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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TOUR \$70 MILLION, 28-BUILDING REHABILITATION PROJECT UNDERWAY IN HARLEM**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Alright, good afternoon everyone. It is great to be here at the Oberia D. Dempsey Multi-Service Center, which does so much for the community – uplifting the community in many ways, including social services and education programs and cultural programs. And I want to thank West Harlem Group Assistance, which does so much here at this location. I want to thank them for all they are doing to make sure that people in Harlem and people all over have safe and decent affordable homes.

What's happening here is an example we wanted to show you all of what you're going to be seeing a lot more of – affordable housing preserved in our communities and helping people stay in the neighborhoods they love in a way they can afford. You know, this is the issue that so many New Yorkers care about – can they stay in their home; can they stay in the neighborhood they love. Our answer is yes. More and more we are creating new affordable housing that can allow people the opportunity to stay in their neighborhood, stay in the city they love. More and more we're preserving affordable housing. Literally, families able to stay in their apartment and get support from the city and in many cases get their apartments rehabbed in the process. So, it will be a quality place for a family to live for decades to come and affordable for decades to come.

So, that's what we're celebrating here today.

The work in this neighborhood is extraordinary. Work is underway to improve and preserve 358 affordable apartments at 28 buildings here in Harlem. And the apartment we just visited is a great example. Had been dilapidated, now it's being fully rehabbed – new floors, new appliances, paint job everything is going to be the right kind of quality for a family to live in 2016.

People get – what's affordable housing, I said a lot of it is for people already living in the unit and find that it can now be preserved for the long haul and they can stay in that affordable apartment. But for folks who are part of our lotteries – who are they? Well, every kind of New Yorker – nurses and mechanics and custodians and childcare workers. Every kind of New Yorker is looking for affordable housing, and have an opportunity to get affordable housing through the process we created.

358 apartments – now, these 358 apartments will work from a clear income standard. For an individual, you would have to make an income of no more than \$36,300 a year; for a family of three no more than \$46,620 a year. So, for many, many New Yorkers this falls into the range of their income and these are folks who really need affordable options. And then once in the affordable apartment, a 30-year guarantee of affordability and clear standards for how much people pay in rent – no more than 30 percent of income. In addition, 20 percent of the apartments that are being renovated – that means 70 apartments – will be set aside for the formally homeless, giving people a chance to have good quality affordable housing – get back on their feet. And again, people who have an affordable rent in a newly renovated apartment a place they can be proud to call home.

The developer, Genesis Companies, has truly done remarkable work. It was a company founded here in this community that's devoted to this community, and has done great work as we saw next door, turning apartments that were dilapidated into beautiful new apartments. And not just the apartments are getting rehabbed – the whole building: the boilers, the roofs, and the energy systems. Everything is being updated. So, we're very proud to be working with Genesis, and we thank them for the extraordinary work they do. They are an MWBE firm. And their firm is taking part in our administration's efforts to get more and more work to MWBE firms. And we're seeing great results. We're seeing more and more firms getting opportunity and doing the great kind work you see here.

We believe that our affordable housing plan can serve many goals simultaneously. It can also – in addition to creating affordable housing for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers – can also create economic opportunity, and create opportunities for firms that are based in the community to get much more work, and, in turn, to hire community residents to do that work – and that's something we believe in, making sure those dollars stay in the community. And Genesis has a great reputation, a great history – it understands how much we have to create affordability for the long run.

I want to thank members of my administration who are here who have really been the engines of this affordable housing plan. When we talk about this extraordinary plan – the biggest affordable housing plan in the country – the people behind it get so much credit, because they have made this work, no matter how high the goals, no matter how tough the mission. I want to thank our Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Vicki Been; our President of the Housing Development Corporation Gary Rodney; and our Small Businesses Commissioner Greg Bishop for the great, great work they're doing.

Now, I've said very clearly if we don't address the affordability crisis, if we don't create a lot more affordable housing and preserve a lot more affordable housing, it simply won't be the same New York City anymore. Thousands and thousands of people will be displaced if we don't act, and act now. Even a plan as bold as 200,000 affordable apartments won't cover every need. We have to keep going thereafter, but we have to do what we're doing now aggressively. We have to get those apartments done as quickly as humanely possible. We've given ourselves a goal of 2024, but, I'll tell you, every single apartment we can get in the hands of a family that needs one, we want to do as quickly as possible. And that takes us to the work we're doing today.

When we preserve an apartment in place, it has an absolutely amazing impact for a family. It means that they go from a situation where they don't know if their apartment will be affordable and, in many cases, they do know their affordable apartment is not good enough quality, to knowing they have the assurance of affordability for decades to come, and seeing before their very eyes the repairs they wanted for years, finally being made. And that's already happened with 26,000 apartments in this city under the two years we've been at it through our affordable housing plan. 26,000 apartments have been reached already – over 2,000 of them here in Harlem – as part of that 120,000 apartments that are core to our plan. But another 80,000 apartments will be newly built. And I've said many times, the status-quo that we used to live by just doesn't work in this town anymore. The status-quo was that developers would offer their plans and their plans didn't have affordable housing in them, or sometimes had vague commitments to affordable housing, and lo and behold, we didn't get the affordable housing we needed in our communities. People didn't have enough options. Too many people had to leave. Well, we're changing those rules. We're putting demands on the real estate industry. We're saying that in today's day and age, we need to require the creation of affordable housing.

And we are working closely now with the City Council – and you're going to hear from Councilmember Dickens in just a moment. And I want to thank her for her leadership – she is someone who knows a lot about housing, who knows a lot about how to get it built and what impact it makes on a community. We are working right now with the Council on something that is critically important – Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning will change the rules of the game. It will fundamentally change the City's ability, and improve the City's ability to create affordable housing.

This is going to be a watershed moment. I've said it and I believe it – people are going to look back at March of 2016, and realize it was a decisive moment, because it will be the time, with the help of the City Council, that this city will say that we must ensure an affordable city going forward, and we must require developers to create affordable housing, or there simply won't be enough. The market realities of today will not take care of our senior citizens, will not take care of low-income families. We have to intervene, and that's what Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning will allow.

And I have to tell you, our seniors are particularly clear on this topic. And there's more and more seniors in the city – people are living longer, and that is a tremendous blessing. The percentage of this city's population that will be seniors will be growing in the years to come. Seniors need affordable housing options. I've talked to a lot of seniors that are very quick to tell me that they have fixed incomes – their income's not going up, but the price of housing is going up, and they need an answer, they need solutions. And the laws governing where we can create affordable housing for seniors are literally more than half-a-century old – they don't work anymore. That's why we propose Zoning for Quality and Affordability – to update the laws, to maximize our opportunities to create affordable housing, in particular for seniors, to do things we can't do now because we have to do things differently if we're going to address this affordability crisis.

I'm going to say a few words in Spanish before I introduce the Councilmember.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

As I mentioned, Councilmember Inez Dickens is a real expert on housing. She's devoted her life to working in the community, and particularly to maximizing the chance that people could afford to live here. We work very closely together, and she has fought to protect Harlem throughout. We served in the Council together, and I've seen what a formidable presence she can be. And I want to thank her in particular. We have another decisive moment for Harlem at the end of last year at the Riverton Complex – almost 1,000 apartments hanging in the balance could have been all privatized – would have been lost as affordable housing, and thank to the good work of the Council member and members of my administration, those units were saved. Those apartments were saved – that's the work we have to do day after day to protect affordable housing in this City.

I want to welcome Councilmember Inez Dickens.

[...]

**Mayor:** Alright, let's take questions about the work being done here and about anything related to affordable housing, and then we'll do other topics.

**Question:** Two questions – what is the rent that the tenant will pay [inaudible]? And there were two tenants from the building who were there trying to speak to you – one was complaining about conditions in the building in terms of dust in their apartment and saying they should have been relocated [inaudible] bed bugs. [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I told one of the tenants I look forward to seeing them after this and I'd go over with my colleagues and hear what their concern is and make sure we're addressing it – and Karim can talk to that as well – speak to that as well. In terms of the rent levels – Vicki, Gary, Karim, who has the best way of describing that? Vicki, come on up. Hold on – making you tall. Alright.

**Commissioner Vicki Been, Department of Housing Preservation and Development:** Okay. So, for example, as you know, affordability is defined as 30 percent of the income. So, these are typically at an income of about \$36,000 for a family of one; up to \$46,000 for a family of three. So, it would be 30 percent of that is the maximum rent for the year.

**Mayor:** And that – just one second, I'm sorry – that could – to clarify, when you say up to, means it could be a family of three at \$45,000, \$40,000 – whatever it may be.

**Commissioner Been:** Yes, exactly.

**Mayor:** And then it's 30 percent of –

**Commissioner Been:** Of the income that can be paid in rent. So, we can get you – for the studios, I don't have that list with me, but we'll get that. We'll get the exact amount.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Commissioner Been:** Adjusted income – yes, it’s adjusted income. So, we’ll get you the actual rents for the studios, one bedrooms, two bedrooms, etcetera, because those have to be worked out. I just didn’t carry that with me, but we can get that for you.

**Karim Hutson:** So, let me say this – we will definitely get you the exact rent for that studio – I think that’s what you’re asking for. But just so we’re clear, there has been no rent increases and all the rents will be – if the rent is too high to meet the low-income housing tax credit rent, which is 30 percent of household income based on the AMI, then that rent is lowered. So, it will be affordable to those earning less than 60 percent of AMI, but we’ll get you the exact rent. And to the complaints – you know, we’re here for a reason. You know, Genesis is here because there were significant issues with these buildings, and so we are here on the ground every day. Genesis’ folks, the contractor’s folks, the property management folks – we are open to hear every single complaint. We do monthly, weekly meetings with tenants. We listen to their complaints. If there’s a complaint before we go into into a building or before we go into a unit, we post a schedule of when work is going to happen. So, we are not – you know, I live five blocks from here, so there’s really nowhere for me to hide when I’m walking around the neighborhood and folks see me. So, do I think we do a perfect job? Im not sure, but I think that we’re listening to every single complaint that is there, and we’re rectifying and trying to create a solution. But I will say that, you know, these buildings were in not great shape for a very, very long time, and we’re trying to do a lot of work quickly to resolve the units, and not displace, and inconvenience the tenants as little as we possibly can.

**Councilmember Inez Dickens:** Most of the complaints will be awaited as the contraction is done, so that although many people may have complaints, most of the complaints are from prior to the construction starting. And so, most of the complaints will be alleviated with the renovation of the units. And any that may not be, Genesis does have a history of addressing all complaints in their buildings. And that’s why we chose them to be one of the developers to do such work as we’re asking today.

**Mayor:** Let me just further follow up – you know, the important point that Karim made at the – we don’t want to see people displaced who need affordable housing. The goal is to always keep them in their units while work is being done that has to be done the right way obviously. So, we have to always make sure we are listening for any concerns. There are some units like the one we are in that were already vacant – those are going to be rehabbed and then made available to other folks who need them. But a lot of our preservation effort is literally doing the work while people get to remain in their home, which is what the vast majority of people of course want. On the bed bug issue, we checked with one of the building managers, and there has been a regular fumigation effort here in the building. I think they said the last time was last month. But we are certainly going to listen to the tenant to see if there are new concerns that have arisen. Okay, on this announcement or on affordable housing. Sally?

**Question:** Was there a threat that once these buildings were rehabbed they could become – they could come out of affordability – like were they reaching a certain timeframe in the affordable housing program?

**Mayor:** I’m sorry, were you saying before this?

**Question:** Really, is there – I know that they’re being rehabbed. But apart from that, like were they reaching the end of their –

**Mayor:** If they had not been – if this had not happened, you’re saying what might have happened?

**Question:** Yes, were they reaching –

**Mayor:** Which one of you knows the answer? If nothing had happened, what was going to happen to this building if we had not intervened?

**Woman:** So I guess I would say two things, Sally. One is that the buildings were not being kept up and so they were declining rapidly. So even if they were technically in a preservation program, they weren’t being kept up by the current owners – by the previous owners. So we needed to [inaudible] that situation. They were reaching what we call Year 15 in the low-income housing tax credit program. So Year 15 means that they still have 15 more years after that but that that’s an opportunity to go in, and we frequently go in at Year 15 because that’s often when systems need to be replaced, etcetera. And then we extend the affordability out from there in exchange for you know repairing whatever needs to be repaired at that time. So it was really two.

**Question:** [Inaudible] for 30 years from here on out?

**Commissioner Been:** 32, I believe it is. Right?

**Hutson:** Yes.

**Commissioner Been:** 32 years from [inaudible].

**Hutson:** It extends another 30 years from this day.

**Mayor:** Yes?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, you’ve gotten pushback from groups across the city because of your affordable housing plan. Just recently, one group that was protesting you two weeks ago has now come on board with your plan – Real Affordability for All. How did you change their minds? [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** You know, RAFA is the acronym, and there are a lot of folks in that organization, a lot of the constituent members that I’ve worked with for years and years, and I think it was always clear there were a lot of shared goals. And we worked very hard throughout the process to show that we were really pushing the spectrum in terms of creating affordable housing, in terms of changing the rules of the game with the developers, in terms of maximizing the amount of affordable housing for lowest income New Yorkers. And I think it was important over a series of discussions to show the fullness of our plan, to answer the concerns and critiques. And I think the more they saw, the more they recognized that we really were doing things that had never

been done before. And that they would work. You know there are some ongoing issues that we're going to explore together about continuing to deepen affordability in terms of the best way to maximize local hiring and other issues that we think are very valid issues and we'll continue to work on together. But I think in the end, it was a process of showing that this plan could work. Also seeing the broad support clearly was important – the fact that AARP was such a strong supporter, the fact that so many of our unions were supporters, the fact that more and more Council members were supporting it – I think that was important in the process too. Yes?

**Question:** There was a promise [inaudible] study that was giving to RAFA. [Inaudible] Who's going to conduct that study? Is the City –

**Mayor:** Yes, City will conduct that study.

**Question:** Okay. What exactly will be the parameters of that study? What is it trying to determine? It was a little bit vague [inaudible].

**Mayor:** You know – the bottom line is they are raising a set of issues about how again we maximize local hiring, maximize affordability – perfectly fair issues that we want to look at. We want to look for any other ways we can go farther. So the exact scope of the study has not been fully determined, but it is something we intend to get to work on quickly. And in the end, I think this is a kindred exercise. Nothing is static here. This is the plan that we believe is the maximum that we can do right now. But we want to keep innovating. We want to find ways to do more because this affordability crisis is so real. So it's something we'll have more to say on as the study is worked through.

**Question:** Following up on that. Similarly, is there an example of anything that did change through that negotiation or through their lobbying of the plan that you would highlight?

**Mayor:** Well I think it's fair to say discussions are still going on with the Council as we speak. And I think when we get to the final product, we'll all be able to judge the different ways that different folks contributed. But again, I think it is very normal for advocates to push the spectrum and push for the maximum. And I know they did that with the best of intentions. But I also think it's fair to say that sometimes when people get to know a plan better, they see more to like about it. So we'll go through the process with the Council. When we get to a final product, we'll be able to you know describe to you sort of how we got there. But I want to emphasize I think again, the Council – it's been a very productive negotiation – very much shared goals. The Council is doing its job and pushing us and asking a lot of tough questions. But I think we're getting to a good place. Okay, anything else on affordable housing?

Yes?

**Question:** How close are we to a deal with the Council?

**Mayor:** Yes, I think there have been really productive discussions. They've been moving apace. I think we'll know a lot more shortly. I'm not going to give you a specific timeline, but I'm very happy with what I see.

Yes?

**Question:** Just on that a little bit further, isn't it that there also are some tweets to the MIH formulas that led to RAFA feeling more comfortable about sort of supporting the plan, not necessarily getting to know the plan better, but actual numbers that they've been shown?

**Mayor:** Well again, the plan that we put forward, which has been in discussion with the Council, continues to be in discussion with the Council. Until that final product is available, it doesn't make sense to judge it. I think – and I don't want to speak for RAFA. Obviously they can speak for themselves. But again, they recognized the extent of our plan and how our plan could be effective. I certainly believe that they are hopeful that the Council process will yield a good result and that the study was an important element for them – to look about, look at what we can do next to deepen the plan. And again on that, there's no lack of agreement. I want to really emphasize, this is not a static situation. This is – we want to get to a good plan with the council. We want to get this vote done, and we want to get back to work looking for what more we can do.

Yes?

**Question:** [Inaudible] liberal members of the Council have pushed for a 30 percent AMI, said they wanted maybe even deeper levels of affordability. In your estimation, what makes that difficult or prohibitive for the City to embrace.

**Mayor:** Again, there's an ongoing negotiation, so I'm not going to get into a lot of detail. What has been for us the underlying principle is that we needed to do more affordability than in the past. We did not believe in the 80–20 model. We had to surpass that. We had to reach as much affordability in terms of reaching folks at lower income levels as we could, while, at the same time, providing a lot of housing for folks who, for example, are civil servants – you know, our custodians, as I mentioned, nurses. We needed a lot of housing for working people. We needed a lot of housing for low-income people. We tried to figure out the best mix, and, in the process, opening up the possibility of a lot more senior housing, and putting some stringent rules on developers about the conditions under which they have to create affordable – that's been the goal all along. We've always known there was going to be back-and-forth with the Council on the numbers – we've always said we were open to that. But until we get to a final product, it doesn't make sense to parse it.

**Question:** Mayor, can you talk about the study? What's going to happen after the [inaudible] will there be changes to [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** First of all, I want to emphasize that, first of all, the study's not been designed, and, second of all, we haven't seen the results. So, I think we're pretty premature in trying to judge –

**Question:** [inaudible]



**Mayor:** No, it just begun. Again, this is something that this coalition asked for us to buy into – we do, but it’s a very initial idea. We’ll work with them in good faith, but it’s – you know, it’s well enough off because we have to design it, we have to implement it, then look at the recommendations, so I can’t prejudge it.

Go ahead.

**Question:** [inaudible] this deal was made, you said, last July – was the start of [inaudible]. So, can you explain a little bit about – is this something that you would have been able to do without the benefit [inaudible] that the City, you know, put in place here? And what were the negotiations like to get to the point of being able to take over these properties.

**Hutson:** Sure. So, the answer is absolutely no. We would not have been able to get this done without the support of the City, and without the support of our financial partners. These units needed something around the \$65,000, I believe, a unit of cost to go into rehabbing these units. So, there’s a significant amount of work that needed to go into these buildings in order for these buildings to be [inaudible], in order for them to be acceptable, I think, from our standards, from the City’s standards. And so, I think, from negotiating with the City, it was a very easy process because, as we see, tenants were living in very bad conditions for a very long time, and the City wanted to alleviate that. They wanted to get these buildings in good ownership’s hands, where they could be managed well and that the repairs would get done. And so, I think everybody was on the same page about that happening. And so, there’s a large commitment from the City, from HDC, in terms of bond financing – a large commitment from HPD, in terms of putting subsidy – low-cost subsidy. That low-cost subsidy actually allows you to get a first loan from HDC so that you can put more dollars in the projects. And then there’s was an enormous commitment of tax-credit equity from NEF and from Morgan Stanley to buy tax-credit equity so that we could provide low-income – a low-cost subsidy into these projects, and get the amount of work that needed to get done. You could only do this type of work with help from the City, because you can’t generate enough from private market financing only to do the complete work that’s needed in these units.

**Mayor:** I just want to say something that kind of unites a couple of the previous questions, which is the process that we’ve gone through over these last few months in terms of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, in terms of Zoning for Quality and Affordability. I’ve been – you know, I was a City Councilmember for eight years. I’ve been through a lot of discussions with an administration. Now, I’ve been on the administration side of those discussions. This has been a very substantial discussion and negotiation, and I don’t want people to miss the fact that in the context of these kind of conversations people actually can come to some agreement. We said from the beginning that what we’re doing on Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning would be the most progressive housing policy in the country. It would require the most of developers of any major city in America, by locking in the notion that major development any place there was a rezoning, whether it was a neighborhood rezoning or an individual building rezoning – that, that would come with a requirement of affordable housing. That’s never been done on any appreciable scale anywhere in this country. So, I think it is fair that some of the activists groups looked at that and they wanted to be convinced that we were going to do that on as big a scale as possible, reach as much affordability as possible. And I have to tell you, there have been a number of conversations

when people really looked at the details and became a lot more satisfied. Again, it doesn't mean they don't want us to keep going farther. It doesn't mean the study isn't going to be important. It means that there's been a real give-and-take to understand the breadth of our vision. And I am very comfortable saying – put this up against the affordable housing policies of every major city in America – this, when it's passed, will be the most progressive, will demand the most of developers of any city in America.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay. Vicki [inaudible], whoever wants to jump in on the – you know the [inaudible] whichever one?

**Commissioner Been:** So, let me just start and Gary can provide some more of the money details. The total development costs across the 368 units is about \$70 million, and that comes from a variety of sources, but I really want to make one point to also tie together, as the Mayor was doing, the various [inaudible] here. When we face a preservation project like this, often, in the past, the way that the preservation needs, which any building after 15 years, after 30 years need preservation work, right? Any building – the boiler runs out, etcetera. That is usually financed in a couple of ways, and, in the past, it was often financed by letting some of the units go higher towards market, right? That is not what happened here. What happened here is that we – the units that were becoming available, are now available for formerly homeless, they're very deeply subsidized. So, we're using our preservation programs, along with our new construction, along with Mandatory Inclusionary to try to always be reaching deeper. And I think this is a very good example of how that exactly happens.

Gary?

**President Gary Rodney, Housing Development Corporation:** So, just to piggyback on what the Commissioner said, my agency, HDC, provided a little more \$33 million in taxes and bond financing, that allowed us to leverage another \$24-plus million from NEF and Morgan Stanley. In addition to that, HPD provided a significant amount of subsidy. Those various layers – the important thing to kind of pull out from all of that is what the Commissioner just mentioned. All of that allowed us to do the renovation – allowed Genesis to do the renovation work that's currently happening, but keep the rents at affordable levels. If it was not the case to provide \$70 million worth of financing [inaudible] required a significant increase in the rents, and probably most of the tenants here would not be able to stay.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**President Rodney:** Abyssinian Development Corporation.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**President Rodney:** Abyssinian Development Corporation.

**Mayor:** Last call on this topic – going once – is that still on this topic?

**Question:** [inaudible] affordable housing.

**Mayor:** Alright, go ahead. Wait – looking for water. I don't see water. Is there some water out there somewhere?

Go ahead.

**Question:** Separate, but related on the bond cap issue – it seems like both the Assembly and the Senate are not embracing the Governor's proposed changes [inaudible] bonds. I was wondering if you have any [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'm hearing that the Assembly and the Senate are not embracing the Governor's proposal.

[Laughter]

I think in Democratic system, that's a rather striking statement. So, you know, we said from the beginning that we thought this would make it harder to create affordable housing, and would slow the process down. And I think it's quite clear the Senate and the Assembly agree, and we appreciate their support, and look forward to working with them, because we need to in fact speed up the supply of affordable housing, not slow it down.

Anything left on affordable housing? Okay – going once, going twice – any topic?

**Question:** Until last week, about half the schools in Newark had their water shut down because of lead [inaudible] from the pipes. Can you assure New York students and parents that our school's water pipes are safe? And how big of a concern is that?

**Mayor:** Yeah. I can assure – you know, until last June, I was a public school parent myself, so I can assure my fellow parents that our water in our schools is safe. We have a very vigorous testing regime in New York City. Our Department of Environmental Protection is legendary for what it's done with our water supply. We have an extraordinary natural water supply in this City, and we test constantly, and we have no indication of a problem in any of our schools. We will remain vigilant. If we see anything that indicates there might be a problem in any given building, we'll certainly look at it immediately. But, to-date, I have no report of a problem in any of our buildings.

Emily?

**Question:** You've been very clear about your – how you feel about Donald Trump, the candidate, but I want to ask you about you about his supporters. [inaudible] state of our country?

**Mayor:** I don't think that's our country. I think our country is increasingly tolerant, our country is increasingly embracing of all kinds of Americans. I think we have a lot of evidence of that. I think that's particularly true of the generation coming up. And if you want an easy example, the way this country matured on the topic of marriage equality in the course of nine or 10 years was amazing to watch. And I think there's other good examples like that. So, no, I don't think the people at his rallies reflect the majority of Americans. I don't think his platform reflects the majority of Americans. That doesn't mean I take him lightly. I think we should understand that [inaudible] doing is deadly serious, and we should be very, very quick to address it, and not for a moment underestimate the threat posed by Mr. Trump. What he's saying is – by the way, it's not just xenophobia, it's not just racism, it's not just inciting violence and commending violence amongst his supporters – he's throwing militarism into the mix now too. If you heard him a few days ago, he was saying, you know, we should send American troops into the Middle East and they'd do the job and come home soon. We've heard that for decades – it's never true, but, you know, it's his effort to win up nationalist fervor. These are very, very dangerous signs, and we've seen them in history before – we've seen this combination of elements before, and they don't end well. So, I think he's supporters are a mix of people, but I agree with the statement that he is responsible for what happens at his own rallies. And the message he's sent has encouraged violence – I mean, you've heard him say, I'd like to punch that guy in the mouth, and, you know, go get that protestor. The way his own security personnel have acted has not comported with our democratic values. This guys's dangerous, and I think more and more people are waking up to it.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** It doesn't mean he has a majority. It means there are some people who support him. And, again, I think there are some people who go to those rallies out of curiosity. There are some people that go to those rallies to protest him. There are some people who go to those rallies because they're frustrated with their economic reality. By the way, they're right – their economic reality isn't fair because middle class and working class people in this country have been going backwards over the last 30 years. So, that economic frustration is not illegitimate, it's quite real, but that doesn't mean they all buy into the rest of what he's saying. But unfortunately there are some people who go to those rallies and express overt racism and xenophobia, and a responsible leader should say that's unacceptable, and I don't want to be associated with that, and you should do that. Many times the press corps has rightfully asked people to disassociate from supporters who have said inappropriate things or done inappropriate things. He stokes inappropriate actions. And I really – you know, I didn't need to know anymore, but when he was asked the question about David Duke and the KKK, and it was so obvious he did not want to answer the question because he didn't want to alienate some of his supporters. I don't know anyone who has to hesitate when it comes to David Duke and the KKK. The KKK represents the worst in American history – overt violent racism. Why did he hesitate? And then, you know, days later he bragged about the fact that he put some separation between him and them. What was much more telling was at the point of contact he could not muster a condemnation of the KKK – that's so far outside of the American mainstream it's unbelievable, and that's why he has to be stopped.

**Question:** [inaudible] Do you anticipate that you will make an endorsement eventually? Or do you foresee yourself sitting out of it?

**Mayor:** No plans at this moment. There's time, obviously, but no plans at this moment.

**Question:** Quick follow-up – you know, [inaudible] numerous things, including turning NYCHA over to the State of New York and the control of Governor Cuomo. Does that make it less likely that you will endorse him?

**Mayor:** I've worked with Keith Wright for many, many years, and I like him. I was very surprised by that proposal. He didn't call me to talk to me about it – I found that surprising, and I think it makes no sense whatsoever. Obviously, the problems at the Housing Authority have to be solved here in the City of New York, not by bureaucrats 150 miles away. But again, I have no plans to be involved at this moment.

**Question:** Could you comment on the current PBA survey that seems to indicate an all-time low in morale among the rank and file?

**Mayor:** I don't put a lot of stock in that survey. It certainly is not a survey of a majority of our officers. I don't know who did the survey. I don't know which officers they chose to talk to. But I can tell you this much, the men and women of the NYPD are doing their job and doing it really, really well – better than ever. They're continuing to drive down crime. They are working aggressively to get guns off our streets. They have a lot to be proud of, and we're very proud of them. That is all going to make the work and the lives of the men and women of the NYPD better. So, I think that's what we should be talking about – how do we get the job done? How do we support our officers? How do we support our communities? But unfortunately a lot of what I hear from the PBA is complaints, not constructive suggestions, or an effort to work for the betterment of all. And I'm much more interested in how we get the job done.

Yeah?

**Question:** [inaudible] rejected the Governor's call for a three-year extension of mayoral control of schools. What do you foresee as your plan to get that extended? It seems like odds are they're waiting for after the budget and want to have you up for a hearing –

**Mayor:** Which I've told Leader Flanagan I would welcome, and I would participate in personally. I made that very clear to him this year and last year. So, my understanding is the Senate didn't pass judgement. I agree with you, I think they'll look at this going forward. But I welcome that dialog. We have the highest graduation rate that we've ever had in New York City – over 70 percent. We have full-day pre-k for all. We have afterschool for all middle school kids. We're making unprecedented investments in education – computer science for all is going to be online more and more. I welcome that discussion, and I think we have a lot of evidence to show, and I can certainly say there's a real broad cross-section of New Yorkers, including in the business community, the labor community, obviously educators who believe in mayoral control. That's a discussion I would be happy to participate in.

**Question:** Have you tried to reach out to Senator Flanagan?

**Mayor:** I've already sat down with him, obviously, and talked to him about this. I've certainly made my case to him. It was a very good, respectful meeting. I think he heard my points. I'm not saying he agreed with all of them, but he heard them. He knows a lot about education, obviously, from his own work on the education committee in the Senate. And I welcome a dialog – I told him I would happily appear at a hearing any time he needs.

**Question:** [inaudible] Can you explain then why the City is cutting the budget for homeless shelter [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I don't know why that assumption has gotten out there. We have made very clear that we're spending an additional billion dollars over the next four years on efforts to reduce homelessness, and we're also in the middle of a budget process where we're going to assess what more we may need to do. So, to-date, we have added to prevention programs. We've put in place a lot of prevention programs that didn't exist in the previous administration. We've restored the kind of subsidy efforts that were needed since the advantage program was canceled by the previous administration in 2011. We've committed to 15,000 units of supportive housing – the most ever by the City government. And we're, this month, launching the HOME-STAT effort, which will be the biggest outreach effort for the homeless of any city in America. That all involves major investment to bring this problem under control and to start to reduce homelessness. So, I know there was a study out today – I don't think it fully took into account all those facts. And I don't think it took into account the fact that we're in the middle of the budget process.

**Question:** [Inaudible] specifically to homeless shelters. There was [inaudible] million dollars taken out of homeless adult shelters and 72 million less for families.

**Mayor:** Again, I cannot place how they're getting those figures given everything I just told you. And again, the fact that we're in the middle of a budget process where we're still evolving the next budget, so I don't think that's a fair analysis.

**Question:** Back to the PBA study for a second, or survey. You question the accuracy of it. Is that because – are you saying that PBA can't be objective in doing this study or why is it?

**Mayor:** I just said exactly what I felt. I don't know how they did, who they surveyed, what the methodology was, was it objective or not. I just know that we're doing a lot of the things that our officers need to do their job better. And our officers are responding by doing an exemplary job. And we should be focused on what's productive.

**Question:** Did you get any heads up from Pat Lynch?

**Mayor:** No. Yes?

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Excuse me?

**Question:** Pi Day?

**Mayor:** It's Pi Day.

**Question:** Yes.

**Mayor:** Okay.

**Question:** Will you be [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** That's good to know, Emily.

[Laughter]

I did not – I have to say my staff has let me down in a grievous manner by not providing me a memo explaining it is Pi Day. Karen, this is an abomination. It's Pi Day, apparently.

**Question:** Yes, March 14th, 3.14 is Pi, but also pie – like eating.

**Mayor:** You're [inaudible], Emily.

[Laughter]

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, so given the violence that has happened at the Trump gatherings and given what you describe as his stoking of the violence, do you think it's wise for the protest groups to continue to try to infiltrate, if you will, his rallies? Or do you think it would be wiser for them to take some other approach?

**Mayor:** I think people are very, very worried about where this is going. And I understand why a lot of people are responding by protesting. Now they should protest in whatever manner the police deem appropriate. I mean the police – the actual police, not the Trump security force. The – in some cases that might be inside the hall, in some cases that might be outside. But the impulse to say this is unacceptable and we're going to stand up to it and we are going to show in a very vibrant way that this does not represent the American values or American democracy, that's exactly right. And I commend them for making their voices heard. Anyone who wants to protest needs to do it in a non-violent manner, needs to follow whatever the rules set forward are by the police, or if they choose to get arrested under civil disobedience, that's alright too. But they still need to follow the instructions of the police. Okay?

**Question:** You [inaudible] at Donald Trump at length and obviously have endorsed Hillary Clinton. [Inaudible] any Republicans you think are more tolerable than others?

**Mayor:** Well, obviously the – Donald Trump is different than the rest. But I also am very struck how few will disavow him. And I don't understand how anyone running for president or anyone who has run for president as a Republican this year could stand idly by and say well if he's nominated, I'll support him after the things he said. I think they're digging the grave of the

Republican party. If they're going to present a party that's racist, anti-Mexican, anti-Muslim, anti-woman, anti-immigrant, and expect to have a majority in America, they are really missing something. So of course I have different views of each individual Republican. But what I want to see is more Republicans stand up and say not on my watch. I won't support this guy under any condition. And a lot of these candidates haven't done that and they need to.

**Question:** [Inaudible] platforms or policies. How they would affect the city and the urban agenda that you've –

**Mayor:** I – you mean in terms of Republicans?

**Question:** All of them. Do you think any of them have any good ideas that would actually help New York City?

**Mayor:** Of course, of course. And look, I supported Hillary Clinton because she put together an agenda that really addresses income inequality. And that agenda being implemented would have a huge positive impact for New York City. There's no question about it. Under her vision, the federal government would actually get involved again on issues like affordable housing and infrastructure and the kinds of things that would fundamentally improve the lives of everyday New Yorkers. But I also think her agenda would help people all over the country. I think there's a lot of great items in Bernie Sanders's agenda. I think unfortunately, from everything I've seen of the Republican platforms, they're still trickle-down economics, which has been proven unworkable. So there's a big divide between the two parties – a starker divide than I think there has been in a long time. And I'm very confident though that Hillary Clinton will be the nominee, will be the president. I think her policies will help the people of New York City quite a bit.

Thanks very much, everyone.

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