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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Bobby Cuza:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As many New Yorkers are keenly aware, although the vaccine is here, it has been hard for many people to get vaccinated, including those who don't have the time or ability to spend hours on the phone or online. And that is compounded by significant concerns over availability and whether we could in fact run out of the vaccine in the coming days. And this comes amid growing concerns over a new, more infectious strain of the virus as the CDC warns that that strain may soon be dominant across the nation. Mayor de Blasio joins me now from the Blue Room inside City Hall to talk about all of this and more. Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good evening, Bobby. Very cheery intro there.

**Cuza:** Well, let's start talking about the vaccine. You have set a goal of one million doses to be administered by the end of the month, just a couple of weeks from now, but you've also said, quite alarmingly, that we could actually run out of supply later this week. So, what is the latest?

**Mayor:** Yeah, unfortunately there's no 'could' about it. Right now, Bobby, at the rate we're going, we will run out of our supply at the end of this week. I mean, look this last week in New York City, we were vaccinating New Yorkers at a rate of one New Yorker every three seconds. That's how intense this effort is now. So, the fact is there's a huge amount of demand. We have a huge amount of ability to get vaccine in people's arms. We are running out of vaccine. If there's not a new supply, this coming week, not just what we've been typically getting, but a brand-new kind of supply, unfortunately we're going to be out by the end of the week and in a position to offer very few appointments the following week because we get a small resupply each week from the federal government, the State government, but nowhere near enough to meet the current demand. So, federal government, State government, manufacturers have got to have a breakthrough here and get us the vaccine we need. I talked a few weeks ago about the freedom to vaccinate folks who needed it, senior citizens, first responders. Now freedom to vaccinate means having vaccine on hand to give to people who are ready, willing, and able.

**Cuza:** Well, what is the likelihood here? I mean, do we have any idea whether the federal government and the manufacturers could come through? I mean, we must have some indication, right, how much we're going to get?

**Mayor:** Bobby, we have a regular schedule that is absolutely insufficient. That's the only assurance we have. Now on Wednesday, the world changes profoundly when the Biden team goes into the White House and the different agencies and they can actually look at what's going on – my hope and prayer is they're going to find ways to free up some supply and get it where it can be used most effectively. Obviously, they also need to use – and I think they're more than ready to – the Defense Production Act to require manufacturers of all kinds who can get into this work are producing vaccine to do it. This is a national emergency. For some reason the Trump administration didn't put things into that higher gear. Many times, they hesitated to use the Defense Production Act. I never understood it, but I am certain Joe Biden will. But we won't know until they get in there, if there is some X-factor that could work in our favor in the short term.

**Cuza:** And I've heard you and your Health Commissioner, I believe, say that there's no heads up from the federal government before we get the delivery on any given weeks. I mean, this is literally day to day. Like we don't know how much vaccine we're going to have on say Wednesday?

**Mayor:** There's a weekly supply we get, which is the neighborhood of 100,000 doses. That's the one thing we can depend on. That's been happening over several weeks consistently, but as you can see, that's a drop in the bucket compared to what we need. Our goal for this last week was 175,000 doses. We ended up doing more than 220,000 doses and that number will jump again in the course of this coming week, the one we're just entering now. So last week, 175,000 doses turned into, in reality, 220,000 doses. You do the math. If you're only getting a hundred thousand new doses a week, you're running out immediately.

**Cuza:** Governor Cuomo today said he's going to try to see if Pfizer will deliver some doses directly to New York, sort of going around the federal government. He also said that the State is going to allocate fewer vaccine doses to those facilities that are sort of underperforming. He singled out in New York City as having administered only something like 65 percent of the doses that have been supplied. I wonder your reaction and whether any of this will have potentially a negative impact on New York City.

**Mayor:** I agree with him on Pfizer because we absolutely need the supply. I didn't see his particular analysis comparing different places, but I can tell you the truth is the truth. We are moving so quickly now, we have built up such a head of steam that we're going to use up our supply. So, by definition, if he's taking supply away from New York City, that makes no sense. But again, I haven't seen his specific comment.

**Cuza:** I think I've seen the numbers in the last several days in terms of new coronavirus cases, beginning to sort of level off. But at the same time, we have these new mutations of the virus. The CDC says this new U. K. variant could be dominant in the U. S. by March. So, what do we see in terms of trajectory? Do you think maybe we've gotten over the hump with this new surge or are you expecting that we could see this surge begin – continue to go even higher?

**Mayor:** Yeah, we got to be ready for a very tough situation ahead, Bobby. I mean, look, there was a hope that after the holidays there would sort of be a wind down and the cases would start to decrease because we didn't have those big gatherings anymore, we have with Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years. Unfortunately, at the very same moment as we hoped maybe we would see some relief, here comes this horrible U. K. variant. And again, I've been calling for a long time now, cancel flights. This is what the federal government should do immediately. Cancel flights from the U. K. to the United States, cut off this variant as much as you humanly can. Now we know it's here. And we know it's going to be a big challenge, so there's no way we can say, 'Oh, don't worry, you know, next month is going to be better.' We don't have that luxury. The only thing we can do is vaccinate people as quickly as possible. And again, right now in New York City, Bobby, we can be vaccinating a lot more people a lot more quickly if we had the supply, hundreds of thousands of people a week, every single week, if we had the supply. So, this is – the whole ball game is how much vaccine are we going to get? There's no question anymore about capacity. The sites are increasing literally daily. Our ability to reach people is increasing daily. There's lots of people who want it. This all comes down to the supply of vaccine.

**Cuza:** Want to shift gears and talk about the City budget. You announced your preliminary budget last week. Obviously COVID has blown a huge hole in the City's finances. You say though, the City can make up the gap with agency savings, reducing the City's headcount by several thousand. I wonder though whether New Yorkers can expect to see any deterioration in services, say for instance, trash pickup, something that was a big issue last year in the spring and summer. What kind of impact are we going to see?

**Mayor:** Look, Bobby, we've had to tighten our belts in the City government intensely. We've cut the Mayor's Office in the course of a year by about 13 percent, cut the budget of the Mayor's Office 13 percent. We are reducing our overall City head count in the course of last year until now by about 12,000 employees. These are serious cuts. These are things that hurt, but we're going to keep the most essential services going. We've had to, you know, find some ways to be more effective on Sanitation, but we're not going to make any further cuts that affect services directly. So, this is going to be an ongoing struggle. Look, the good news is – very hopeful about the stimulus plan that President-elect Biden has put forward. I'm thrilled that Chuck Schumer is going to be the Majority Leader of the U. S. Senate. That's a huge game changer. He already proved that by working to get done something crucial, which was FEMA reimbursement at 100 percent retroactively. He pushed hard to get the incoming Biden administration to agree to that. They did. That immediately gave us relief, Bobby, and we were able to avert some substantial cuts because of that. So, I'm hopeful going forward, but you know, belt tightening is going to be a part of our lives for years to come until we're really out of this crisis.

**Cuza:** In terms of long-term impact, one thing that you revealed last week is this huge cut in the number of property tax receipts, something \$2.5 billion in the budget. A lot of that, the hit to commercial real estate, right, office space and retail. I wonder in the long term, is this going to be with us for years given the fact that even as the economy rebounds a lot of workers, probably aren't going to return to the office full time?

**Mayor:** Well, I think the crucial point here, Bobby, is bringing our economy back overall and job one is to vaccinate our people. If we get enough people vaccinated, our economy starts to come back just because there's so much demand waiting to be unleashed, so many people here

who need services and, you know, so many opportunities here. We're going to talk about this a lot in the course of the year, the opportunity for this city to become an even more crucial center for health research, for life sciences, to become the public health capital of the world. There's going to be so much that's going to happen in New York City once we get people vaccinated.

So, I do believe, fundamentally, jobs are going to come back. You're going to start to see those property values start to rebound, you're going to start to see the property tax receipts start to rebound over time, but for the next year it's going to be a particular challenge because a lot of those particular industries took a big hit and that is being reflected in our property tax receipts. We've just got to do the workday to day to bring the city back as fast as we can and that begins with vaccinating as many people as humanly possible.

**Cuza:** All right, Mayor de Blasio, don't go anywhere, we've got to take a break. But I'll have more with Mayor de Blasio when we return.

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Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm once again joined by Mayor de Blasio from the Blue Room inside City Hall, and Mr. Mayor last week you announced a new program within the NYPD, a new discipline matrix that sets parameters for different infractions, different types of NYPD wrongdoing, NYPD misconduct. Tell us how this is different from the existing system.

**Mayor:** Yeah, Bobby, this is going to revolutionize police discipline in New York City. Look, we all hope and pray that every officer does the right thing every single time, but any officer who does the wrong thing, there's now really clear rules. So, this discipline matrix, it's public, and I urge all New Yorkers who care about these issues, go to [nyc.gov/disciplinematrix](https://nyc.gov/disciplinematrix). You can see the whole thing. Why is it so important? Because it literally says for every offense, the exact range of penalties. And now we know for sure if someone is found to have done one of these offenses, for example, excessive force, exactly what penalty aligns to that, depending on the outcome of each situation. It also is very important because it talks about hate speech. It talks about the kinds of messages that we've heard from some officers, not most thank God, but some that really indicate that someone should not be a police officer.

If someone is expressing white supremacist views or racist views, they should not be a member of the NYPD, and it's clear in this discipline matrix how we are able to act in a case like that. If someone's doing the wrong thing, the penalty can be termination. And the bottom line is what we've learned with this horrible attack on the Capitol is that it is literally unacceptable for anyone who harbors racist views to wear a uniform that's supposed to represent all of us and protect all of us. If anyone has white supremacist views, they should not only not be a police officer or a firefighter, they shouldn't be anywhere in government, anywhere in this country. And this matrix gives us what we've needed honestly, for decades in this city, 100 percent public transparent standards, you commit that offense, you're found to have done it. Here's what happens to you. And a lot of those cases, it's termination.

**Cuza:** But, Mr. Mayor, it's really just a framework rather than something binding, right? It's still ultimately up to the Police Commissioner. They have ultimate discretion in determining what the punishment is, right?

**Mayor:** I would say something very different than that, Bobby. Put aside State law, which is its own matter. I'm talking about what will be the policy of New York City. This discipline matrix is now the policy of New York City. It was published by the NYPD, they understand this is what we need to do both to ensure justice and fairness when someone has done something wrong that there needs to be consequences, but also to deepen trust between police and community. Community members need to know there's going to be consequences. And this makes it abundantly clear. Our NYPD will abide by this matrix. One of these offenses is committed, once it's confirmed that it happened, the penalty has to be in the range stipulated here, period.

**Cuza:** As you know last week, the State Attorney General, Letitia James, filed suit against the NYPD for its treatment of protestors during last summer's Black Lives Matter protests. You said last week that any sort of court involvement could slow down the process of reforming the NYPD so what are the next steps here? Will the City fight this lawsuit in court?

**Mayor:** Yeah, just making the point, this happened – this was put out publicly over the summer. Something that had been worked on for months before that. This was put out publicly by the City of New York, by the NYPD not because a federal judge told us to do it, but because we thought it was the right thing to do, the same way we got rid of stop-and-frisk, the same way we retrained our police force in de-escalation and implicit bias and put body cameras on all our officers. Let the elected leaders of this city continue the reforms which we're deeply committed to. So, you know, we had protests this summer, incredibly difficult, painful time. Our Department of Investigation at my direction did a full evaluation. Our Law Department, Corporation Counsel, same thing, came back with a series of changes that they put on the table.

They said, we need to do these changes. I accepted them immediately. The NYPD accepted them immediately. So, when you look at that process where democracy is actually functioning, the last thing you want to do is bring in a federal court process, which inevitably slows things down and obviously leads to folks not elected to make these changes, trying to sort through them. I've seen this kind of thing before, Bobby, it can take months, years. These things can drag on a long time. Here, we have 100 percent commitment to reform. And, again, anyone who wants to see it living, breathing, go [nyc.gov/disciplinematrix](http://nyc.gov/disciplinematrix). And you're going to see something that we've needed in this city for a long time. And it's finally here.

**Cuza:** Is this overreach on the part of the State Attorney General?

**Mayor:** Look, I respect the attorney general. I met with her. I know we have the same goals in mind for continuing and deepening reform, but New York City's doing it. And on top of that, we're about to do a process with the City Council over just the next few months to add additional reforms to NYPD to answer the larger State timeline we're working with. So, it keeps happening one reform after another, after another, this is the best way to get things done.

**Cuza:** One of the latest entrants into the race for mayor, Andrew Yang, last week when he rolled out his campaign, one of his part of his platform is a new civilian commissioner for the NYPD. I wonder your thoughts on that. Have you ever considered possibly installing a civilian commissioner as an NYPD reform?

**Mayor:** I haven't seen his proposal, so I don't know exactly what he's talking about. I think the most important thing is the mayor is held accountable for the NYPD and the mayor should

choose a commissioner who can keep the people of the city safe and continue to change the culture of the NYPD and move us forward. That's what I have been doing throughout my previous seven years, choosing leadership committed to neighborhood policing, committed to fundamentally changing. I mean, under my three police commissioners, we greatly reduced the number of arrests, we greatly reduced incarceration, retrained the whole police force. I knew where we could go. I knew there was a lot of change we could make while keeping the city safe. The last year, of course, has been a total disruption, a total perfect storm because of COVID. But before that, it was abundantly clear. You could make intense reform while reducing crime. It's been proven. I want to see the next mayor continue that.

**Cuza:** Some NYPD officers are going to D. C. for the inauguration. I wonder what was the thinking there? And just an update on whether we've seen any threats to New York City related to the inauguration in the next few days?

**Mayor:** No, last briefing I got in the last 24 hours, no specific and tangible threats against New York City. We're monitoring all the time. We're not seeing anything at this moment that's causing us to have to change strategy or approach. We have a lot of officers ready to move quickly if anything comes up. What we appear to have here is things directed by extremist groups, towards state capitols and towards Washington, D. C. But even those projected activities seem to be lessening because of the show of strength of security forces. So, we got a request from the D. C. Metro Police for 200 police officers. We agreed to that, of course, immediately. They needed the backup, respect the District of Columbia. We want to be there for them. You know, it's really important that the inauguration goes safely. So, we wanted to contribute and support that effort.

**Cuza:** Last few seconds. I mentioned Andrew Yang, who was a fellow candidate on the campaign trail in the presidential primary back in 2019. I don't know if you had any opportunity to interact with him, but he's never held elected office, hasn't particularly been involved in public life in New York City. I wonder if you think that is disqualifying for a mayor of New York City.

**Mayor:** Look, I think it's a challenge. I like him as a human being. I got to know him a little bit on the campaign trail. He's an affable guy and a smart guy. I disagree with him on some of the substance that – he was right to focus on the issues of automation as did I. I disagreed with his solution, which was universal basic income. I think there's areas where the kinds of things he's talked about, I'm not sure they're going to work on the ground in New York City, but I think he's – look, he's an impressive guy. He's going to have to show people that his skills and his background actually fit this role. I think that's going to be true for several of the candidates. If you haven't had experience in New York City government, it's a tall mountain to climb and folks are going to have to show the voters they actually have a plan of what to do tangibly to help the people of this city.

**Cuza:** All right, Mr. Mayor, we are going to have to leave it there. Thank you so much as always for spending some time with us. We'll see you next week.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Bobby.

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