



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 18, 2015

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS PRESS GAGGLE IN ROOM 9

Question: You saw that POTUS has a Twitter handle now?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I did not.

Question: He does. And you tweeted at him, which means that you don't handle your Twitter [inaudible].

[Laughter]

Mayor: I personally – that was a very quick conclusion you drew, and I do not handle my own [inaudible].

Question: Do you use any social media or is it something that you're into at all?

Mayor: I used to spontaneously tweet. I have not found myself doing it so much lately. I might do it again.

Question: But not Facebook or Friendster?

Mayor: No. But the – our tremendously media-savvy team is using all available methodologies to communicate with the people of New York City. But I did enjoy my liberated tweeting. You never know if I might go back to it. Sally –

Question: Do you know – I was thinking – we hadn't had a chance to talk to you about 421-A since you made your announcement at – actually a while ago, but we haven't talked about it. Can you tell us a little bit about [inaudible] that negotiation?

Mayor: I think the different strands made sense. I think that, you know, there's long been a concern that it – there was going to be subsidy and should it encourage affordability? I think that is more pertinent now than ever, given the nature of the affordable housing crisis and the strength of the market. I think the resources we need to achieve our affordable housing plan are at the front of our minds right now, obviously. And the vision we've put forward will really play a key role in terms of our affordable housing plan – and that's mission critical to us. So I think it – it emerged from a series of ideas, you know, over the last months, about what would get us to the endpoint of 200,000 units. And obviously there's a lot of folks out there – that spilled.

Question: Actually, you're not the first person to [inaudible] –

Mayor: Oh!

[Laughter]

Mayor: [inaudible]

Question: Wait, can I get a picture? My mom will freak out.

Mayor: [inaudible]

Question: Plus, I don't use floppies anymore, actually, so –

Mayor: Impressive.

But I think, you know, as we have been experiencing what it's going to take to put together this plan and achieve it, we've also heard a lot of folks who are concerned, you know, that every taxpayer dollar needs to be used to be contributed to affordability. And I think this new plan will speak to that.

Question: But there was no thought of ending it altogether? I mean, there was one class of activists who just want it ended completely.

Mayor: I think that the question is what's the most efficient way to, you know, create the 200,000 units. And we believe this is the way to do it. We think this is consistent with our broad approach, where we are demanding more of developers – you know, this demands more.

Question: There's a story in the Times that there was some black leaders that feel as though they don't really have your ear, and that, you know – are you worried? Do you feel like you're losing – you know, you've always seen strong support in that community – are you worried about that? Do you feel like you're losing some support there?

Mayor: I feel very good about the support that I have around the city, including in the African American community. I was up in Harlem yesterday at the EatUp! Harlem Festival, and, you know, was there for about an hour, got a tremendous, warm reception from people. And, you know, I find that when I go around the city I think there's a clear understanding in a lot of different communities that we're moving a progressive agenda very consistently, and that the things I said I was going to do – affordable housing, pre-k, and, you know, reforming the relationship between police and community – are actually happening. So, you know, it never surprises me when some individual leaders have their own agendas, but I think people across the city understand what this administration is trying to do, and that there is a lot of support for it. You know, there was an interesting glancing moment in the article when they said, well, 68 percent support in the community, according to one poll – you know I often critique public opinion polls, but, you know, I would think if someone has got more than two-thirds of the support of a – if they want to use that as their quote, I would think that would suggest a very positive situation.

Question: Did it bother you – I mean some of these were Thompson supporters. Do you feel that you're not connected with them because they weren't with you? You know, some of the people complain –

Mayor: Again, I'm not surprised by, you know, people in the political world having their own politics. I think the question here is are we moving an agenda that responds to the needs of the community? Yes. And do the people at the community level know it? I'm absolutely convinced they do.

Question: Mr. Mayor, this budget has so many billions in reserve. The previous administration [inaudible] sort of hidden [inaudible]. And do you have any concern that by being so transparent with the amount of money that we are reserving, that you're sending a signal to the people who are [inaudible] in Albany [inaudible]? [inaudible] special interest group [inaudible] whether it's you or the MTA – you've laid it out there. If it's a Republican legislator, "Oh, they've got the money, it's all there – it's in reserves – let them spend it." Is that a concern of yours in terms of negotiating for money?

Mayor: I don't think there's really a viable alternative. I think it's a great question, but I don't think there's a viable alternative. I'll tell you why. Here's what's happened in government more and more – the [inaudible] is all downstream. You know, obviously I've been fighting and trying to change the federal dynamics, including [inaudible] transportation funding. Today you have to assume the status quo, at this exact moment. And we saw what happened with Albany – when we went to Albany and asked them for support in some crucial areas. And so what we find more and more is that the – and I think mayors around the country would say the same – you can't depend on what's upstream from you. But if things go bad, which they inevitably will, then all of the dangers accrue to the locality. You know, if the federal government doesn't come in and save you, the state government doesn't come in and save you, you have to prepare yourself. This is the area actually where I felt a lot of agreement with Mayor Bloomberg when he talked about this in terms of security issues – part of why NYPD had to build up the way it did for us to recognize some of the [inaudible]. So I feel very, very comfortable that, by saying out loud, both what we are doing now and what we intend to keep doing, and being open about how we're putting reserves in place to protect our ability to do these things consistently, I think it's the best approach. I tried to show what had happened in the recessions after 9/11 [inaudible], and it's quite clear what it does to city revenues and the city's ability to provide services. And I don't think we want to go through that again, so we have to have our own reserves. So I do get your question – and a very pertinent question – but I think there's no choice but to make the bigger case – that we know what happens to us. We know the cavalry isn't coming under the circumstances – and that could change – I'm certainly going to fight for those changes – but the best way to level with people about what the challenges are we face and show that we're being responsible about [inaudible] reserves to address them.

Question: So, the minority leader is going to resign at some point this summer. I was just wondering, first of all, like, if you're at all concerned about, I guess, like, connecting with the minority of the Council and not knowing who it will be, and just the future of that. And, as well, like, your relationship with Councilman Ignizio – if you could talk about that?

Mayor: Oh, I think the world of Vinny, and I really enjoyed being his colleague in the Council. You know, we often – we often agree, and that's actually was one of the things that was encouraging to me that there can be a lot of bipartisan agreement. We agreed on fiscal responsibility. We agreed on issues of importance to children. We agreed on a lot of things that had to be done after Sandy. And, you know, I had some of the same experience on Tuesday and Wednesday in Washington, working with Republican mayors and Republican members of the House and Senate where we were in agreement on the transportation bill. So I think, you know, bipartisanship is always available to us. And I certainly found working with Vinny that it was something that he and I both value. He'll definitely be missed. I'm – you know, I don't know who's going to come next, but I certainly am hopeful it will be a good public servant. But in terms of the other Republicans in the Council, I think I have a very good relationship with them. We've been able to work very productively together.

Question: Do you plan on – I don't know, there's only three of them, so they – they'd have to decide amongst themselves, most likely. Do you plan on talking to them at all about who they're going to choose, or are you just going to –

Mayor: No, of course it's their choice. And – but I'm saying I feel sufficiently good about the relationship with the previous group, when I was in the Council, and when I was public advocate, and certainly with the group that's there now that we're all going to work together [inaudible] – take that as a given.

Question: I am not going to ask you about [inaudible].

[Laughter]

Deflate-gate stuff. I'm not going to ask you your opinions on them.

Mayor: Thank you.

Question: I think we're at the [inaudible].

Two quick travel questions – firstly, do you have any plans in the weeks of the legislative session to make any personal appeals for your legislative agenda?

Mayor: We will play that by ear, but I'm certainly ready to.

Question: And secondly, while you were on the road this past week, you're probably aware, there was some pieces – op-eds in various papers – who were somewhat critical of your travels, suggesting you were early in your term, even pointing to [inaudible]. I mean, does that concern you at all? Do you feel like these are fair arguments? Do you have, basically, a response to this?

Mayor: Yeah, I mean, I've said, when asked about it, you have to walk and chew game at the same time – I really believe that. The mayor of New York City is supposed to be a leader in urban America. That's something that, again, goes back to La Guardia, who helped to found the Conference of Mayors, and organized mayors around the country to call for the kinds of policies that became the New Deal. And I can think of any number of mayors who played a common role on national issues that affected New York City. You know, the reason you go to Washington, D.C. is because that's where laws are made and that's where the resources are that can have a profound effect on this city. To not go there would be malpractice. And to not try and change things that aren't working for our city and other cities would be, you know, an abrogation of responsibility. I'll give you an example with the transportation bill. The current bill has been basically stuck – [inaudible] over the last seven years have been stuck around \$50 billion a year for the whole country – the whole nation. The president's plan is a six-year bill – \$80 billion a year. If the president's bill were passed, it would mean \$1.2 billion more a year for the New York City metropolitan area. We would stand to get, I would say, at least half a billion a year of that. Half a billion dollars more a year for roads, bridges, highways, and mass transit would have a huge impact on this city. You know, in the course of a decade, that would be \$5 billion. You know, we don't have \$5 billion more that we can find somewhere. The state is obviously trying not to give it to us. So, the fact is that there's something moving now on the ground for mayors all over the country, and I certainly was very struck – we met with Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma, a Republican of Oklahoma who's the head of the, you know, pertinent committee in the Senate. We met with Congressman Shuster [inaudible]. You know, we met with some of the Democratic Senate leadership. Clearly there is an opening now for a longer [inaudible]. And in fact, we heard from all of the members of the House and Senate we've worked with that they believe that mayors and the local business communities would play a crucial role in this debate. So, yeah, I think the citizens of my city would like to see me pursuing something that could lead to a half billion more for our roads, bridges, highways, and mass transit. I think [inaudible].

Peter Kadushin: One or two more.

Question: Mr. Mayor, there were some questions about the Campaign for One New York – whether it should be registered as a lobbyist if it's going to be lobbying for specific issues. Do you know the status of that, and [inaudible] –

Mayor: I think they've – they've spoken very clearly to it – that there is no current plan to lobby this year. There was last year, and they re-registered. To the best of my understanding, the plan they have this year is just to do public education efforts.

Question: Do you – do you – have you set a date or a time for a town hall?

Mayor: I don't have a specific plan, but, you know, what I do all the time is go out around different communities in different settings. You know, as I said, I was in Harlem for about an hour yesterday at the EatUp! Harlem Festival, talked to a number of people about different – you know, people just come up and talk

about things, and offer their views, raise concerns – a lot of people obviously talking about pre-k, given what time of year it is. I was at a restaurant in the South Bronx, in Mott Haven last night, called [inaudible], and, you know, talking to people there. It's like – you know, I go around all over the place – and the subways, and walking down the street – talk to everybody [inaudible]. But there's also lots of formal settings where I get to hear from people [inaudible], and we'll be doing any number of different things going forward.

Question: I wanted to ask you – [inaudible] – is that why you're [inaudible]?

Mayor: [inaudible]

Question: I remember you [inaudible].

Mayor: Flip phone is alive and well.

Peter Kadushin: Folks, we've got to go.

Question: The – the City Council had asked for \$700 – about \$700,000 dollars to fund the Board of Corrections. They only got about \$35. I was wondering if you could talk about why so little? They want to hire some more investigators, you know, try to [inaudible]. Why [inaudible] small amount?

Mayor: Well, look – obviously, in ongoing discussions with the Council, looking forward to the adopted budget, so I'm sure that will be on the table. Look, we've put a lot of resources into the Department of Corrections. I think that's the bottom line. We've put a huge amount of resources in, including security [inaudible] host of reforms. And I think we felt it was important to focus where we thought the biggest impact would be, but it will be an ongoing discussion.

Peter Kadushin: Thanks, guys.

Mayor: See you later, guys. See you tomorrow.

Unknown: Thank you, mayor!

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