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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOSTS PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE PAPAL VISIT

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Hello, everyone. How are you doing? Welcome to City Hall. A lot of smiling faces today. This is a very exciting moment here at City Hall and a joyous moment. And I think you're getting a first glimpse of what this week is going to be like in New York City. It's going to be a joyous week. It's going to be an exciting week. It's going to be an inspiring week for New Yorkers as we welcome Pope Francis. We're going to kick off this week with a really wonderful group of people.

I want to welcome students, and faculty, and parents of three remarkable Catholic schools on Staten Island – St. Ann's, Holy Rosary, and St. Christopher's. Now, these schools are remarkable because they do a great job educating their children. They're remarkable because each one of them is part of our Pre-K for All effort and they welcomed many four-year-olds over the last two weeks to start their educational careers in partnership with the city. And they're remarkable schools because these are schools, obviously, where the kids care deeply, the parents care deeply, the teachers care deeply. And they care so deeply that they – thank you – that they went out of their way to really think about the meaning of Pope Francis' visit.

The students at these schools cared deeply that His Holiness was going to be here with us. And so, they were so excited about the upcoming visit that at one of the schools, they prepared for the Pope's visit by having a visit from his likeness, a "Paper Pope" – a life-size cardboard likeness of His Holiness. And through the likeness, they used the opportunity to teach and to think together about Pope Francis' extraordinary message of compassion and inclusion, and how it is all of our responsibility to help those most vulnerable among us.

They also learned in the process – these children learned that once upon a time, Pope Francis grew up in Argentina and was a child like them, with a whole life of possibilities before him. He did not know then that he would become the strongest moral voice on this planet. He didn't know that that was his destiny. So, what an extraordinary thing for these young people to think of a young person just like them who has reached this extremely important and powerful level of leadership in our world.

So, the students go to meet the Paper Pope last week. It was a momentous day for them and a symbol of how extraordinary the Pope's visit would be. Well, when I heard about it and when my team heard about it, we said we have to do something better. We have to bring them face to face with the real thing. So, we will be giving these children tickets to Pope Francis' Central Park procession so they can experience this amazing moment first-hand, and they can really have the experience of seeing this Pope and all he stands for.

I want to thank the folks who made this special day possible for these children and for their families. First of all, I want to thank a man who is doing so much to bring these events together so effectively – Michael Paul Carey, the executive director of the Mayor's Office of Citywide Events. I want to thank him for his great work. I want to thank Diane Gatto from the Archdiocese of New York. And the principals from the three schools – now, if I say your name wrong, correct me. Catherine Ealbella.

Principal Catherine Falabella, St. Christopher School: Falabella.

Mayor: Falabella. I'm sorry, they put in an *E.* Falabella. Ann Major. Catherine is from St. Christopher. Ann Major is from Holy Rosary. And Bernadette – do you say it Fe-cee or Fi-cchi?

Principal Bernadette Ficchi, St. Ann School: Ficchi.

Mayor: Ficchi – from St. Ann's. Welcome, all of you. And thank you for all you've done to prepare the children for this extraordinary week. Now, the Pope is using his voice, his moral authority to get across a message the whole world needs. And I think he's come around at a moment in our history where it was particularly necessary. He's calling for global economic justice, global environmental justice. He's calling for the changes we need to protect our earth and to treat all people with compassion and dignity. He's talked about how inequality undermines societies all around the world. He's talked about our common humanity, particularly in the context of crises related to immigration all over the world. He's called on world leaders – he's held world leaders to task – whether it's mayors or heads of state – to be more inclusive, to respect all people equally. And in this, he's not only in my view the most powerful moral voice in the world today, but he's obviously faithful to the Christian teachings that we've known for generations – teachings which clearly and compassionately instruct all of us to lift up the poor, to help those in need, to help those who suffer. I firmly believe in the vision that the Pope has put forward. He's calling for action, and that's one of the most compelling and powerful things. He's calling for action. He's demanding of all of us – and it doesn't matter if we're Catholics, or Christians, or people of other faiths, or anyone – he's calling on all of us to recognize our common humanity and to act in accordance with it.

We try here humbly in New York City to address the inequalities of our society in many ways. And I've been inspired by the words and the actions of Pope Francis throughout. We are grateful for the extraordinary partnership we have with the archdiocese, and equally with the diocese of Brooklyn. The ways we're working together – whether it's pre-k and afterschool, or affordable housing, we're working through Catholic Charities to help people in need, and certainly the amazing partnership around this visit. Together, we're doing a lot to reach every day New Yorkers in every neighborhood, and it's a powerful partnership for this city.

There'll be 80,000 people in Central Park on Friday, and you'll be among them. 80,000 people waiting to see the Pope and to, in solidarity with him, celebrate our common humanity and celebrate his message. And the memories of this visit – I know this – the memories of this visit will be passed on for generations. So, I want to say to all the children here today, even though you're just starting out your lives, you will be telling this story to your children, and to your grandchildren about how you saw Pope Francis in this amazing moment in history. You're going to tell your children and grandchildren – I was there and I saw him with my own eyes. It's going to be a great experience – an experience you will treasure. And I know you'll let His Holiness know how much we appreciate him being here. So, I assume you know how to applaud and cheer – you've been practicing that in school?

[Laughter]

And you're going to represent all of us too. You're going to represent people all over this city – all our families, all our schools, all our neighborhoods. You will represent Staten Island. You will represent the whole city of New York. And we're so proud that you're going to be there. Let me say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Now, we're going to give these young people an opportunity to exercise their cheering skills.

[Laughter]

So, this is going to be a little warmup for when you see His Holiness. I'm going to bring forward a young woman who exemplifies everything good about New York City. She exemplifies a spirit – the energy and strength that we're so proud of as New Yorkers. Isabella Acierno is a student at St. Christopher's. Isabella has faced challenges, battling recurring brain tumors. But that has not stopped Isabella. She is a top-level student,

she is a fierce competitor on the basketball court, and she is a loving member of her family. So, we're so especially happy to welcome Isabella. And now I'd like all of the children here to cheer her on right now – Isabella.

[...]

Mayor: Let's take first questions about this auspicious announcement and about the week ahead with His Holiness, and then we'll take other topics as well. Yes, Hannah.

Question: Where is the cutout? Did you guys bring it?

[Laughter]

Mayor: Well, now that would have been logical, wouldn't it? I think – you didn't bring it, did you? We will make sure you get access to the cutout. Yes.

Question: I have a question for Isabella. Could you describe what it is about Pope Francis that you find so inspiring?

Isabella Acierno: Pope Francis is by far my favorite pope. I think that he lives – as like all the popes – but he really lives as Jesus did, and he follows – like Jesus did. He doesn't wear red because he feels like he's not like a king. So, he does that. And his chair, also – he doesn't sit in a throne chair, that's also red. He sits in a wooden chair, because Jesus was a carpenter. So, I feel like he really is a kind and sweet man, and he really follows the example of Jesus.

[Applause]

Mayor: Beautifully said, yes. I think you may be the one that comes back as mayor.

[Laughter]

You heard it here first. Yes.

Question: A security related question – for the Pope's visit, is there any discussion to shut down any portions of the subway system while he's here, particularly anything under Madison Square Garden and Penn Station, while he's delivering mass?

Mayor: Well, again, as you know, we're working with the Secret Service. They're the lead on this and we're in very, very close cooperation with the Secret Service and the FBI, and obviously the NYPD is doing an extraordinary job preparing, so I would refer that question to the Secret Service and the NYPD. But, as I said the other day, I think having seen a lot of the preparations in action, I think they are extraordinary. I think we are absolutely ready, but I also would say to all my fellow New Yorkers, of course there are going to be some delays, of course there are going to be some inconveniences. It's absolutely worth it for such an amazing and historical moment. And our security professionals may make some decisions from time to time for some temporary shut-downs. We should respect that that those are the decisions of the very best security professionals there are. Yeah?

Question: Mr. Mayor, will you personally meet the Pope?

Mayor: I am absolutely and humbly looking forward to that, and we're still working on the specific schedule, but I look forward to participating for sure.

Question: Would it be dining with him? Or would it be at an event?

Mayor: I think he has a very busy schedule and he doesn't really have time for dining with people.

[Laughter]

But whatever it is, it will be a tremendous honor, and it will be inspiring, and I just look forward to being a part of his visit in any way I can. Yes?

Question: Is there any official give that you're planning to give him on behalf of the city? A key, or something else?

Mayor: I'm going to say this – we are going to say everything we have to say at the right time and the right place, but I also want to say that this Pope has made very clear that he is less interested in material things. And I think that as we think about how to honor him, we want to make sure we do so in a way that is consistent with his values. Anybody else on this topic of the visit?

Question: There was a report about impersonating New York police officers by terrorists. Any feelings about how that may be a concern?

Mayor: Again, the security preparations are absolutely outstanding, led by the Secret Service. The news that we offered the other day when we were doing the security briefing – there is no specific and credible threat against the Pope, thank God. We think things are going very, very well. But there is going to be a lot of vigilance, a lot of measures in place – as we like to say – a lot of measures you will see, and a lot of measure you won't see. And that means things are being done right. But, I feel very good about where we stand right now. Yes?

Question: I know the Pope has a pretty packed schedule when he's going to be here, but are there any things in New York or about the city that you're particularly excited for him to see, or hope he gets a chance to see since it's his first visit here?

Mayor: Yes, I think – as is so consistent with his values and his love of all people, the fact that he is going to East Harlem and he's going to spend time with immigrants who make this city great – I mean what could be more quintessentially New York than spending time with today's immigrants, celebrating this ultimate city of immigrants? And I keep saying to people, we're the – arguably, the most successful city on the earth. And I'm not just measuring that in the wealth we have here or the tall buildings, but in terms of the human success stories. And the fact that we've been a city of immigrants since the very beginning and generation after generation replenishes us, and a city that includes very kind of people in much more harmony than is achieved in many parts of the world. I'm glad he's going to experience that in East Harlem. I can't think of anything more important for someone to see and experience about New York City, and he obviously will use the occasion to remind all of us that we have to embrace our common humanity. There's a raging debate on immigration in this country and around the world, obviously in Europe and in many other places. And I think Pope Francis' voice is cutting through all of this and saying – wait a minute, these are human being, just like our forebears, who sought freedom, or sought a better way of life, or an opportunity to feed their families. That's what people are doing today. And it would be hypocritical to not appreciate that each and every generation faces these struggles. So I think he's going to see the ultimate New York experience, but also take the opportunity to teach more deeply his lesson to us all. Yes?

Question: Mayor, I want to ask you – when you first knew about Pope Francis coming to New York, what was the first thought that came into your mind?

Mayor: That we are the center of the world – I think I can say that humbly and his voice is the most important voice on this earth, and it's a match made in heaven. We need to hear his voice here and it will only make more powerful his message to the world. Yes?

Question: When he was in Cuba, the Pope met with Raul and Fidel Castro. I'm wondering what you're thoughts are on his political views, especially since a lot of the Republican presidential candidates have criticized him for having political views?

Mayor: I had a difference yesterday with Senator Rubio on this point. I don't understand how anyone can suggest that the Pope, speaking with constant reference to scripture, is expressing "political views." It's quite clear to me that everything he talks about is consistent with Christian teachings. And as I said, Senator Rubio needs to go back and reread the Sermon on the Mount. Everything that the Pope refers to in terms of economic fairness and embrace of immigrants – it all can be found right there, in a message that is 2,000 years old. So, I think that it is an uncomfortable moment for folks who are anti-immigrant or who don't believe in economic fairness because we have the number one moral voice on the earth sounding those themes in such an uncompromising moment. But let's not perform revisionism. He is not offering personal political views. He is reflecting the values of his religion. Yes?

Question: In terms of preparation, you talked about security a little bit for these prepared events. He's known to make surprises, are you prepared [inaudible].

Mayor: Yes he is.

Question: Are you prepared for that?

Mayor: Yes, while I was at the Vatican – again, this is a Pope unlike any other. Isabella is right, he is unique and extraordinary. And I was at the Vatican because he called mayors from all over the world to the Vatican to talk about how we can do more to address climate change. So, he's putting his words into action. He's putting his teachings into action by calling people to account. But while I was there, I met with the head of Vatican security – Domenico Giani. You know, it was funny, he wanted to explain to me that very fact. And I said, "Señor Giani, it's quite well known this Pope has a pension for being spontaneous and for wanting to connect with people." So everyone understands. The Secret Service understands. The FBI understands. The NYPD understands. Our job is to protect him as we know best, and he will make his own decision. And as I like to say, referencing the great advertiser from my youth – he answers to a higher authority. So, whatever he chooses to do, we will do our very best to accommodate and continue to protect him throughout. Yes?

Question: You have a lot going on in the city this week –

Mayor: That is a true statement.

[Laughter]

170 heads of state during the General Assembly – more than we've ever had before.

Question: Is this, you know, a lot of people have asked questions about security preps, but I mean, this is a huge drain on security in the city.

Mayor: I have to tell you, I don't – I don't for a moment, misunderstand that question or think it's wrong to say it that way, but I have a different perspective. First of all, I get security briefings so I have a particular insight that that gives me. When you see the work that has been done for months and months to prepare, and the sheer capacity of the NYPD, and then the way the partnership with the FBI and Secret Service has grown in recent years, I am absolutely confident – and I have been in the discussions, been in the meetings – no one is nervous. Everyone is focused. They have the resources they need. They have the equipment, the personnel. I think there's a great deal of confidence. And no one's underestimating that this is something we've never experienced before. We all understand that. But there's a tremendous can-do attitude in the Secret Service, FBI, and NYPD. And we're confident. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, we probably won't know until we are in the middle of it or even at the end of it. But I think every dollar will be worth it. I think it'll be an inspiring and uplifting moment for this city. I think it means so much. And again, there's no question, it means so much to millions of Catholics in and around this city. But it means so much to millions of people who happen not to be Catholic too. So, I think it's going to just be an uplifting moment and worth the investment. Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, this visit is generating unprecedented street closings in Manhattan in Midtown and ripple effects as well. How concerned are you about how people and-or vehicles are going to get around?

Mayor: We're talking about the time His Holiness is on the ground is give or take 24 hours. And I think we can handle a day of inconvenience to have the leader of a global religion with us preaching a message of inclusion and understanding. I think we can handle it. Again, we'll make every effort to keep things moving but I think New Yorkers are resilient. We are certainly used to U.N week every year. I think we'll be fine in the end.

Question: Mayor, the head of MTA transit said that this is one of those weeks where people might consider staying at home. And I'm wondering if that is right.

Mayor: I would say it's a week to use mass transit to the maximum extent possible or walk when you can walk if you're in Midtown, and certainly understand that in Midtown, specific – there's going to be some challenges. But again, most of that is consistent with previous U.N. General Assembly weeks. For the time that His Holiness is here, from late Thursday through Friday, there will be of course, unusual street closures, etcetera. But I think people can navigate that. I think they can navigate by walking where they are able to. If someone has the option to stay home and they can work from home, that's a great choice too. But again, I often think we worry a little more about these special events than we need to. The city always keeps going. Businesses will be open. The government will be open and functioning. Everything's going to go on as normal. There will be an epicenter of activity in Midtown where there will be special activities, but otherwise, everything is going to go on as normal. Yes?

Question: Is there a sense of how close these children will be able to be? Will they be on bleachers? Will be standing behind ropes?

Mayor: Michael, would you like to come over? Lets introduce you to the world. Michael Paul Carey is running the city office of special events – citywide events that's doing this great work.

Michael Paul Carey: They will be around a perimeter, so it's along with the, sort of, 80,000 other folks that are there. Whenever they get there, it's sort of first-come, first-serve in the space throughout the park. So –

Question: So, the Pope is coming south essentially in the park. You have people on each side – these kids will be yards – hundreds of yard away?

Michael Paul Carey: It's hard to say because there's a security perimeter between him and anyone that I leave up to the Secret Service. But they will have an amazing view and, as the mayor said, we're all very exciting and 80,000 other people are excited too.

Mayor: They'll have a good view. Michael hit the nail on the head. They will definitely have a good view, and they'll feel the moment and the excitement, and I don't doubt – now, here's the question for these very diligent young people. Now, this may mean getting up – no, it's not early in the morning, that's not right. Michael, what time are we talking about?

Michael Paul Carey: Doors open at 11.

Mayor: 11, so you don't have to get up early in the morning, but you do have to get there, and wait in line a while, and be there. Are you ready? Are you ready?

Students: Yes.

Mayor: I can't hear you. Are you ready?

[Laughter]

Students: Yes.

Mayor: I don't hear the kind of enthusiasm we're looking for. Are you ready?

Students: Yes.

Mayor: I think the principals need to go and have a little session on enthusiasm –

[Laughter]

Mayor: One more time – are you ready?

Students: Yes!

Mayor: Excellent. Excellent – third time's a charm. Any other questions on-topic? On-topic, going once – going twice – we're going to go to – wait, on-topic? I'm sorry, yes?

Question: You haven't laid out – I know you can't get into specific details on all the plans, but besides road closures, what can people expect to see in terms of security and planning for this?

Mayor: Some of the things we've talked about – and Michael, you can add if I leave anything out. Obviously, if you're going to one of the events, have a valid government ID with you, because that's going to be important wherever there's a list to confirm identity. We're going to be sticklers about that, and if people don't have their ID, that's a challenge. And expect, you know, if you're going to an event, there will be lines and there'll be delays getting in. Do you want to –

Michael Paul Carey: Yeah.

Mayor: – Add to that?

Michael Paul Carey: And so, as the mayor had indicated, so anyone – everyone – everything is ticketed, so as long as you have – make sure you have your ticket, a valid ID, and, as we say often, plan ahead. Get there early – enough time to get through the security check. And, you know, there'll be a little bit of waiting, but we'll prepare for it.

Question: On that note, like, do all these kids have ID's? I mean, they're a little young for government issued ID's.

Mayor: Michael? Have you asked each of them for their ID?

Michael Paul Carey: I will ask each of them – no –

[Laughter]

Michael Paul Carey: Anyone under 18 has to come with an adult anyway, so hopefully that adult has their ID as well. And before anyone asks the question, of course we're taking the municipal ID as an ID as well.

Mayor: Yes we are. Okay, on this topic, going once – going twice. Okay, do we want the children to be someplace better than the Blue Room now?

[Laughter]

Mayor: Okay. Congratulations, guys. Well done.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Hold on one second, we're going to –

Okay. Alright, we are now transitioning. The doors are closing – off-topic. Off-topic - Emily?

Question: Mayor de Blasio, I understand that you'll be meeting with James Blake today, along with the commissioner. What are you hoping to express to him? What do you expect from the meeting?

Mayor: Im certainly going to let him know how much we are making fundamental reforms in the relationship between police and community; that we are retraining our entire patrol force, which has never been done before, to focus on bettering the relationship between police and community and reducing any unnecessary use of force; and that – I'm going to let him know how confident I am, and Commissioner Bratton is, that this is going to make a huge impact. We're very, very optimistic about where things are going in this city in the relationship between police and community. And the fact that we've had the lowest number of civilian complaints to the CCRB in almost 15 years in the last report by the CCRB is real evidence that this new approach is starting to work.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, if this was not James Blake, would you be meeting with just a regular citizen if this –

Mayor: I talked to a lot of regular citizens. Obviously he's a prominent person, and this was a particular incident. But the bottom line here is the changes were already moving, and that's what I want to explain to him, and certainly to all New Yorkers. We don't want to see this kind of thing happen. We want to see a better relationship between police and community. We want to see force used only in the degree necessary. And that effort has been underway for the last year. So – very proud of the changes we're making and that's what we're going to explain to Mr. Blake.

Question: Mayor, I wanted to get your reaction to something Presidential Candidate Ben Carson said recently – that the United States should not elect a Muslim president.

Mayor: Well, it's so pertinent to the discussion we just had because obviously I come from a Catholic family, and the stories that were told to my family of the bias against John F. Kennedy when he ran for president – the overt bias, the overt discussion in this country about whether JFK would be more loyal to the Pope than to the people of the United States – that went on for months and months in 1959 and 1960, and he was a decorated war hero – a former sailer in the United States navy. This is a problem we've faced before and it's time to face it down. Mr. Carson's absolutely wrong. He should apologize to Muslim-Americans. Clearly, you know, we have millions of Muslim-Americans who are loyal American citizens, who contribute to our society all the time, who of course are as qualified to serve us as anyone else. As Commissioner Bratton has said, we have about 900 Muslim-American members of the NYPD protecting us every day. So, I don't know if Ben Carson was trying to score cheap points with the conservative base, or if he actually believes that. But if he believes it, he doesn't understand what America's about.

Anna?

Question: A young woman was killed while biking on Highland Boulevard last week – a boat detached and hit her and another cyclist as they were both biking. There's been a bit of the debate on the island about bike lanes, and I was wondering if you thought that there should be more bike lanes on Staten Island, given this incident and –

Mayor: I don't know the details of the incident, but I do believe in bike lanes and that they should be well established throughout all five boroughs.

Yeah?

Question: Mr. Mayor, there are a number of homeless people who work for the city – municipal workers, potentially hundreds. I'm just wondering, besides what you're doing on the homelessness front, is there anything different that you can do in those cases [inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah. Well, first of all, we should check that number. I'm not sure that's the accurate number, but we do know there are some people who – obviously there are a number of people that are homeless and working, and we do know that some of them at least work for the city of New York. As I've said, trying to explain to all New Yorkers what we're facing now, this is becoming more and more of an economic problem, meaning people have been displaced from their homes by the high cost of housing even if they're working. And because wages and benefits in too many places are still not all they should be, it's causing a challenge. So, were going to make sure in every case, particularly with working folks, that we look for every opportunity to get them to permanent housing. With our new programs alone, we've gotten 15,000 people to permanent housing, as you know from the Mayor's Management Report. Many others, through our previous existing policies, got out of shelter. Our job is to get people back on their feet. And for the many, many people who are working, you know, we want to do everything we can to help them become more economically viable.

Erin?

Question: Mr. Mayor, former New York Jets player Michael Faulkner actually announced a mayoral campaign against you today in Times Square. I'm wondering – any reaction to that? You know, do you think it's interesting that he's kicking off a campaign so soon, and, you know, obviously he's criticizing your management of the city, so –

Mayor: I've said to you guys before, anyone wants to run – the more the merrier. I feel very good about what I have to say to the people of this city over the next two years. We have 177,000 more jobs than we had on January 1st, 2014; we have an affordable housing plan that's on schedule for 200,000 units, enough for half-a-million people; 65,000-plus kids in pre-k; higher test scores in our schools. I have a lot that I'm going to be proud to talk to the people of this city about, and I look forward to a spirited debate.

Grace?

Question: Earlier this month there was a protest outside Trump's building on 5th Avenue, I believe, where some protestors were rushed out by security guards –

Mayor: By apparently private security that worked there, yeah.

Question: Who worked for Donald Trump. I'm wondering if you saw the video –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: – They're now suing Donald Trump – and what you make of their treatment?

Mayor: I saw it glancingly. I don't know enough to comment on the situation. Obviously, we respect freedom of speech, so I don't know why that happened the way it did. But I just don't know enough about it.

Marcia?

Question: Mr. Mayor, this has been a particularly week and weekend in this city. I wonder what you would say to New Yorkers concerned about their perception about the increase in gun crime.

Mayor: I would say have faith in the NYPD. I would say, if you look at the facts and the numbers, the NYPD continues to drive down crime. We had the safest summer in 20 years, that's a fact. Overall crime down compared to last year – that's a fact. Just in the last week, we all heard about the extraordinary takedown the NYPD achieved working with our federal partners in K-2, which is a new and growing challenge. Well, the NYPD and the federal government knocked out whole ring related to K-2 across the five boroughs – a major, major setback for the criminals and a great thing for the people in this city. In the same week, the NYPD broke out – or I should say, took down a heroine ring in Brooklyn, and they took down a gang in the Bronx. Between all of that, dozens and dozens of arrests, a lot of weapons seized, a lot of contraband seized. The NYPD continues to be more and more effective, and has better technology, even than last year, better training than even last year, and 1,300 more police officers on the way by the end of this year. So, I would say have faith that NYPD is becoming more effective all the time.

Question: [inaudible] incident at the Ingersoll Houses. I know the city has spent a lot of time, and up until this weekend there has been a shooting there –

Mayor: We're very proud of what the investments at the Ingersoll Houses yielded, because we were able to turn around what had been a tough situation and really reduce the crime situation. We're going to continue to do that. Look, from what we know of that one incident, it was a group of criminals confronting a group of criminals, and that doesn't make it any more acceptable, but it does not reflect the overall situation in that development or the success of applying additional police recourses in some of the most needy areas. We believe in that strategy fundamentally and we're going to keep doing it.

Question: Earlier this month you held a [inaudible] town hall with Chancellor Carmen Fariña – schools chancellor. What are your thoughts about how that went?

Mayor: I loved it. We had, I think, over 5,000 parents who participated. We took 21 questions, and what was so striking was, you know, parents are looking to understand how they can best serve their kids. A lot of the questions were to understand what's going on with our curriculum, what role parents should play in their schools and in their child's education. Parents ask tough questions – I mean, I was a school board member in Brooklyn long ago. I remember parents are going to be tough, tough critics. They're going to hold us acceptable, as they should. And it was a great dialog, and I look forward to a lot more of them because I want the parents of this city to hear directly from me and directly from Carmen Fariña about the things that we're doing to improve the schools.

Thanks, everyone.

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