickers and their routes coming into the city. It shines a light on some of those key things that are important when you're tackling rising gun violence. But it also helps us enhance the gun arrests we're making. We have record numbers of gun arrests this year. In the first three months of this year, I think more than we've seen in 25

years. That's a good thing. It shows that the police officers are out there, they're engaged, and that they're fighting gun violence.

But it also allows us – because every gun tells a story. You know, when you get that gun and we run it through the Gun Intelligence Center here, the Crime Gun Intelligence Center, when that gun is connected to a crime. And I think it makes a difference when you say to a prosecutor or to a judge, yes, this is a gun arrest, but the gun that this person is arrested with has been matched through the other technology that ATF gives to us to three other shootings and a homicide. So, that's important. Again, every gun tells a story. Every bullet tells a story. Every shell casing tells a story and ATF technology helps us bring that all together. We talk about stray bullets. There are no stray bullets. There are stray dogs, but every bullet has an owner. And that's the person who fired that shot. And those are our targets in the city. And as John described it, this partnership has opened new doors, new windows, new vistas, into the intelligence that helps us make more effective cases and enhance the arrests we're already making. Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Thank you so much, John. And this work is going to make a crucial impact on the streets in New York City. This kind of coordination and partnership is how we get the guns off the streets. Now, as we focus on these efforts, we also need to take a moment to remember those we've lost. I had a really painful, poignant moment the other night with the family of Justin Wallace in their living room, in the Rockaways. Feeling the pain of the loss of their child, Justin Wallace would be 11 years old today. This would have been his birthday. His sister showed me the text that they sent back and forth. He had wonderful, beautiful plans for his birthday, which friends he wanted to come to his birthday party, where he wanted to go. He was planning for a joyous moment. Now he's gone because of gun violence, because there are too many guns out there. Because there are people who don't care about human life and who need to be apprehended, who should not be out there with a gun. So, we're going to remember Justin Wallace. I want you to keep his parents Aretha and Albert in your prayers and his whole family. And let's resolve to get guns out of this city once and for all. With the help of the federal government, we can do things we've never done before, and we will.

Okay. Every day we go over indicators, let me go over today. Again, we've had a lot of good news lately. Continues to be really solid, really strong, and people continue to get vaccinated. I gave you those numbers at the beginning. The way to keep driving down these numbers is more and more vaccinations. So, we need everyone to keep the pedal to the metal. We got to keep going. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19. Today's report, 81 patients. Confirmed positivity, 16.05 percent. Hospitalization rate per 100,000, 0.44. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report 217 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19. Today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 0.71 percent. Excellent number. Okay. I'm going to say a few words in Spanish. And I want to go back to the collaboration with the ATF, the work of getting guns off our streets.

[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: Good morning. We will now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we are joined by John Miller, Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counterterrorism, John DeVito, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF New York Field Division, Dr. Jay Varma, Senior Advisor on public health, Dr. Mitch Katz, President and CEO of New York City Health + Hospitals, DCLA Commissioner Gonzalo Casals, Fred Dixon, President and CEO of NYC & Company, and Geoff Brown, Chief Information Security Officer and Head of New York City Cyber Command. Our first question of today goes to Dana Rubinstein from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Dana. How you been?

Question: I'm okay. My first question has to do with the absence of the NYPD Commissioner? I mean, if you're trying to sort of create the impression that the City is taking this gun problem seriously, wouldn't it have just from at least an optics perspective, made sense for him to be here today?

Mayor: Dana, look, we've done the same thing for years and years. Commissioner Shea and I, as I did with Commissioner Bratton, Commissioner O'Neill, we appear together for many announcements. But there's also other key leaders of NYPD who we highlight depending on the work being done. Today it's Deputy Commissioner John Miller, the other day, Chief of Department Rodney Harrison. Many times it's been me and Dermot Shea together. We were together at Wagner Houses recently, we were together announcing police reforms. It all is one team fighting in common cause. So, we bring out the person who's going to best speak to the specific subject matter. No question in my mind that this is a crucial moment talking about this partnership, unprecedented. And I do want to give John Miller credit because he was one of the people that helped pull this together. And I wanted the people of New York City to hear from him about it. Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thanks. And then on another note, a bill that would allow gun manufacturers to be sued under the State's nuisance law passed the Senate last week and it looks poised to pass the Assembly today. What do you think about the bill? And would you file a lawsuit if it becomes law?

Mayor: I want to see the exact bill language. You know, all the bills were finalized yesterday, late in Albany. So, we're analyzing the bills right now. But basically, I personally feel that there are real issues in this country with holding gun manufacturers accountable. I think we need tougher laws. I think there are situations where lawsuits are appropriate. But let me look at the exact language and then I can tell you more.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my question as always. I wanted to ask about the hack that we reported on yesterday. I know you spoke a little bit about it

yesterday on NY1. You said the hackers didn't demand a ransom. So, can you say what at this point in time, your understanding of why the hackers did what they did is?

Mayor: Yeah. in a moment I'll turn to Geoff Brown who heads our Cyber Command. And he and his team have done a great, great job protecting New York City in a really difficult environment, an ever more difficult environment. But at this point we're constantly investigating this. Cyber Command working with NYPD and other partners. To this hour we have not seen information compromised or a ransom demand. But again, Shant this is an evolving investigation and very complicated subject matter. So, I want to keep people updated as we get more information. Let me have Geoff Brown, give us a quick update.

Head of NYC Cyber Command Geoff Brown: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. To reiterate, contrary to some of the reporting, this is not a ransom situation. So, comparing this to some of the other recent ransom events is not accurate. And we do fully expect the Law Department IT environment will be securely reestablished promptly so the Law Department can get back to the business of serving New Yorkers. And to your question about motive, we are cooperating with law enforcement and I am not at liberty to discuss yet, that.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Geoff. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: So, thanks for that. I mean, I appreciate it's an ongoing investigation. You don't want to speculate about the motive. But this attack did come when White House officials have been warning businesses, localities about an increase in attacks. Just any thoughts about this attack on the Law Department in the bigger context? Is it your feeling that the City could be facing this increased barrage in hacking that the White House has been warning about?

Mayor: Oh, I'm very concerned. I'll give Deputy Commissioner Miller a chance to speak to this as well. Look, Shant there are enemies of this country that clearly would like to get at our nation's largest city. There are folks trying to take advantage in terms of ransom. It's a very tough, complicated environment out there. We take this very seriously. We're in a state of high alert. We built up our Cyber Command capacity years ago, anticipating this environment. But I think people should realize this is something that's going to be with us for quite a while. And we're going to have to do a lot to focus on it and constantly protect ourselves. Deputy Commissioner, you want to add?

Deputy Commissioner Miller: Sure. So, the NYPD works very closely. The Intelligence Bureau has supervisors and detectives over at the FBI Cyber Task Force where we tackle these complex cases. Many of which are foreign routes. The Detective Bureau is there too. So, we were looking at this from the moment it came to the City's attention. What we're seeing in this case is the good news is the system worked. Once there was activity seen that was suspicious, that rang bells between Cyber Command and its contractors that patrol those systems looking for anomalies. So, that's a good thing, which is we were able to stop that through Cyber Command and DoITT and Jessie Tisch's people, Geoff Brown's people. And disconnected from the system to make sure while we assessed what was in there, didn't get out to other systems. So, that's a positive. The investigative piece is now all about the forensics, which is looking at the malware, seeing where it's been seen before. We've identified the malware. We have seen it before. And

then tracing that to the actor. Is it someone looking to corral information, export it, and then do a ransomware attack? That's a possibility. Is it another kind of actor looking to gather information for other strategic purposes? That's a possibility. We're still early in the forensics piece and that's being worked between Geoff Brown's people at Cyber Command New York City and the FBI task force.

Mayor: Thank you very much, John.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Bob Hennelly from Chief Leader.

Question: Good morning. Thanks for taking the call. Yesterday, Governor Como identified the state's poorest performing ZIP codes in terms of vaccination rates among the eligible residents. 11 of those ZIP codes were in New York City and places like Far Rockaway where the rate is just 31.2 percent. You have put a tremendous emphasis on engaging the general public on this effort. But last time we checked the NYPD itself is not quite at 40 percent. The vaccination rate at the FDNY is around 50 percent. Shouldn't you be featuring civil service employee vaccination rates on a daily basis because we know it gets measured, gets managed?

Mayor: Bob, it's a fair question. I think we understand right now that there are, and this is what the research is showing. I mean, the research nationally, locally, our experiences out in the field, hundreds of thousands of interactions with New Yorkers. There are many, many people, right this minute, willing to get vaccinated, whether they're in public service or they're civilians. There are so many people ready to get vaccinated. Our job is to reach them, make it convenient, make it easy, give incentives, answer questions, whatever it takes. And clearly you can see the numbers keep growing substantially every day. So, you know, I think there's a bit of a coalition of the willing dynamic right now. We want to go to the folks who are ready or almost ready, or need it to be a little easier and keep building up progress there. Folks who are not yet ready. I appreciate and understand that it means we just have more work to do. So, I'm not against putting up numbers, but I also want to recognize that folks who are in uniformed service, they've been given a lot of encouragement, a lot of information. If they're not yet ready, they're not yet ready. It's our job to keep working. Go ahead, Bob.

Question: Yeah. Thank you. As you know, the pandemic was quite a traumatic event for the civil service, I guess, close to [inaudible] individuals died in thousands are dealing with some kind of long-term complications. There's been a lot of – there was initial optimism when there was discussion of early retirement for folks. That's kind of worn off a bit and we did get something forwarded to us by a UFT member, a flyer that would say, “we are disappointed to inform you that despite our efforts, City Hall has refused to offer an early retirement incentive for any DOE employee this year. Under legislation in Albany, in April, the City had until May 31st to finalize details of an early retirement incentive program with UFT and failed to do so.” Now, we have done our own investigation and spoken with Assemblyman Abbate, one of the sponsors of that legislation, and that may not be correct. But can you give us the status of what early retirement is going on. Is it based – we know that you have a lot of discretion here – is it part of the negotiating that goes back and forth through unions – just, where is the status of that? Because a lot of people have already been through a lot and are looking for some kind of resolution.

Mayor: Yeah, Bob – and, look, I feel for anyone who's been through the pain of this crisis and their families. I feel for them, but we also have a job to do as New York City and we need our public servants. We are now deeply in the recovery phase. We have beaten back COVID effectively – very different environment than when the discussions began on early retirement. Now, we need all the good public servants we can get. We need all the great educators we can get. We're about to reopen our school's full strength, no remote, and with a massive need to close the COVID achievement gap. So, let's be clear, the situation has evolved rapidly and we need every good public servant front and center to bring this city back and serve our people. So, we're always going to work with our public servants to try and address their personal needs. But, right now, the folks who do so much for New York City, we need them more than ever.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

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

Mayor: I was hot and sweaty before I came into City Hall. But now I'm feeling cool, calm, and collected, Henry.

Question: Okay, great.

Mayor: How are you doing? How are you?

Question: I'm pretty good. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about this joint effort with ATF. You said that the officers will be designated as federal agents? Is that correct – they will basically be under the jurisdiction of which agency? The federal agency or the City agency? And who might be liable if there's any kind of untoward incident involved with this?

Mayor: So, let me open and then turn to John DeVito and John Miller. Henry, I want you to think about a Joint Terrorism Task Force, which has been extraordinarily effective, where officers, officials of different agencies, different State, local, federal come together. Here's a variation on a theme where we're going to have our officers working with ATF very closely, the ability to share information, the ability to sort of cross register and do work together, one team. That's something we've been needing, going to be a powerful step forward. We're still going to hold all of our employees accountable as always. But the notion of the information flowing and the teamwork being intensified because when you're tracing guns, time really matters, this is going to allow us to revolutionize that approach. So, I turn first to John DeVito and then John Miller,

Special Agent in Charge John B. DeVito, New York Field Division, ATF: What he's getting at sir, is basically the Task Force Officer Program, which is an, you know, tried and true strategy that we've been utilizing, relying on for many, many years. The most important part about that is that it actually provides protection to the law enforcement officers acting under color of law of the federal agency that they're assigned to and they're working with. So, literally all we're doing is saying this detective who has that street expertise and that subject matter expertise in the area that we're looking at on the federal side, we're going to provide them the coverage that they need

to operate in areas that they may not fit into local jurisdiction necessarily, and vice versa. So, it's all about the protection and the coverage of scope of responsibility and authority. We work together with law enforcement officers from every federal, state, local agency in the state on a daily basis. In certain situations, we simply take a step forward and we actually have these individuals deputized with – under the federal authority that they'll be investigated while working on the task force concept. So, everybody will act as professionals and do their jobs to the best of our ability to protect the citizens of this great state.

Mayor: Thank you very much. John –

Deputy Commissioner Miller: The only thing I would add to that, which was a very good civics lesson on how the task officer – task force officer program works is, you know, the New York City police officers and detectives who are assigned to these task forces don't just become federal agents. They stay New York City police officers who can afford a State law, who can afford New York City law. But they also have the power to act with their federal partners, investigate federal violations, put together those cases that they can bring to federal court. So, from an enforcement standpoint, especially if you're talking the gun business, it gives you a lot of options whether to exploit the federal gun laws, which may be better in one case or the State gun laws, which may be preferable in a different situation. It gives us important options in these cases.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Okay. Thanks for all that. Now the question is, you know the feds, you mentioned Joint Terrorism Task Force, we've got gang activity that's investigated by both the City and the feds. Why now after 16 months of increasing shootings and mayhem, and it's never really been a shooting-less city, there've always been too many shootings, even at a small number, why is this partnership suddenly happening now and not having been created five years ago?

Mayor: So, Henry, I'll turn to John Miller on that, but just want to emphasize throughout 2020, we all had to deal with job one, which was fighting back COVID. And to make matters worse COVID took a lot of our law enforcement officers out of the game for a period of time because so many of them were sick themselves. And we lost members of our uniform service, very, very tragically. So, we have been, since the beginning of COVID, having a mix a focus on first and foremost defeating COVID and saving lives, then dealing with unprecedented crime dynamics here and we've seen it around the country. Trying to bring the city back, trying to bring our economy back. A lot of moving parts. But one of the things that we've all been very devoted to is we have to do a lot of things differently as part of that. And you've seen some announcements already of different approaches, different strategies. You're going to be seeing a lot more. And thank God, you know, we're now about two weeks into our court system being back and that's starting to have a real impact. So, the amount of dislocation, Henry, is very, very hard to fully summarize. There's a lot of catching up to do, but the way to do that was with constantly coming up with new approaches and deepening them. So, with that intro, John Miller –

Deputy Commissioner Miller: So, Henry, actually an interesting question, a good question. You know, there's been an ATF Crime Gun Intelligence Center in New York probably for 25 years. I was at the opening of it in 1995 with Jack Maple. So, why did it take us this long to get

to where we are? A lot of that just traces back to John DeVito, who is a very forward-leaning Special Agent in Charge who came here and asked all those questions about, well, how do we do it and why do we do it that way, and if that's the way we always did it, how could we do it better, faster, sharper. And I give him a lot of credit for breaking down the barriers to get all these people in one room and, and in NYPD space which is not always the way the federal government goes in this, but there's a logic to it. And the logic is this – in every precinct, the Intelligence Bureau has that field intelligence officer. That person's job number one is to identify who are the drivers of gun violence, where are those guns, and how do we reduce that in the precincts, in the housing commands in the transit districts. That's what the FIOs are there for. The hub is at the intelligence bureau located in HIDTA. And the question was, rather than think about that question about well, we have this investigation, it involves guns, maybe we'll want this traced, or maybe we have this question, let's call the Gun Intelligence Center at ATF, the Crime Gun Center, and run this data. It's so much easier if that hub is there, and then when you have that thought, you just turn to the ATF agent next to you or that analyst and say, hey, this is my question, can you run that data right now? And B, and this is the key, when that agent or analyst turns back to you and says, that's a good question, but there's three more questions you should be asking that I know from my experience in investigating guns, gun traffickers, the gun market – that they add that value. So, we're doing something we've been doing for a long time. We're just doing it much better.

Mayor: Amen. Go ahead.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Jillian Jonas from WBAI Radio.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Jillian, how you been?

Question: I'm okay. I hate this weather –

Mayor: You are not alone, Jillian.

Question: I know, I know. I know. I was going to ask you something about adding the Ramones to the music loop because it's about time the Queens boys get recognized, but another time. Last year I asked you about the SoHo rezoning because the length of time that DCP put into Envision SoHo report, you know, 30 meetings, six months, and then they came around with just the idea that more study needed to be done, and – because it was so complicated. Then there was a sudden push to get it done. And the opponents said it was because they wanted to get – you wanted to get, or the City wanted to get it done while you were still in office. That was denied. But yesterday a judge ruled that the City – first, that a motion to dismiss was granted because there were significant issues in the rezoning process that were problems, and insufficient edification, but also DCP admitted that they were trying to get it done while you're still in office. So, is there going to be some kind of new timeline for the rezoning for this historic district?

Mayor: Well, Jillian, look, I'll certainly comment after we've analyzed the recent activity in the court. And a lot of times, as you have seen, you know, there are many, many decisions by a court

in the course of a process. And what you see one day is not necessarily what ends up happening a few days later. So, you know, we are still intending to find a way to move this forward. It is an opportunity to do a rezoning in a community that has been more privileged, exactly the kind of place I want to see more affordable housing. It's a place where we can do a much better job of creating retail jobs, for example, for everyday working New Yorkers. I think it's the right thing to do to get it done. But when I get more of a briefing on the legal situation, I'll be able to update you, or I'll have our team update you. Go ahead, Jillian.

Question: Okay, well, speaking of affordable housing, you know, there's a lot of criticism with the upzoning and one of them – and I promise not to go into all of the serious ones – one of them is that it incentivizes developers to demolish historic and low-rise buildings, which is – are often the homes to rent-regulated tenants. So, there's going to be the sense, I guess, that there's a net loss of affordable housing and diversity, and that there are so many loopholes in the plans that the actual affordable housing that you're trying to create will not materialize. There's the community facilities issue in NYU. I asked you about big box stores before, but you didn't know about it in the text. And there's the issue of your – you've got this high ranking member in your administration involved in land use who has deep connections to NYU. I think her husband does as well. Hers are to the real estate part. And there's a potential for a conflict of interest. And of course, the optics are bad. So, is this something – and I guess you kind of answered this before, but is this something that you would consider going back to change, especially because of your deputy mayor's position?

Mayor: A fair point, Jillian, to always ask, is there any potential conflict or assemblance of conflict? Any time when that's a concern, it's easy for people to recuse and I'll check the status of that. But, look, I think the bottom line – you raise a really important point and I appreciate it, and I know your questions are always really earnest. The last thing I want to do is try to create more affordable housing and inadvertently take away affordable housing we have, but I would say to you, what I have seen in so many cases is affordable housing that we have lost for a variety of reasons, nothing replacing it, no systematic effort to protect working people by creating new affordable housing or are preserving affordable housing. That's why I felt this for 20 years, Jillian, when you just leave market forces to their own in New York City, good luck for working people to find a place they can afford. And every time people tell me what they don't like about rezoning, I say, come to Brooklyn with me, let's go to Bed-Stuy, let's go to Bushwick, let's go to places that never had a rezoning and where a huge number of people are displaced, and nothing was created to balance the equation.

So, I still believe a smart rezoning with a focus on affordable housing with real guarantees, not like we saw, unfortunately, in the previous administration where they were very, very porous, but real binding guarantees around affordable housing is our best bet to make this a place that working people can afford. But it has to be written properly. And in some cases, if you have something low-rise – put aside to the historic districts, those are very real issues – but let's say you have a building that happens not to be historically pertinent and it's replaced with a bigger building, with a lot more affordable housing in it. I would take that opportunity any day, because if we don't create more affordable housing, more and more New Yorkers won't be able to live here. So, it's a balance we always try to strike. I think we are striking it in this case. But I will definitely have the team get back to you on some of your other concerns.

Moderator: Our next question goes to Nolan Hicks from the Post.

Question: Good morning, everybody.

Mayor: Hey, Nolan. How you been?

Question: I'm all right, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, good.

Question: There was a horrendous shooting over the weekend in Queens. There was a police officer who was shot and killed in Kensington yesterday. There have been at least 312 shootings in the city since the last time the Police Commissioner was at City Hall to take questions from the press corps that covers City Hall. Where is your Police Commissioner and why isn't he showing up?

Mayor: Nolan, you mentioned we lost a retired police officer yesterday. My heart goes out to his family – really, really horrible loss. Nolan, again, we do all sorts of different things. The Commissioner's out there all the time, leading the way, fighting back the challenges that we're facing. The NYPD is doing an extraordinary job getting guns off the streets. We've really documented that and new strategies, new approaches all the time. So, I'm very, very clear about the work of the NYPD and the fundamental belief that the best way forward is through the neighborhood policing philosophy that Dermot Shea and John Miller were there present at the creation of, and we're going to double down on again now. Go ahead, Nolan.

Question: Yeah. I mean, your Police Commissioner makes \$240,000 a year to come up with the crime fighting strategies in the city. We're on pace to exceed the number of shootings that we saw last year, which were more than the number of shootings the year before. Why isn't he here to face the music?

Mayor: Nolan, again, respectfully, look around this whole country. It's very painful, but we had a global pandemic. It dislocated our entire society. People didn't have jobs. People didn't have schools. People didn't have houses of worship. We have saw crime – we've seen crime go up and violent crime go up all over the country, major cities, many of which unfortunately have gone through much, much worse than New York City. But what's happening now with the leadership of Commissioner Shea, Deputy Commissioner Miller, and so many others is we are turning the tide. It's going to take a lot of work. It really – we really needed the courts to come back. That was the missing link in so many cases. Thank God they're coming back. We need help from Albany. We need help from Washington. I'm really hopeful that we can get this parole bill passed in Albany that would give us new tools to make sure that folks coming back from prison don't end up going back into a life of crime, but actually move towards a peaceful better life. Commissioner Shea is leading the way on so many of these pieces and I am convinced this is the strategy we need, but it won't happen overnight. We're going to have to work really hard to make it work.

Moderator: We have time for two more questions today. Our next question goes to Kevin Duggan from AM New York.

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

Mayor: Good, Kevin, how you been?

Question: Doing well. I'm following on a string of questioning that I had from my Brooklyn Paper days. You mentioned a few months ago that [inaudible] with a specific plan or talk specifics about the BQE by May. I just wanted to check in and see what was going on with that right now from your side of things.

Mayor: Kevin, I can report to you it is no longer May. We're a little bit behind, you are right. I had a meeting with Commissioner Guttman and members of our team. Initial plan we went through, and we agreed we wanted to add some elements to it. That's being worked on now. I think we'll be able to say something more in the next hopefully week or two, but it's very much on the front burner. We've got to protect the BQE. We've got to make sure it will be safe, and it will be viable for the years immediately ahead while we come up with hopefully a much bigger and more creative solution. Go ahead, Kevin.

Question: Okay. Just to kind of hone in on that a bit, I guess you know, could you – would you say your strategy is focused only on the city portion of the BQE that the triple cantilever section, or are you still looking at putting forward a plan that's kind of larger, the whole BQE corridor within your administration?

Mayor: So, Kevin, a couple of different pieces. Job one is to protect the triple cantilever and protect the viability of the BQE for the years ahead. Well, that's the number one thing I want to make sure we do. I also want us to leave a clear game plan for the next administration, looking at the bigger picture. We'll have ideas that we think are the most viable, but we also might present multiple options so that we give the next administration those choices. But we got to do both. We got to secure the immediate challenge and then a situation – you know, make sure the immediate situation is addressed and then project solutions that would be for the big picture.

Moderator: Our last question for today goes to Reuvain from Hamodia.

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

Mayor: Good, Reuvain, how you been?

Question: Good. So, I would like to follow up on these questions about why the Commissioner's not here. When I interviewed him in September, I asked him about the fact that he was not at press conferences for five weeks during the height of the Black Lives Matter protests last summer. And he said, 'if I was invited, I would be there.' And I asked him why he wasn't. And he said to me, "You have to ask the Mayor." So, why – apparently, he has not been invited to his press conferences. Why not?

Mayor: Again, Reuvain, people can ask questions in the negative. I'm going to answer in the positive. We put together the lineup to speak to each situation. We do that with every issue, every agency. The Commissioner is out there leading the way with the NYPD. He was out with the family of Justin Wallace yesterday. The whole city watched as he went to support that family. And that was deeply, deeply appreciated. He's in many different venues where he speaks to the issues. I'm just – I think this is a little inside baseball with all due respect. We are doing what we got to do to set the strategies in place to get past this really tough moment in our city's history. And we will overcome it. Go ahead, Reuvain.

Question: Scott Stringer tweeted yesterday from his Comptroller account that he audited the Sanitation Department, that they failed to follow procurement guidance and award a \$14 million COVID emergency food contract to an inexperienced, ineffective vendor with the recent criminal conviction, end quote. Of course, the Sanitation Commissioner at the time, and also the Food Czar, was Kathryn Garcia who happens to be Stringer's rival for mayor. I'm wondering if – many people feel that Stringer's using the Comptroller's Office now as a way to hit out a rival in this race. I'm wondering what you think of this. Do you think there should be an investigation about a conflict of interest?

Mayor: Well, look, the underlying issue is real. Something happened that was both unfortunate and inappropriate. In fact, the vendor that was hired was fired after three weeks. So, obviously something went wrong. That's an appropriate topic for an audit. Now the timing is a little suspicious, obviously, not a shock because we've seen audits used as political tools before. There's a real issue there. You know, this is the kind of thing we got to move heaven and earth to avoid happening because that vendor shouldn't have gotten that contract. But I do see your point about the very interesting timing of the audit. The bottom line is, you know, we're going to make sure these issues are corrected, and move forward.

And with that, I'll conclude and say, look, this city's recovery, to me, what we're seeing now every day – I have the real privilege of reporting to you the facts, all of you, the people in New York City, what we're seeing happening. And just in the course of today's press conference, being able to show you the many, many areas where we're making great progress in this city, even things we never would have expected like tourism coming back this quickly. We should be proud as New Yorkers of the comeback we're making. We got a lot more to do. We all know that every single additional New Yorker gets vaccinated fuels that comeback. So, I'm going to be a good broken record and keep saying, if you like hearing about New York City's recovery and the Summer of New York City and all the possibilities ahead, help us out. If you haven't yet gotten vaccinated, if your child hasn't been vaccinated, today's the day to make that appointment. Thank you, everybody.

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