

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Makes a Social Services Related Announcement

March 30, 2022

**Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi, Operations:** Good morning, everyone. I'm glad to see there's a crowd. This is an important event. I'm Meera Joshi, I'm the Deputy Mayor For Operations. And I oversee two of the agencies that are involved in the task force we're going to speak about today; Sanitation and the Department of Parks And Recreation.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** I'm accompanied by Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom who oversees the Department of Social Services, and our Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, who oversees NYPD. And of course our most honored guests, our Mayor, Eric Adams who oversees all of us and the entire city. So I just wanted to give you a little rundown of who we are here on the stage.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** But we're really here to provide you an update on a multi-agency and dual focused effort. It's a task force that's put together comprised of Parks, Sanitation, NYPD, and Department of Homeless Services with the true purpose of getting our most vulnerable New Yorkers, connected to services and safe places to sleep and eat, and shower, and cleaning our public space.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** So with that, I'm going to turn over to our first speaker, Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom.

**Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, Health and Human Services:** Thank you, and good afternoon. I am Anne Williams-Isom. And as the Deputy Mayor said, I oversee all human and health services here for the city. This has truly been a team effort. One that we have done with words that you may not hear often, but I will say with compassion and with care, care for each other as an outreach team and care for each New Yorker that we encounter. This is very difficult work. Work that has to-

[...]

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** No, that's okay. I was nervous I used the word care. I was like, can I not say love? I'm going to say love and care.

[...]

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** That's okay. I was reminding us that this is very difficult work. Work that has to be done to create a connection with people who are living on the streets, and to connect them to the supports that they need. Most importantly though, to build trust with those people. Many of them who have lost trust over the years, and to connect them to both the health and mental health supports that they need; the shelter, a Safe Haven bed, or access to other resources when they are ready.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** We literally meet people at the most difficult time in their lives. They're mothers and fathers, aunts, and uncles. Last week I met a man who was telling me about his grandchildren. He was somebody's grandpa that was living in the subway. They were our neighbors.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** They worked side by side with us and they will, once again. As you have heard, and just to drill down, we engage folks when they are ready. Meaning that our outreach teams talk to them right there and then, and ask them, would they like to come inside?

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** And we'll arrange transport and shelter, and a bed for them right away. But if you're not ready, we don't leave you alone either. We try to encourage you. We try to get you to a center where you can go, and then we'll be back again to encourage you and to remind you that we want you to come inside and we want you to get connected.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** For every person in these encampments, and for every person that we encounter, we are doing this with dignity and respect. I want to say that again. We are approaching everyone with the dignity and respect that we would want for our own family members. This has been the mission, our mission, from the very beginning.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** And it will remain so for every future interaction to get New Yorkers back on their feet and connected to a place to live and supports that they

need so that they can thrive. For me, today is not just about cleaning areas. It's about connecting people to the supportive services that can categorically change their lives and reminding them that there is a place for you. Thank you.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** Thank you very much. Next we're going to hear from our Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell.

**Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department:** Good afternoon. Thank you all for being here. The New York City Police Department is proud to join this group of dedicated public servants as we work together to address this very complex issue. No person, no matter what the circumstances should ever have to live on the street.

**Commissioner Sewell:** Homelessness has its root causes, but our response must be clear. When we see a problem, we must do everything we can to fix it. We must ensure that our public spaces are safe, that they are accessible to all, and that everyone in need of a suitable place to stay has access to one. In close partnership with the mayor's office, and all of the agencies represented here today, we are focused on improving the quality of life of all of the people we serve. Especially our city's most vulnerable populations.

**Commissioner Sewell:** Everyone deserves a safe, stable living condition. And this initiative works to secure this most basic requirement. It is a multifaceted, holistic approach, focused on social services, public health, and public safety. And it requires our full dedication and support.

**Commissioner Sewell:** And from the public and private sector alike, we need to be successful together. As we all know, the homeless crisis is long standing and widespread, but that only means we must... Excuse me, but that only means we must work harder to fix it and to resolve it. It's all part of our sworn duty to every New Yorker and the NYPD will continue to do this work professionally, lawfully, and in close collaborations with the agencies involved.

**Commissioner Sewell:** Every element of this initiative will be geared toward ensuring dignity and delivering positive outcomes. And while we understand how immensely challenging this problem is, your police department is committed to giving the people the dignity they deserve and being part of the solution and this whole holistic approach that the mayor has initiated. Thank you.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** Thank you, commissioner. I want to spend a moment to give some thanks to those in leadership and at the front lines. These are the compassionate men and women, the professional men and women that are behind the work. It's a four agency task force, as I mentioned at the top, and I want to call out a few of our critical leaders.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** First, NYPD's Deputy Chief Brian McGinn, and many of them are behind me. So feel free to raise your hand so you can be recognized. Our Department of Sanitation Commissioner Ed Grayson, Deputy Commissioner Greg Anderson, and Chief Steven Harbin and Assistant Chief Jeff Pitt.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** From the Department of Homeless Services, our Commissioner Gary Jenkins, and our task force members, Assistant Commissioner Shane Fox, and Program Administrator Kevin Perdomo. From Parks, our Commissioner Sue Donahue, and our Deputy Commissioner Margaret Nelson, and Director of Parks Eddie Falcon, and all of our agency partners have helped us.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** I do want to just underscore a special thanks to the frontline workers. That's the men and women that have exhibited extreme patience, professionalism, most of all, empathy for the work that they're doing. Those that are cleaning up, and those from Sanitation, and those from the Department of Homeless Services that are engaging with people that they're meeting during each and every cleanup.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** This task force effort started March 18th. And just to give you a little bit about the protocol; before any site is cleaned up, the Department of Homeless Services surveys the area, posts the notice at least 24 hours in advance of the cleanup, and engages with clients if they are on site.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** A lot of these engagements are successful because when DSNY and DHS come back, some 24 hours later, sometimes the sites are cleaned up. That is the notice that the site is going to be cleaned up, has had the effect and people have collected their belongings and moved on. And sometimes they are not. And they'll get to the site and they'll do the cleanup. If there's nobody on the site, they continue the cleanup as necessary. If there's people on site, DHS is engaging with those people.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** And this is not a rushed job. This takes time, especially patience. Because when people are on site DHS and DSNY are explaining the process to them in detail and giving them the time to comprehend it. So I want to applaud those on the government side that have been working hard for our dual purposes of making sure that everybody who's living on the streets has a much better option.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** And that everybody who uses our public space in New York city has access to all of that public space. Since we started, over 200 sites have been identified, and that is continuing work. So we identified 200 initially, and we've begun canvassing again to see if they're additional sites. And reinspecting some of the sites that we initially visited. To date, right now, and these numbers change every day, because it's an ongoing effort. Of the 244 sites, 239 are now cleaned.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** And I want to emphasize that this is not a one and done. It's not for two reasons. One, because as Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom mentioned, this takes constant communication and trust and relationship with those people that we're trying to bring in and connect with services. And so we will be constantly out there and engaging with those people. And two, because this is a large city and we need to make sure the entire city and all of its public space is clean. And that as a task force, we're constantly out there reinspecting and re-identifying new sites that need to be cleaned.

**Deputy Mayor Joshi:** So I want to again thank the men and women that are at the front lines and leadership with this. And I want to applaud all New Yorkers who understand that this effort is for every member of our community. And we will all benefit from a cleaner, safer, more livable city. And now I'd like to turn it over to our Mayor.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you. Thank you so much. Good job. And something very interesting happened during this exercise. I remember week one when I met with the team and told them we were going to do this in a two weeks period there was a lot of apprehension. There was a lot of uncertainty.

**Mayor Adams:** And then I just gave them clarity of message. Clarity of the plan. And they came back the next week and I saw a transformation in the entire team. They did something that many New Yorkers are experiencing right now. They believed in each other and they believed that they could accomplish the task. They believed that our fellow brothers and sisters should not have to live this way. And they took that belief and

they turned it into a plan and they operated in unison. But the lack of belief is not only in city agencies, the lack of belief is pervasive throughout this entire city.

**Mayor Adams:** We don't believe. The human being has an amazing ability to adapt to anything, including dysfunction. We accepted people living on the street. We stated that is the life of the big city. We reported it. We complained about it. We ran out and found places where people were homeless, and we talked about it. We announced a plan on Monday, we went into the subway system on Tuesday and said, "Eric didn't resolve the problem yet. We don't believe." And what I must tell this team that I am assembling as we change the culture of disbelief to a culture of belief, ignore the noise. Ignore the noise.

**Mayor Adams:** This is the first inning of our ninth inning game. I'm not concerned about striking out. I'm not concerned about someone hitting our pitchers. I'm concerned about the end of this game. And when this game is over, we are going to have a city far better than a dysfunctional city that we've witnessed for far too long.

**Mayor Adams:** I believe. And we are building every employee at a time to believe in their ability to come together as a team. I am so proud of the men and women here for how they came together, brought their resources together, coordinated together, and created a plan that we executed.

**Mayor Adams:** And is it perfect? Heck no. Because I'm perfectly imperfect. Told you that over and over again, but we are dedicated. We're committed. That is the culture that we are going to create. And slowly you are going to see New Yorkers, walk around, putting their thumbs up, like I do all the time.

**Mayor Adams:** We got this as a city and all the naysayers that don't believe we can turn it around, don't believe we can deal with crime. I'm sure the police commissioner is focused on getting it done. Those who don't believe we can pick up our trash, I'm sure my deputy mayor of operations knows we're going to get it done.

**Mayor Adams:** Those who believe we can't deal with homelessness and mental health issues, I'm sure Deputy Mayor William-Isom, we're going to get it done. Because we are a get it done administration. So I want to thank the team, the entire team, for what we have accomplished in this first inning. So many more innings to go; living on the streets, under bridges, out in the opening, as probably five of these sites, I identified myself as

I'm driving along the city, looking at people, living on the side of highways. This is just so inhumane.

**Mayor Adams:** And I called it in and the team responded accordingly. And so I'm clear, as the Mayor of all of us, including my homeless brothers and sisters, I'm not leaving any New Yorkers behind; we're moving together. And that is the goal of what we must accomplish. I'm not abandoning anyone. I'm not believing that dignity is living in a cardboard without a shower, without a toilet. Living in terrible living conditions. This city is now engaged in a multi-agency mission with compassion and caring, taking our time, not rushing through this. But being compassionate to people who are experiencing terrible circumstances that they're living through.

**Mayor Adams:** And so we are going to reach out, we're going to offer them help. And we're going to be clear on that as we give them this brochure that we will be handing out when we speak with people. Because they have in their heads what the shelter system, particularly if you're dealing with mental health issues, what it looks like. We want to show them what it looks like to have wraparound services, for someone to be there on the scene giving you healthcare, mental health assistance, a clean bathroom, going a month without a shower, giving them a place where they can have dignity, not living in their own waste. This is what this is about.

**Mayor Adams:** People are critiquing and criticizing. Join us. We want to do this together. We don't want to leave anyone behind. We are going to be announcing in the next few weeks a partnership with Norman Siegel, who's putting together a grassroots effort of volunteers that are going to go out and assist us in engaging those who are homeless.

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to do the right thing for New Yorkers, the right thing for New York City, and the right thing for public health, and the right thing for all New Yorkers who have fallen on hard times. There's no freedom or dignity in living in conditions that we are witnessing here. As I stated, no solution is perfect. Perfection is what we're going to move towards. We have to rebuild fear and distrust. When I'm on the subway system talking to those who are homeless, there's a lack of trust. When we go from homeless shelter to homeless shelter, like my commissioner is doing of HRA, and visiting unannounced to see how good our product is, we keep coming up with the same message. We don't trust. We're going to rebuild that trust. Over the past week, I have seen just how much we can rebuild that trust.

**Mayor Adams:** We announced yesterday, 350 of the 500 beds we committed for Safe Haven and stabilization beds, they have open to serve New Yorkers. We're going to continue to fill those beds and move forward with those that need help. I receive reports every day, all day, as we put in a place, a real time system to analyze where the shelters and where the locations for assistance is located. Also, as these encampments attempt to reopen, we're going to immediately go there and respond. What did I learn that from? I learned it during the mid '90s when our transit system was filled with graffiti.

**Mayor Adams:** Instead of ignoring the graffiti on the wall, there was an immediate announcement to those who were cleaning the system to cover the paint of the graffiti or remove it. You saw a graffiti free transit system, because we were consistent, and we had a zero tolerance for it. At one encampment, 500 hypodermic needles. 500 living like this. Look at this. Look at this condition that a fellow New Yorker was living in. I'm supposed to allow this to stay? I'm supposed to act like I don't see this? This is dignity? This is how we treat fellow New Yorkers? Some would say, "Well, this is a warm place for them." Please. Well, I would subscribe to that.

**Mayor Adams:** They need help and assistance, and rebuild their lives. This is not about sweeping policies or announcements. This is about a humane way of ensuring this is done right, with a humane leader. As I learned yesterday from my commissioner of HRA, having to spend time in a homeless shelter, you need people who have gone through a lot to help people who are going through a lot. I'm so happy to have him as part of our team, because he brings that commitment and dedication to addressing the issues of people who are going through what he has gone through. It's about one person at a time, one family at a time, one encampment at a time.

**Mayor Adams:** Not just sweeping through this process. It's about treating people with the dignity that they respect, and bringing the right team together, every one of them. They care and they show compassion. They're doing their best and what we have. That's the New York City that I know. We need help. We all see people who are homeless. Let's encourage them to go into these sites and locations. Let's not just complain about them and point a finger at them. These are your brothers and sisters, New Yorkers. As a partner, we could resolve this problem. As we go forward, we're going to recover and rebuild. We're not going to leave anyone behind.

**Mayor Adams:** They're all going to come with us. Everyone is going to travel through the prosperity of this city. I promised this when I campaigned, and I'm committed to it



every day. Trust me, you leave here today and go on your assignment, or go find a homeless encampment so you can prove them wrong, you're going to find it. But when you find it, not only report it in the paper, but report it to us, so we can get services over to them. We have a long way to go. But we are getting there. We're going to get there each initiative at a time. We're not going to be disrespectful. We don't have the right to tell people they can't live on the street. Laws don't allow us to do that. That's why we're calling for a stronger Kendra's Law to give people help that need help.

**Mayor Adams:** Albany must make that decision. But we are not going to have a city where people are living like this, and where people have to witness their homes like this, instead of the far left poster. That is what we are doing. I'm really proud of this team. I thank them for their commitment, their dedication, and sincerity in dealing with this real issue. I want to remind you of this, those who look at the numbers and state, "Well, five people received services and referrals. Some people went back home to where they were before." Week one, when we did the transit initiative, we had only 22 people that accepted service. Up to date, we have over 300 and something people who have accepted our services. We are rebuilding trust in the city. We're going to make sure it's done right. I know we can do it right.

**Question:** The number you just mentioned, 300 plus accepting services, is that specific to this initiative? If not, what is the specific number accepting services for this initiative?

**Mayor Adams:** This initiative, the numbers I gave you were, 22 was the first week of when we were in our transit initiative, and we went out and tried to get people off the subway system. As of date, we have over 300 who have accepted the services. The first week, no one wanted to do it, no trust. To repeat it allowed us to do so. This initiative, the first seven or eight days, we had five people that accepted services. Some went back home, some went to other locations. We know the continuation of this program, and now with the new brochure, we know those numbers are going to continue to increase.

**Question:** This initiative, I take it, a lot of advocates' concern is that this is just going to be shuffling homeless people around the city. They'll move from one location to another. How do you foresee dealing with that into the future?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I tell the advocates to grab our brochures, meet us on the ground, assist us from talking to the homeless, encourage them to go into the Safe Haven and

stabilization beds. We're in this together. This is not a point where folks are going to look and say what I'm doing wrong. It's already wrong. It's already a mess. We are trying to do the best. Those who really are concerned about the homeless, come out with me, let's go together and encourage people not to live on the streets. If we didn't have the Safe Haven beds, as we announced yesterday, as in front of us, then I could understand their arguments. But we have these Safe Haven beds. Let's at least fill them.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, do you have enough beds to house the people that were removing the encampments? How do you keep people there to get the services?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, a couple of things. One, we are going to continuously make sure that every person that needs a bed will receive a bed, either through our traditional homeless beds, or through the stabilization Safe Havens. Every person. Remember, we are required to house people, must house people that are homeless. We will make sure of that. First, let's fill the beds. We're going to have 500. Let's make sure those 500 are filled. We will continue to evaluate the need. Many people go back to their prior living arrangements. There are many places people go that may not want to go to a shelter. They may go back to a loved one. They may go back to a different living environment. They may get the care that they need. If you have 500 hypodermic needles, you may not even realize that you have a real drug problem. We need to identify that drug problem beforehand. That's what we're doing.

**Question:** Aren't you concerned that people who are mentally disabled will leave and go back out on the street where it's comfortable for them there, they're not afraid? What do you do about something like that?

**Mayor Adams:** That's what I hear. When I'm in the subway system and I'm talking to people that are dealing with real mental health issues, they're saying, "Mayor, I rather be out on the street." There's going to be a small number, I believe, when this is over, that, for whatever reason, they'd rather be out on the street. That is where the new Kendra's Law should look at this and say, "How do we take care of New Yorkers who are not making the right rational decisions without infringing on their rights?" But we are going to persuade as much as possible, and that was why, yesterday, when someone asked, I said, "We're going to get this brochure." Because I think the more tools we have to show that we are moving in a different direction, the better we have to resolve this. To arm people with what we are asking them to go to, I think it helps us peel back

another layer. We're just going to keep peeling back the layer until we get every person that's homeless off our streets.

**Question:** You visited the cleaned up sites. You've been on the subways and talking and engaging. You just talked about making sure that these won't become temporary measures [inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Well, right. Temporary measure is closing down an encampment and not having a place for a person to go. That's a temporary measure. That is a band aid on a real issue. That's not what we're doing. We are identifying the sites, bringing all of the teams there, and say, "We're going to give you help. Here's where you can go to stabilize your life." People don't want to live on the street. They believe they don't have any options. That is why we want permanent measures. Then we want to move them into the next phase. We have almost 2,000 housing units of apartments that were empty. It's unacceptable. We're going to roll out how we're going to fix that. Because I'm a get stuff done mayor. Although y'all know how this is done. I said, this is not new. Y'all know how this is done.

**Question:** Is there any differences in the locations in the brochure you mentioned? Is it different to traditional homeless shelters? The second part is, individuals I spoke to say they're too afraid to go to homeless shelters. Will any additional services be provided to them if they stay on the street?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. We are going to continue. Remember, as the borough president, I put money into the shower bus. This is not a new initiative for me. I've always been focused on homelessness, because I was almost homeless as a child. I know how impactful it is. We are going to continue to give the services, communicate, build the trust. As the deputy mayor says all the time, we're going to continue to build that trust. Over time, I believe people are going to come in.

**Mayor Adams:** Then the partnership that the Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom is working out with Norman Siegel, and we're looking to have 100 volunteers to constantly be there giving people socks, places where they can go to just have the dignity that they deserve. It's the erosion of distrust that is going to allow us to build the trust. But it's a process. It's a process. If you are on the street, and you no longer believe in the shelter system, you have to rebuild that trust. You have to peel back the layers of distrust to get the trust that we are doing. We're going to do it.

**Question:** You said it was 20 people on the first week on the subways, and 300 people take it, convinced to come into shelter from the subway system. With the encampments, how many people have you found living in the encampments, and how many of those people have made it to intake and gotten a bed in the shelter?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. So that we're clear, in the first week, I said, of our transit initiative, we were able to convince 22 people to take the services. Now we're up to over 300 and something people. I was explaining that in the beginning of the process the lack of trust. People are reluctant. Now they are embracing, they're seeing the initiative, and they're seeing the faces. The beginning of this process, five people have accepted our services. We believe, just as the pattern in the subway system, you're going to see the trust being built. Or people may go to different locations. They may go back home, they may go to different location. The problem is, in the city, we've said it's acceptable to build and live in an encampment. You now have a mayor that says it's not acceptable to live in an encampment. People are going to access services, they're going to go back to their living arrangements, they're going to do things differently, and I believe in a more respectable manner.

**Question:** Do you have a count on the number of people who were found in the encampments before you guys broke them down? How do you build trust with folks if you're coming by the encampment and putting their belongings in the back of a dump truck?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first of all, we're not just throwing up in the back of the dump truck. This is what we're doing. We are saying there's acceptable behavior and living standards in the city of New York. Now, some people subscribe to the theory that, "So what if there are encampments everywhere?"

**Mayor Adams:** If you block Nolan, he's going to talk about you later, so you should think about allowing him.

**Mayor Adams:** The goal is not just coming in and taking the items of people and throw it in the back of the dump truck. All that sounds very graphic. And I got that. No, the goal is to come and talk to them, engage them, give them the options that they don't have to live on the street. And we are proud of that engagement that this team has done.

**Question:** A question about these encampments. If you come across somebody who doesn't want to go to these shelters, who doesn't want to get rid of their encampment, what's that discussion like? And has anybody been placed under arrest? I know that there was a video from the New York Post about a guy living in a tree, and that ended up becoming an arrest. But has that situation appeared in any other of these encampments? Has anybody else had to be arrested because of the nature of what the discussion was?

**Brian McGinn, Deputy Chief, Police Department:** So, yes. Good morning. So there was the one person that was in the tree who was arrested a few days ago. That person was released on recognizance yesterday. Since then, that encampment has been taken down and that individual is now in the hospital, emotionally disturbed. Other than that, we made three other emotionally disturbed people. We brought them to the hospital. And four summons for erecting structures in different locations. That's where we are with that right now.

**Mayor Adams:** And thank you. And think about this for a moment. We have a person living in a tree that we accepted. And the person needed mental health assistant. We would've never identified that until what? Something happens, where he shoved someone on the subway tracks, or he attacked someone on the street? The goal is to be proactive. We know that if a person is sitting here, injecting himself with drugs, he needs help. So we know if you're in an encampment and you're dealing with mental health issues, do we wait until they create a crime? Do we wait until something happens? And we say, "Okay, they committed a crime. Now let's lock him up." Or do we go find them and give them the help that they deserve? But it's overwhelmingly, we're not making arrests because we're coming with a level of compassion.

**Question:** Young lady mentioned that you put the notice up at least 24 hours before. And a lot of times you go back, the encampment is clear. Are those people just moving to other parts of the city? And the second question, can you give an idea of where any children and families found in some of these encampments?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. The chief can do that. We put up the notice, what happens and I believe many of the cases people say, "We can't do this anymore." I said, no one told them they couldn't do it. So I think people say, "Well, we can't do this anymore. There's a mayor that believes we should not live like this." And you have those who have dismantled or realized. We had one gentleman who was on the side of the road, where

he took down his encampment. And so it's about setting the standard and clarity of expectation and not doing it in a heavy handed way. Who can answer about the children?

**McGinn:** Yes. So there haven't been any children of families at the encampment sites. And the mayor mentioned compassion. We are following up on all these locations. By five o'clock tonight, all the locations are going to be re-canvassed, which we've been doing all along, but by five o'clock tonight, all locations will be re-canvassed. And we're going to continue this going forward compassionately of course.

**Question:** Generically, generally rather, where in the city are they? [Inaudible] gentleman in the tree. [Inaudible 00:35:58] where do you find... Where are they?

**McGinn:** So most of the locations were in Manhattan South. I think we started originally with around 85 locations in Manhattan South. And then the rest of the locations were spread out through the city. But when we originally did our canvas for homeless encampments, a lot of locations that we were getting back were historical locations. So we also looked at those locations also.

**Mayor Adams:** And what's fascinating is that the locations and where they were located, they were in very dangerous places. And being able to go in, identify those locations, all the precinct commanders in the sectors did a real mobilization and did inspections of their precincts. I mean, this was just a well-executed plan of using city resources. And it's extremely impressive to see how the coordination of the city utilizing all of our agencies in a real way. Now, what else did we do? We videoed what we did. So no one can say that, "Well, you're trying to do it in the darkness of night." No, it's on video. Our interaction, our offices had on their video. We want to be put front and center so people can see how you can accomplish a task if you just put your mind to it.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, so you've repeatedly referred to the city as dysfunctional, there's this culture of dysfunction. Records from De Blasio's administration show that he enacted sweeps, whatever term we're using here, but I'll just say sweeps about 9,000 times. What makes you think that the approach you're applying now is going to be different? What makes you think it's going to work as opposed to what he did, which clearly we still have the same problem?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first of all, someone living in the tree and allowed to live there, that's dysfunctional. 65 percent of Black and brown children not reaching proficiency, that's dysfunctional. Crime is dysfunctional. So I'm not making up dysfunctional, you report it every day. All of you report of the dysfunctional act. It doesn't mean we're going to stay there. We're going to move from that. And there's one culture that I create in this administration. It's the culture of failure. Try. There's nothing wrong with failing. Keep trying. Something is wrong with not trying. We put in place our process, bringing out an encampment and then giving the help that people need. Creating the Safe Haven beds, continue to do an evaluation to make sure we get it right but we going to keep trying until we get it right.

**Question:** How is it different though than what mayor De Blasio did as far as the sweeps? And I mean, he was getting Safe Haven beds up as well.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm not sure what he did. That was the previous administration. There's a new administration and the mayor is not called Bill De Blasio. He's called Eric Adams.

**Question:** Can you just elaborate a little more about the images? The hypodermic needles, what was that location? And then here at the bottom, I assume that's the Safe Haven from yesterday. What about it will people who are unhoused benefit from? And speaking of images, are you going to be releasing any of the video of the encampment cleanups that you've referred to?

**Mayor Adams:** The police department can talk about that. One, the difference between here, wraparound services. Someone is there for medical needs. Do you know how much money we spend because those who are homeless use the emergency rooms? That is just an unbelievable dollar amount. That's a dysfunctional process of knowing you go in, you're dealing with some issues. We give you medicine for one day, you go back out in the street. That's just not correct. And so by having someone there to deal with your medical needs, this location that you saw yesterday is across the street from Lincoln Hospital. They will have that relationship with the doctors, those who give the mental health assistance that is needed. And I think that's so important. And being able to make sure, again, we do it in a compassionate way is crucial.

**Commissioner Sewell:** So there is a process for the release of body-worn camera footage, but the officers are activating their cameras before they engage. But I can assure you that these encounters are humane and compassionate in partnership with

our other agencies. So there is footage. We are releasing the photos at this time, but there's a process for the actual release of the footage.

**Question:** So wanted to follow up on, you mentioned the body cameras. Are you specifically actually reviewing this body camera footage? When I've spoken to people experiencing homelessness in my term of working at Politico, people have said that they've had bad interactions with cops during their time of living on the streets. I haven't spoken to anyone who said that living in the encampments, but I want to know if you yourself are reviewing the body footage. And if not, who is to ensure that these are filled with dignity?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, number one, the first line supervisors are carrying that out and the commissioner has the process. And our daily calls and daily interactions, she would reach out to me if there's a problem. If there's something she became aware of on the video, she immediately lets me know exactly what is taking place. So we have a real process in place of making sure we have the integrity of the video. We have our ICOs, the integrity control officers. We have all of the oversight. I don't know if there's another agency that has as much oversight as the New York City Police Department, but the commissioner is going to make sure the integrity of the video and that the first line supervisors are reviewing to make sure that everything is in order.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, I have a question about the Safe Havens. My understanding has always been that the Safe Havens that are the most desirable are the ones that offer private rooms. So of the 500 beds, how many are in private rooms?

**Mayor Adams:** Do you have the... We try to, you want to minimize the number of beds. I'm not sure if my HRA... Gary, do you know the exact numbers? Okay, we'll get the exact numbers who are private rooms, but it's about the Safe Havens are also places where you can get the wraparound services. That's very important. Do you have medical? Do you have those who are dealing with mental health illnesses? Do you have someone that specifically is there for you? Not just putting you in a—like when I went to the congregate setting that was on Randall's Island, there's not someone there specifically. These are just people who are experiencing homelessness. They don't need the same services as someone with a mental health illness. And you find that a lot on street homelessness.



**Question:** Mayor, the... Sorry, we have sanitation here. We've seen some video scenes of people's belongings being thrown out. You mentioned earlier also that the city doesn't have the right to stop people from sleeping outdoors. I guess I want to square that circle here. I mean, are you throwing away some folks' belongings into the trash and then moving them off the street? I mean, how does that square with the no right to keep them from sleeping on the street?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. One, those things that are personal items that are vouchable, we are vouching it. We're vouching and we're giving them their voucher so they can get it.

**Question:** Like money for clothing?

**Mayor Adams:** No, if something simple as they have a bag full of bottles that they collect it and they getting 5 cents each from them, we're not going to discard that. Those are their... That's their value. That's their property. If you have something that's soiled with human waste, something that is rubbish, they're making the right decision. They're making the right decision on the ground. But those things are the personal items that we are going to give them a voucher so they'll be able to retain that. And we're not throwing people off the street. Let's be clear here. You have a right to sleep on the street. You don't have the right to build a miniature house. That's the difference. And so those who are reluctant, that we're going to continue to talk with, we're going to do so to build that trust. Because this is about building trust. And even if they say, "We don't want to go inside," we're going to continue to build the trust. And eventually we're going to convince them to go inside.

**Question:** Mayor, can you just clarify how many people were encountered across all of these sites? And then what are the live reports you said you're getting all day long about them?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, do we know a number? Some of the sites have, by the time we put up the notice, people have departed. So we don't have a hard number. We are looking to, if there are people who actually... I can only go by those who have took us up on their offer. And so what... Yes. So we have a spreadsheet, live spreadsheet, a shared document. We're able to look at the site, who responded, what action has actually taken place and we monitor it in a live way. I'm a big, shared document person. When I start my day, I look at a series of documents on what my initiatives are and how we're moving forward. That is one of the documents. So we look at the sites, who's

assigned, who identified, who did the reinspection, what had to be done and we keep a tab on exactly how we're moving.

**Question:** Do you see this initiative as a model for other cities, especially as it pertains to homelessness being a disproportionate problem for Black and brown communities?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, a lot of things we're going to do here that's going to become a model for other cities. The way goes New York, goes America. The way goes America, goes the globe. Everything starts in New York.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor Adams:** We are hoping that we have two locations in New York City and we are looking for the proposal. We don't have the authorization to determine the citing. Albany's going to do that, but we are hoping to help boost our economy and tourism that we can get two sites in New York City.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor Adams:** We are still evaluating what's the best location. We're not locked into a particular location. We don't have power over that, to be honest.

**Question:** We heard that, although the Gaming Commission would have to make the final offer, as you know because you were chair of that committee when you were in Albany, that it looks like the one in Manhattan, the one in the city, that would be approved would be the one [inaudible]. So the question is, where would that second place be? And I'm told that there are 30 different bids that would be in Manhattan. I wonder if you have a preference. So, there would be one in Queens. Where else [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, your sources are better than mine. Everyone knows you have great sources. We would love to have two in New York City. I think it would be a great boost for the economy, and we are evaluating what's the best location, so we can weigh in with some type of communication. We're looking forward to doing so.

**Question:** So last night, on channel four, we aired an interview that I did with Nina Rothschild. You remember that she was the City Health Department employee who was beaten with a hammer as she was on the subway. She's overwhelmingly positive in this interview. She's very grateful to you for implementing the patrols that enabled police to get to her quickly. She was screaming for her life.

**Question:** But she also says that she's not going to be taking the subway anytime soon. And you can sort of understand where she's coming from. Her colleagues at the Health Department raised money for her, which she says she's going to use to take Ubers instead of the subway. What's your overall reaction to her interview? She's very positive. She feels gratitude instead of anger. But also that message that it sends to other subway riders while you're trying to bring ridership up.

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first of all, I thank channel four for doing that. I believe that the level of compassion that was shown, not to lean into her but allow her to talk her piece. I thought that was an amazing interview. And it just really helps me because the numerical minority that are trying to push back on my desire to make this city safe, they need to hear that real story.

**Mayor Adams:** This was a city employee, and there's certain cases that... the thought of getting hit with a hammer over... He was brutal. First of all, I'm pretty sure we're all happy that she's alive. She's lucky to be alive and just optimistic about her city. And, of course, it's traumatizing. And that is why I am so vigilant on why we must make sure our subway is safe. That's why I spend just about every night. I'm down in the subway, walking through, talking to passengers so they can see. And they're happy to see. They say, "Hey, the mayor's down here. He's serious about it." So we can't have incidents like that happen and turn around our economy.

**Question:** Are you seeing any turnaround in the numbers, specifically based on the anti-crime initiatives that you put in on those subways, the patrols on the platforms, etc.?

**Mayor Adams:** There's a stark difference between the first night that we rolled out our initiatives and... looking for police officers, having a real visible presence... There's a difference. I am seeing a lot more officers. The passengers are telling me they're seeing the officers ride through the trains. They're saying, "Eric, we are seeing a presence, and we feel good about seeing our police officers here."

**Mayor Adams:** And we're going to keep escalating that. And all my chiefs out. And many people don't realize, but in order for the leaders to understand the seriousness of a problem, they need to be on the ground. So all my chiefs are doing a tour in the subway system. They're down there, doing the tour, seeing the problems, because, if I'm down there, 2:00 in the morning, then you have to be down there, 2:00 in the morning.

**Mayor Adams:** But people are seeing the presence, but we can't have cases like that. And again, I think that your interview was crucial because it really helped people say and see this is what Eric has been talking about.

**Question:** Also going back to the state budget. Given the immense needs that we see here in New York City, how do you feel about Governor Hochul's proposal to spend \$600 million of taxpayer money to build a new stadium for the Buffalo Bills?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I think the negotiation is still taking place. And anyone will tell you that, during negotiations, you don't want to do anything that's going to cause your side to get less. And so I'm just going to stay focused. We were up in Albany this week. Our team has been walking the halls, and I think the governor's doing a good job. And she's going to have to look at the budget and make the determination on where the money's going to be allocated.

**Question:** You, obviously, need a lot of money from Albany for New York City's immense needs. Is that where you'd like to see the money go, for a new stadium?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I don't think spending money in Buffalo is going to impact the money we need on Buffalo Avenue in Brooklyn. I think that we are going to get our share. We have real advocates up there. I think we are going to get our share of the money. How they spend their money up in Buffalo? That's their thing. We know the needs we have down here.

**Question:** City Council Member Keith Powers has filed a bill that would allow outdoor dining establishments to use propane heaters. This is a bill that you said you supported late last year. The FDNY testified this week entirely against that. They said, basically, under no circumstances, would this be a safe thing to do. So I wanted to see what your stance is now on this bill, given that testimony, given what you said last winter.

**Mayor Adams:** I like the outdoor heaters. Anything that will boost my restaurants, I'm in favor of. And I think that, as the FDNY, they have the right to give their belief, their professional opinion, on what needs to be done. But the FDNY? They work for me. And the final say-so of how we execute my agencies will be determined by me. They weighed in, but the final choice would be determined by me.

**Question:** You still support that bill?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, I do.

**Question:** Yeah. Mr. Mayor, you have your Neighborhood Safety Teams addressing gun violence. Are you thinking of any similar strategy to address the continuing problem with thieves just wiping out shelves on Duane Reade, in supermarkets, and attacking security people there that obviously aren't armed?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. We have a plan specifically to deal with that. And it's a combination of things. It's a combination of paid details and some other surprises that we're going to roll out. But you're right. And I often hear people to say, "Well, Eric, you're criminalizing the poor." No. When you have a Duane Reade close down, all those low-wage employees are fired. And so, I'm not criminalizing the poor. I'm criminalizing criminals. You can't walk into a store. I'm on line. I'm paying for stuff. Everyone else is paying for stuff, but you believe you can hop over the counter and take whatever you want. No. No. It's unacceptable.

**Question:** But can you just... what's involved with... what the plan is.

**Mayor Adams:** It is going to be able to identify the repeated offenders. You know what they're doing? They are stealing the items, and they're selling them on the internet. Or they're so bold, they would steal the item and stand in front of the grocery store, laid out on a sheet, and sell their items. It's unacceptable.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, a couple of questions on two separate items. The MTA police is reportedly going to be boosting up efforts on the subway after two different incidents where two separate guns were recovered. If you could comment on that, if you've heard anything about that. And the second was on the police officials. I know the police

commissioner was in Albany, lobbying for bail reform. Could you enlighten us a little bit as to what she testified about, what she said, how things are moving on that front?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I was in district two yesterday, in the subway system, and I'm pretty sure we all know about the horrific beating that took place in McDonald's. An off-duty FIO, field intelligent officer, was sitting on the train. He looked over, and, based on information, he saw the person was wearing the clothing from the McDonald's case. The officer notified backup, and they made the apprehension.

**Mayor Adams:** That officer did the job while he was off duty on the subway system. And I take my hat off to him and also district 33. I was riding through district 33 last night in Brooklyn, where they made an amazing gun collar. So our officers are doing their job. And I encourage a boosting of those of uniform personnel and those officers who are doing some type of field intelligence or surveillance work. And that's what we have to do to bring down this crime.

**Question:** The police commissioner was in Albany. Anything you can say about her and how that went?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. And I thank her for going up. When people think about our blueprint to end gun violence, they focus on one river. I keep saying we have to dam every river. And so, there are pieces to our blueprint that goes far beyond just bail. We talk about... It's the revolving door. I really want New Yorkers to wrap their heads around there's a small number of people that are committing the crime. They've just been in and out of the jail system, in and out, long... a list of crimes. They don't believe in... People have a right to be safe in the city.

**Mayor Adams:** And so, our blueprint is looking at all of those rivers, and that's what the police commissioner went up to talk about, repeated offenders that carry guns. Talk about discovery. Talk about those who are known violent offenders but arrested with guns. So there's a slew of things that she talked about up there that was far more than saying we should be doing some things around bail.

**Question:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Two questions on the budget. One of which is, it sounds like you want a second gambling facility in the city beyond the Aqueduct Racetrack. Is that the correct interpretation? And if you had your druthers, where would it go?

**Mayor Adams:** I don't have. Albany would make the decision of the placing. We are looking at the proposals because it's more than just where you're going to place it. But what's the overall plan that you're bringing as a presenter? And so, it would be... People would have looked down on Aqueduct, going out to the racetrack, but it turned out to be a boom. So you need a presentation. What are you going to do? We don't want just a gambling casino. We want to know how it impacts the overall city and how we all benefit from it. So that's why we want to see the proposals and the plans of everything.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, you said you'd like to look at the plan. You would embrace a second casino coming?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, yes.

**Question:** So in this public safety committee hearing, Deputy Mayor Banks said that he realizes there may be some mistakes in the anti-gun violence blueprint that need to be, quote, "adapted." I'm wondering... Do you have any sense of what he might be talking about, what mistakes he might be referring to?

**Mayor Adams:** No. Listen, all I know is he's one smart law enforcement person. I'm amazed at, every time I sit down and speak with him, how he thinks outside the box. And if he states there's some things we need to look at, I don't know if he was talking about the blueprint or what they're doing in Albany. I'm not sure, but I'll follow up and find out from him. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

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