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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW

Brian Lehrer: It's the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC. Good morning, everyone. And we will begin as we usually do on Fridays with my questions and your questions for Mayor Bill de Blasio in our Ask the Mayor segment. 2-1-2-4-3-3-WNYC, if you want to ask the Mayor something this morning, 2-1-2-4-3-3-9-6-9-2 or you can tweet a question. Use the hashtag #AsktheMayor. Mr. Mayor, welcome back to WNYC.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Brian.

Lehrer: And I want to acknowledge that you couldn't make it the last two weeks, first for the funeral of Assemblyman Denny Farrell and last week because you were sick. So, I'm glad you're back and I assume you're feeling better?

Mayor: I'm getting there. I appreciate it, Brian.

Lehrer: And we see that your son, Dante a student a Yale, has an op-ed in the Daily News today about overt racism at Brooklyn Tech where he went to high school with comments about the black students there not really being qualified and snickering that a black cafeteria worker should go back to Africa. Would you talk about that and tell us any of the things that you were aware of or had to deal with as a parent during his high school years?

Mayor: Well, listen, first of all Brian, I got to tell you. I'm very proud of him, putting into such powerful words what he experienced and what it meant to him and a lot of his fellow students. And so, you know, speaking first as a father, it's powerful, it's really heartfelt and well-written and it makes me very proud of him but it also makes me sad that he had to write it.

You know, like many teenagers there were some things he would come home and talk about and other things he didn't. It wasn't really until the hashtag came out about what was happening at Brooklyn Tech that he started to open up more about the sheer extent of what he felt. I think he tried to [inaudible] himself to some extent for some of these realities during high school, tried to put on a brave face. But I think like many students he often felt isolated and he often felt judged

unfairly. I don't want to put words in his mouth but I think this was some of the reality as he said.

I find it very sad to think that there's this whole generation this year and years past, decades past who worked so hard to get that kind of opportunity and felt like people around them including adults were belittling their accomplishments.

And by the way, I hate to say very little has changed in this light but my wife, Chirlane, talks about teachers in her high school in Massachusetts overtly discouraging her from applying to Wellesley because they said she'd never make it and she couldn't perform at that level. And the notion that adults would join in to discouraging young people of color from following their dreams and reaching their potential, that's still happening in this day in age, is deeply, deeply troubling.

So, I'm really glad he wrote it because it proves that there's a lot more we have to do. We have to make these bigger changes in the specialized schools, I'm absolutely convinced, in the name of fairness. But it also, beyond that, we have to get to the heart of the matter that if we're really going to value all of our young people, we can't tolerate any of these kind of actions or behaviors from adults or young people alike trying to exclude or belittle each other.

Lehrer: So, on the specialized high school admissions reforms to make them more diverse, that you and Chancellor Carranza want, since Albany has jurisdiction over at least three of the eight – Brooklyn Tech, Stuyvesant, and Bronx Science, and maybe all of the eight – do you have any new thinking on those five out of the eight specialized schools? All of the ones other than Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech that you might have the power to reform without the State?

Mayor: You're hitting the nail on the head that it's a gray area and a debatable area legally and when – I'm a firm believer when you meet a legally unclear situation, the best way to resolve it is through legislative action. The proposal we put forward in Albany is all about fairness. Our specialized high schools, being a place where very few middle schools are represented. You know about half of the kids in our specialized high schools come from 21 middle schools out of 600 and I think there's about 300 middle schools that right now send essentially no kids to specialized high schools.

Rather than accept that kind of reality, rather than accept a reality where Stuyvesant is one percent black students, three percent Latino students in their last admitted class, let's create a fairness-based system.

We will accept the top performing kids from every middle school judged by both their grades over their whole time in middle school and their performance on the universal State exams, not just this one specialized high school test which is very narrow and particular and only some kids take.

And I think that is a universal approach and I think it can win in Albany ultimately because the fairness speaks for itself. That then solves the issue of how we treat all of these schools going forward.

Lehrer: And how about expanding the number of seats at the specialized high schools as some people have suggested for more students who are qualified but they don't make the cut-off because the seats are so limited or doesn't that really solve the problem because the feeder system is the same and so the demographic imbalance would be the same?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a great question. So, three things. One – we got to go to the root cause. We have to overwhelmingly change our school system. This is what the Equity and Excellence vision is all about. We're still a long way from where we need to be. Even though our schools have made real progress on graduation rates and college readiness and a lot of other measures, they're a long way from where we need to be so we got to go to the core of improving middle school and high school quality across the board and I think a lot of things we put in place will do that.

The second is we need more good high-quality high school options in general and that's not just specialized schools. There are other great high schools that need to keep growing, that need to keep presenting that option. We have a lot of great high schools that a lot of parents don't even know about. We've got to get that out there. We have to keep growing those and the number of seats in those schools.

And lastly, I've said to the Chancellor, I've given him the direction to go and create a plan to maximize the number of seats in the specialized high schools and a range of quality high schools. He's going to come back with a plan in the coming months. I think there are places where we can expand the number of specialized high school seats and we would certainly want to do that.

But that's just – as you indicated, that's just in affect a small piece of what needs to be a much bigger solution.

Lehrer: New topic. On May 15th, you announced the 30-day task force to study the city's marijuana enforcement policies. Here we are on June 15th. Do you have anything to announce?

Mayor: Your sense of the calendar is exceptional. We will, next week with the NYPD, be announcing the results of that task force and the actions that will be taken. I think it's been a very productive process and the goal here is straightforward. We are the safest big city in America. We want to be the fairest big city in America. Those two goals go together in my mind. They actually support each other. We need to reduce any – and obviously get rid of any arrests that's unnecessary. We need to reduce and ultimately end disparities and that was the charge that I gave to Commissioner O'Neill and his team.

They've been working actively on it and I think next week, we're going to be able to show a really smart plan to reduce those disparities, reduce unnecessary arrests but also continue the clear progress we're making on safety.

Lehrer: Can you give us a hint? Any bit of a sneak preview?

Mayor: I'm not going to give sneak previews but I am going to say I think it's going to have a real impact and I think the results of the plan will start to be felt even in the course of this year.

Lehrer: 2-1-2-4-3-3-WNYC on our weekly Ask the Mayor call-in. 2-1-2-4-3-3-9-6-9-2. Kate in Brooklyn, you're on with the Mayor. Hi, Kate.

Question: Hi, hi. I'm the parent of a kid who's at a Success Academy school in Brooklyn. And just a few days before the end of the school, 70 families were told that their school, Success Academy Lafayette Middle School, which was actually supposed to open in ten weeks' time, will not be allowed to open.

So us parents see this as another attack on Success Academy by the Mayor. And I would like to ask the Mayor this question – will you and the Chancellor commit to meeting with the affected parent community to hear about our concerns and to talk about the future of the school?

Mayor: I am not familiar with the specifics of this situation. I know there's been several situations where we had a plan to accommodate the needs of a Success Academy school and other factors came into play. In one case I know there was a legal issue but other factors as well.

So, I want to be really clear to all of your listeners, Brian, that – it's well-known I have some philosophical differences with the Success Academy approach but as a matter of administering our school system, we work with Success Academy every day. They have a strong presence in a number of our buildings. When we say space is going to be made available, we make it available unless there is a legal or logistical or other problem beyond our control that comes to us.

I'm happy to make sure senior folks at the Department of Education and City Hall sit down with the parents. I'm not ready to commit personally to this sit down but I am ready to make sure that some senior folks sit with the parents right away. We want to make sure listening to the parents' concerns. Those kids are part of our family, our city. We want everyone to be well-educated and we certainly want to hear the concerns and we'll talk about what we're going to do to address the situation.

Lehrer: Kate, thank you very much. We're going to go to [inaudible] in Harlem. You're on WNYC. Hello, [inaudible].

Question: Hello, Brian, thank you for taking my call. Hello, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, good morning.

Question: Good morning. I called a few weeks ago and I asked about plastic bags and we all agreed they're kind of a scourge to our wonderful city. But honestly I don't have a place to bring the recycle. Whole foods doesn't take them. Fairway doesn't take them which I think is antithetical to that plastic bag act

Every place I go. I have a big plastic bag filled with plastic bags. It's the size of Delaware –

[Laughter]

Mayor: That's the metaphor, right there. A big plastic bag filled with plastic bags. Yeah, you hit the nail on the head. Look, let's be clear the answer here is a ban. You know, there's been some progress now on the State level. I need to get an update on exactly what the next steps will be. I think a ban is the right way to go on plastic bags.

We got to work out the details. I think a ban is the right way to go on plastic straws. We have to work out those details.

I don't – recycling works with a certain type of product but we also have to remember recycling is always imperfect. We're still trying to get New Yorkers to engage in recycling more and more. It's always something that takes a period of time to really acclimate to and get people bought into.

With plastic bags, given the history, I've never heard of a realistic way to do recycling in a big scale. The answer there is a ban in my view.

Lehrer: [Inaudible] thank you for that call. On that first caller regarding Success Academy and Lafayette. My brain was telling me there was something specific in the news about that this week with the Chancellor and I just looked it up. On KingsCountyPolitics.com it says Success Academy families and educators are continuing their fight to create a new Success Academy Lafayette Middle School next year despite the City's recent decision to scuttle the plan and scatter about 70 SA fifth graders in current SA middle schools throughout the borough next year. Success Academy has been operating a K-4 school at P.S. 25 on Lafayette Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant and wants to convert the space to serve middle school grades. This says the conversion would require no additional classroom space and the co-located school, P.S. 25 would not lose a single square-foot. So is that a particular situation that you're not familiar with?

Mayor: Yeah, we have 1,800 schools so I cannot tell a lie. There are some situations that I'm just not updated on. I would need to get the facts. But I think the broader point is again we've been really clear now over four full years-plus that we work to find fair outcomes for Success Academy and its kids.

But there also has to be a balance with other factors that come with running an entire public school system and working with the other schools that are in a building or the other needs that come with that building.

So, it's not – I didn't read that article. I'm not familiar with that case. It's not enough to just look at one side of the equation. We have to understand why the Department of Education is making its decisions, all the other factors in play to be able to put it in perspective. I'd be happy to speak about it next week after I get a briefing.

Lehrer: Jay in Brooklyn, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi, Jay.

Question: Hi, Brian. Thanks for taking my call. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: I'm calling because I'm a small homeowner kind of on the Clinton Hill Prospect Heights border. And we have a lot of development going on around us and I had a problem – I still have a problem with a developer who flooded my basement by leaving their building stripped down over the winter, pipe froze, flooded my basement. My insurance won't cover it. And they're just not making it easy. It's not like if I flooded someone's basement, I would just be saying sorry and either try to get my insurance to cover it or pay out of pocket. So, anyway, as I was talking to neighbors about it, it became apparent to me that a lot of my neighbors have problems with development happening on the edges of their property and they always have to get lawyers, and it's expensive, and I was wondering if the City ever considered making – and I called 3-1-1, they're helpful and nice but it's a process and people are supposed to get back to me – how about a special line for homeowners, I know it might be hard to make those distinctions. But considering how big these developers are – like the company that did this to me, they own like 15 properties. I don't even know why they would let a pipe flood.

Why should this be on me to spend all this time and money to fight a much bigger entity who's actually been a feckless and inconsiderate neighbor to me? I was just wondering if there was something the City could do about that. And also they kind of seem like they feel empowered to treat me this way which makes me wonder, they must know that they get away with this all the time and I know from some neighbors, they have gotten away with rather atrocious behavior to smaller homeowners.

Lehrer: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: I think the concern is really valid because we hear this a lot around the city that developers, landlords big and small often do these very insensitive things to their neighbors. And look, we want to make sure they're held accountable and we want to make sure if they do something wrong that the folks who are victimized are fully compensated. I'm not sure, hearing it for the first time as a proposal – I'm not sure the notion of a separate hotline is necessarily the way to do it.

I think what's been important here is that you can call 3-1-1. You can report it. The Buildings Department does come over. We've added literally hundreds more Buildings Department inspectors in the last few years because of this very kind of problem.

And I've found that we get real consequences and real action in a lot of these cases. If there's examples that prove we need to toughen our laws more or raise the penalties or anything like that, I'm always ready to do that because I find it truly upsetting when people do not respect their neighbors particularly if they're busy making profit at the same time.

But I have heard of plenty of examples where real compensation was given and real penalties were applied. So, I think the 3-1-1 system does work. I think the Buildings Department is doing

more and better work but I'd like you to give your information to WNYC so we can follow up in this specific situation and try and make sure that we get a fair outcome here.

Lehrer: So, Jay, hang on. We'll get your contact information off the air. And speaking of housing, I guess, I want to ask you a couple of questions about NYCHA. Of course, earlier this week came the consent decree with federal prosecutors for the City to spend money to reverse the horrid decline in conditions in public housing buildings. Among the failures that the U.S. Attorney asserted, as you know, were that at least 19 children are at risk of lifelong neurological problems as a result of lead poisoning likely to have been caused by crumbling lead paint at NYCHA, that's their words. And that's just 19 known cases, there are probably many more, the U.S. Attorney's Office said. And they said, "Year after year NYCHA falsely certified that it was in compliance with lead paint regulations when it was not."

That happened before you were Mayor as well as while you were Mayor. So, I'd like to ask, who in your City Hall knew when the NYCHA Chair, who was Olatoye, signed off on any false certificates of lead inspections. I'm told that Deputy Mayor Glen met weekly with her as part of her job. When did the Deputy Mayor first learn about this deception and when did you first learn about false certifications filings compared to when they were publicly revealed?

Mayor: Let me start at the beginning where you talked about the children involved. I am a parent and this entire administration is focused first and foremost on children obviously with pre-K and everything else we've been doing. So, the health and the safety of our children is the very top of what I care about and it – I'm very, very concerned for any children whether in NYCHA or not in NYCHA that might suffer from lead paint poisoning.

We're, by the way the City of New York and our Health Department, we've been driving down as a city over the last couple of decades lead paint poisoning across the board. A lot of progress, thank God, in that area. In fact tremendous progress including for people who live in NYCHA.

But that said, if any child gets poisoning, that's a huge concern. Now, the problem is we do not know all the facts. You're right – what the U.S. Attorney said was a series of allegations but we don't know specifically what happened with each child because unfortunately with lead paint there can be many sources. There are unfortunately a number of sources that have nothing to do – lead poisoning, I should say. There are a number of sources that have nothing to do with housing or lead paint. There are other sources that can be the cause for something. We just don't know in each case what happened.

What we do know is if any child is identified as having elevated lead levels, our Health Department, our Health + Hospitals Corporation will provide all the support and all the care they need.

We want to in any case – and I want to say this to all your listeners. If anyone knows of a child who they suspect has elevated lead levels or they know, they can get treatment for free. They can get help for free through our public health system and we need them to right away and we'll stick with that family and that child until the situation is addressed.

On the question of the history. I'm only going to stay very broad on this and obviously the U.S. Attorney spent two years looking at this and agreed with us on a series of steps through the settlement to address the issue and that was the right thing to do, Brian, to make a long term plan to make a huge amount of investment.

I was actually very conscious of committing my successor to this settlement and long term funding to fix the underlying problems in NYCHA which have been developing for decades literally. But on the question of the certification, I'm only going to make a broad point which is – we've said it, I've said it many times, there were people inside NYCHA and I believe the best way to characterize them is folks who were there on a career basis, who understood that the inspections stopped circa 2011 during the previous administration.

And they should have told us the day we walked into the door that they needed to be restarted and I wish we had figured it out. I'm not happy about it but I also know people withheld information. I also know for a fact, and it's been verified by HUD, that as soon as our Chair understood what was happening, she reported it to HUD. That's the right thing to do.

I can't give you the tick-tock over things that happened a few years ago in exact detail but I can say once we understood that the inspections were not happening, we ordered them to happen. When we understood that a whole host of things needed to be differently, we put the resources in.

We've obviously put a lot more in. And the goal is to fix this problem once and for all. That's where I found common ground with the federal government. We wanted to fix the problem once and for all, and we're going to need federal help and we're going to need State help to do it in the long term. But I think this settlement gives us the framework to get there.

Lehrer: So, as far as holding people accountable, you're asserting that as soon as the leaders of NYCHA that you appointed – I guess would be Ms. Olatoye and Michael Kelly, the general manager – as soon as they found out that there had been false compliance reports, certifications they reported that to HUD? Is that what you're saying?

Mayor: I can't give you specific tick-tocks. I can give you what I know and I've said it before publicly. When – in the case of Shola Olatoye, the Chair – when she found out what had happened she reported it to the regional director of HUD. The regional director of HUD at the time has said that publicly. And actions to fix the problem ensued from that point on.

The bottom line on all of this is we can continue to look at the past and that's fine but the real issue is how are we going to fix these problems going forward. That's why the settlement made so much sense to say we are all agreeing.

What ever happened before, what ever happened in our years or the years before us even if the origins of the problems go back decades, here's an action plan with a huge amount of resources to actually fix the problem. And I can also tell you Brian and it's crucial, for the first time since 2011 – in 2017, NYCHA complied fully with Local Law 1, which is our anti-lead paint

poisoning law, inspected all the appropriate units, and has now remediated 90 percent of them. There's still about ten percent where there's been a problem getting access with the residents.

I've given an instruction that even though I respect obviously everyone's privacy, that in terms of remediating lead that is a broader public interest and that we need access to those apartments one way or another to do that. And we will proceed to do that.

But we are in compliance with Local Law 1 for the first time in a long time and I want to make that the norm going forward.

Lehrer: Roy on the Upper West Side, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Roy.

Question: Hi Brian, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for taking my call. We on the West 89th Street block have a serious a private trash carter constantly picking up – we're a residential block mostly – and constantly picking up in the middle of the night in violation of City noise ordinance. They pick up at a local private school mid-block [inaudible] and disturbing the sleep of hard working residents and endangering the health of many of our most seriously ill seniors.

I am a senior and I just had a massive heart attack and [inaudible] –

Lehrer: So, this is about garbage trucks, very loud, picking up in the middle of the night on your block. Mr. Mayor, is there a policy with respect to hours?

Mayor: First of all, Brian, I just want to say to Roy, I'm so sorry for what you've been through health wise and in terms of this issue. I don't know enough about the specific rules regarding the pick-up times. I do know there's a host of problems with these private carters and haulers that – safety issues, noise issues. There's a lot we need to look at again and be aggressive on.

And we're also going to be doing a lot more. We're working with the City Council to take some new aggressive actions to address noise which is a huge problem in this city. And I really get what it means if people are trying to get some sleep in this place and it's disturbed in the middle of the night unnecessarily, how frustrating that is.

So, Roy, please give your information to WNYC so we can follow up on the specifics of this particular company, this particular site. But Brian, I would say we're going to have more to say on anti-noise efforts and certainly more to say on how to address the problems of these types of companies.

Lehrer: You happen to know if noise is still the one – number one complaint topic to 3-1-1. I know when it was first launched, right away that was the number one thing in the first few years of 3-1-1 under Bloomberg.

Mayor: I do not know that. Having spent now most of two decades in public service in this city including at the City Council level, I can sure tell you that it's something a lot of people care about, a lot of people talk about.

I'm not sure I've ever thought it's the number one concern but it's a deep concern. And what's sad about it, and I think a lot of New Yorkers feel this, is hey, we can deal with the noise that's unavoidable, what we don't like is the noise that's avoidable.

And a lot of cases where people are insensitive to their neighbors or where companies in the name of profit do things that are like Roy is describing, there's a better way to do. I think it's a high concern still for sure.

Lehrer: Steve on Staten Island, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi, Steve.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: Since the loss of Cromwell Recreation Center eight years ago, there is a lack of public recreation on the North Shore of Staten Island. We are still the only borough without a Parks Department indoor pool. There is talk you're about to announce the Petrides Education Complex as the site for the aquatic center. The North Shore Indoor Pool Committee feels this is not a good location due to poor public transportation options for children and those without cars. The Petrides location will also impact an area which already has severe traffic problems. Will you meet with us as you promised at the town hall to discuss other options? We have other locations which will be better for all of Staten Island.

Mayor: Well, I absolutely look forward to meeting with community members as part of a bigger discussion which I believe will start soon around the potential rezoning in the area around Cromwell and I think there's a lot of good I think we can achieve for the community in that and certainly there's a chance in that process to address the loss of Cromwell – what could be done to bring back a new facility. And that is something I've said when I was out on Staten Island for the first time a few years ago and I'll say it again here that that's something that would be a high priority to address in the context of rezoning but it needs to be addressed in that context. I've also said as you indicate there's going to be an indoor pool for Staten Island that should have been there before.

We're going to make sure there is one. It's something that has been missing for decades in the borough, an indoor public pool, but we're still working on the details of that and when we have an announcement we'll make that and we want to make sure everything we do is balanced. Whatever we do with the rezoning, serving folks in that community, whatever we do with the pool which is meant to serve people from all over the island, that it be something that people can use from every part of the borough.

So, more to come on that but yes, definitely look forward to meeting with community members about Cromwell but also about the larger rezoning process.

Lehrer: I want to ask you about school safety agents. WNYC News is doing some reporting on them and many advocates and students being interviewed have raised concerns about those agents being able to issue summonses and arrests for low-level offenses and violations and about

the school safety agents responding to mental health crises or emotionally disturbed students. To that second point, one report found last year that SSAs or other NYPD officers responded to more than 2,700 incidents of a child in crisis where a student was restrained and transported to a hospital for psychological evaluation. The advocates say that SSAs are not sufficiently trained to respond to these situations. There should be more social workers and guidance counselors who are qualified.

I gather that the NYPD said at a City Council hearing last month that it has proposed revisions and passed them along to City Hall and the Department of Education. The DOE says the revision process is ongoing but I gather they won't say who has been involved and what changes they are considering. My question is are you personally aware of this issue and can you give us an update on what changes are being considered?

Mayor: Alright, that was an essay of a question, my friend. Let me try to piece it apart a little bit real quick.

So, first, Chirlane and I had a town hall meeting with young people after the tragedy, and the horrible situation in Parkland, Florida and one of the things that was really powerful in that meeting with high school students from all over the city was they talked a lot about the relationship they had with school safety agents and the relationship they wanted to have and they talked a lot about the need for mental health services and counseling and for it to be more widespread.

I say that to say there is no question in my mind these are areas we have to do more on. There's been a lot more done to train both police officers and school safety agents in how to address mental health issues. This is obviously very much connected with what Chirlane is working on with Thrive NYC which is about training a whole swath of public employees but also every day New Yorkers in terms of how to address mental health issues better.

We're going to keep looking at ways to increase the amount mental health services available in schools. Right now every school has access to some which is a major change that happened because of Thrive NYC and our community schools which are about 215 schools, all have a mental health professional regularly on the premises.

But we need to do more on both counts on mental health in the schools but I think in terms of school safety, our leadership there really wants to make sure that we deepen the relationship between students and school safety, that we get more of a dialogue going. That's part of what we need here, more human connection. But yes, we're going to keep deepening the training and look the NYPD model is important here.

We've got over 8,000 NYPD officers who have gotten the mental health training and [inaudible] training so that they can more effectively deal with mental health challenges. That's the wave of the future to keep giving more and more people that training and that's what we want to do.

Lehrer: So, are there specific changes or is that it, just more training?

Mayor: It's ongoing. This is not a flick-the-switch kind of situation. This is a [inaudible] change. Let's face it that mental health in general was not given its due in all discussions of young people's well-being or health care or any area that mental health touches until recently – the mental health piece of the equation was being left out or downgraded or stigmatized or whatever choice you want to make. We are trying to systematically – and I want to give Chirlane a lot of credit for leading this charge – systematically remake how we approach government, understanding the centrality of mental health and you see it a lot at the NYPD and you're seeing it more and more at the Department of Education and it's going to be a deep remake.

But to the core of your question, do our young people need more access to mental health services, more access to counseling, and do all the people who interact with them need more sensitivity on how to address mental health realities? Yes and that's going to take years of retooling and more each year – you'll see more specific pieces being put on the table each year.

Lehrer: Last caller. Jim in Jackson Heights you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi, Jim.

Question: Good morning. Mayor, I wanted to take a moment to thank you very much for the work that you've done on Queens Boulevard making it safer.

Mayor: Thank you.

Question: I have – there's a missing link on 43rd in Sunnyside and Skillman and it's tied up in the community board and what happens is in these community board meetings [inaudible] residents against residents and really it's a safety program that your great commissioner came up with and she did all these tweaks for the community and it's still not happening and it's very dangerous to get between – to get to Queens Boulevard and to get to the bridge and there's just a missing link and I'm hoping that in the future, personally, I'm hoping you can take care of this but in the future that you don't put neighbor against neighbor with these community board meetings if you know it's safer. Look at how many lives that have been saved on Queens Boulevard.

Lehrer: And Jim, I'm going to leave it there because we're over time. Mr. Mayor, are you familiar with Skillman and 43rd?

Mayor: Yeah, I don't know all the nuances but I can speak to the issue. First of all, Jim, thank you and please give your information to WNYC so we can follow up with you on the specifics. Look, Queens Boulevard has been the best example. It is literally called the Boulevard of Death for decades. It is now a place where, thank God, crashes are a rarity and that is something that is all about the changes that we've made and we're going to keep making them.

On the question of how we talk to communities, I think it's pretty clear – the Vision Zero approach is working. It has driven down pedestrian deaths. It's driven down traffic fatalities consistently. We're going to keep deepening it. There's going to be more.

But it's also important to engage communities before getting to the final plans. I have no problem saying, when we've come to the judgement that it's about safety, that even if there is

opposition or concern, we're going to make that judgement in the name of protecting lives. But I do like to hear from communities. I do like to see if we can balance concerns and get people to hear that we're actually trying to adjust where we can for real and honest needs.

That part of the democratic process is worthy but we're not going to – and I've shown this many times on Vision Zero – we're not going to give in to some loud voices who want to keep the status quo in place that actually endangers people's lives. We're going to keep building the Vision Zero model and I'll make sure my team follows up with you to see what we have to do more on Queens Boulevard.

Lehrer: By the way, to the previous caller, a listener tweets on the plastic bags that Staples has bins to take back plastic bags and I don't know if that's true. I know that they take electronic recycling but maybe it's true. So, passing that along for people who – there's so many of us that are frustrated with all the plastic shopping bags, if in those instances where the reusable bags are not available. So, you can check that out, folks.

Mr. Mayor, thanks as always. Talk to you next week.

Mayor: Thanks, Brian. Take care.

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