

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 15, 2021, 11:05 AM  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON  
THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW**

**Brian Lehrer:** Hello, again, everyone, and as usual to start the 11:00 hour on Fridays, it's time for our Ask the Mayor segment my questions and yours for Mayor Bill de Blasio at 6-4-6-4-3-5-7-2-8-0 or tweet a question, just use the hashtag, #AskTheMayor. And good morning, Mr. Mayor. Welcome back to WNYC.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, Brian, how are you doing today?

**Lehrer:** I'm doing all right. Thank you, and as calls are coming in, let's begin on the lawsuit that New York State Attorney General Letitia James announced yesterday against the NYPD, over abuses that her investigation turned up during the racial justice protests last summer, including she says, beating protesters with batons and bicycles, and arresting legal observers and even medics, and she blamed you and the commissioner for failing to train, supervise, stop, or discipline officers who engaged in this conduct. And so she wants a court-appointed monitor to make sure police behave properly at future protests. Will you can test that request or cooperate with it?

**Mayor:** I met with the attorney general and share the goal, and that's what we're doing right now of continuing fundamental changes in the NYPD. We did two exhaustive investigations, our Department of Investigation, and our Law Department. I ordered those investigations. They made very clear what we need to do better. I've accepted all their recommendations as has the Police Commissioner and we're implementing them right now. So, a court process doesn't help us speed reform. It often, in my view, slows it down. We're going to move forward with reforms today – today, literally, we are announcing what I think will revolutionize the police disciplinary process to a disciplinary matrix that will make clear exactly what the range of penalties are for any offense when a police officer does something wrong and makes that very public and very consistent. We're moving forward reform – and by the way, on top of seven years, getting rid of Stop-and-Frisk, retraining all our officers, deescalation, implicit bias training, a host of fundamental reforms, reducing arrest, reducing incarceration. We're going to keep doing that, but the City is doing that work when, I believe – when there's a commitment in the executive branch and the legislative branch, we're going to be passing a series of additional reforms in the next two months with the City Council. That process, based on those elected to serve, is the best way to get things done.

**Lehrer:** You acknowledged a lot of what the AG charges, last month, when, as you say your own Department of Investigation came to similar conclusions and I've asked you previously, if any disciplinary actions have been taken against any officers or systemic changes made, and the

answer is usually it's coming. Why not allow a court to oversee the NYPD during responses to protests? It would take – for future Mayors, it would take the politics out of it.

**Mayor:** No, I don't think this is about politics. I think this is about the will of the people. The people sent me here to make changes in NYPD and we have done that incessantly, and there's a lot more coming – wait until you see this disciplinary matrix, it's been out in draft form, but it's going to fundamentally change. This is going to be one of the biggest steps forward in police discipline in the history of this city, and that process has been going on for months and months. So, that's what's actually happening. I want to get the City Council credit too. The City Council has moved a host of reforms, which I've supported. So, we know right now in New York City, if I gave you the list of every major police reform that's happened in the last seven years, generated by my administration, the City Council, or both, it is a clear, clear trajectory. We're making fundamental changes. I want to make clear to what you said earlier, Brian, I have said we're making systemic changes as we have throughout. We accepted every single one of the Department of Investigation's reforms, and they are being implemented already, and so, to get a judge involved, to me, slows things down, it doesn't speed it up, especially when you have the full commitment of both the executive and the legislative branch.

**Lehrer:** Can you give us one top-line reform from the announcement that it sounds like you're going to make later today?

**Mayor:** Yes, and without getting into details, it's going to be formally announced, but I'll give you the top-line: for any offense committed by a police officer, there's now going to be a mandatory range of penalty, and for many of those offenses, and let's be clear, God forbid, we don't want to ever see an officer do something wrong, but if they do, and a number of officers were disciplined as a result of what happened in May and June, if an officer does something wrong, they get due process, but this discipline matrix makes it very clear what the outcomes must be, and on a number of serious offenses, the outcome will be termination.

**Lehrer:** We have a caller about a specific police discipline case. So, I'm going to take that caller first, Alex in Sheepshead Bay. You're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Alex.

**Question:** Hi there. Thanks for taking my call. On December 18th, during this segment, the Mayor was asked why the NYPD had failed to serve the CCRB charges on Officer Wayne Isaacs for the 2016 killing of Delrawn Small. Despite this, CCRB sent charges to the NYPD in October. During that segment, you said, you didn't know and would find out. This week, the NYPD was asked the same question at the City Council hearing, and they also had no answer. What is the hold-up here? And when are you going to ensure the NYPD serves charges on Isaacs and schedules a discipline hearing so he can be fired for killing Delrawn Small?

**Mayor:** I appreciate the question. I had an initial conversation with the Chair of the CCRB, but I need to finish that conversation. We will have a formal answer next week.

**Lehrer:** Formal answer, next week, I was going to ask you the same thing, following up on that caller from December, and I want to ask you one bigger picture question about that case. As I understand it, originally, both Officer Isaacs and NYPD officials initially claimed that Small physically assaulted the cop, prompting him to fire in self-defense. This is – I'm quoting the description in Gothamist, but surveillance video released shortly after the incident appeared to

contradict that narrative, showing Small falling to the ground almost immediately after walking up to the side of the vehicle. So, my question is if surveillance video contradicted the Department's official account, what's left of their credibility for their versions of events, whenever a police officer fires their weapon?

**Mayor:** Yeah, Brian, I have not seen that video, and then I don't know those specifics, and I'm not going to comment, especially on something that's ongoing. But the bottom line is we need transparency in all disciplinary activity. Remember, discipline trials are public. CCRB activity is public. There's a lot of transparency. We got to deepen it, and that's why this matrix is so important. You're going to see – it's going to be public today, here is all the range of offenses. Now, again, we don't want to ever see an officer do something wrong and the vast majority don't, but let's say someone used excessive force, an obvious example. It's going to be very clear depending on what happens and what the outcomes are, what the penalties would be, and again, the maximum penalty in a number of cases is termination. There is still due process, very important. We all believe in due process, and I want to remind all my progressive brothers and sisters, due process matters for everyone. But the outcomes that are now delineated, squarely, it's a clear range, and the maximum, in many, many cases is termination. I think it's going to send a clear message to all of our officers, to remember their training, remember their deescalation training, their implicit bias training, all the training we're giving them, which they never used to get, by the way. Before this administration, there was next to no training after the Police Academy, and this is part of why we had so many bad incidents in this city. As we have trained officers more and more, we have seen fewer and fewer gun discharges. We've seen a lot of efforts to deescalate. We still have more to do, but if an officer does something wrong, this discipline matrix makes it abundantly clear what the consequences will be.

**Lehrer:** Kyle in Bed-Stuy on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Kyle.

**Question:** Oh, hi Mayor. Thanks for taking my call. I just noticed a real uptick in residential fires in my neighborhood, and a lot of them have been places that are currently under construction. So, I was just wondering if there was any investigation going into it, if there are landlords and developers that are kind of taking advantage of the situation for insurance money and starting fires, and what would the police do to investigate these? Thank you.

**Mayor:** Kyle, leave – please give your information to WNYC. I want to get immediately more information on this. Look, I am concerned when I hear that. There have been instances over the years where for the, you know, criminal reasons really, we've seen property owners set fires. I had not heard of a spate of them. I want to know what's going on. I would note that even with all the challenges going on right now in the city as a result of the coronavirus, it does not make sense to me that a property owner would be harming their own property because clearly there are still lots and lots of people who want to live in New York City, and that's something doesn't follow. But if it even might be true, we got to get to the bottom of it. Please give your information to WNYC. I will have one of the top people at the Fire Department follow up with you and talk about whatever investigation is going on, or needs to go on in this case.

**Lehrer:** Citizen sleuth, Kyle in Bed-Stuy. Hang on, we'll take that contact information. Malcolm on the Upper East Side, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Malcolm.

**Question:** Hi, thank you for thinking about call. I don't want to take up too much of your time. I hate to be off-topic a little bit—

**Lehrer:** It's your topic.

**Question:** —but, I do live in congregate housing, and out of 56 of us in one building I believe there was 17 of us who have tested positive to COVID-19. That's more than a fourth of us. My question would be, what is the schedule before we are able to start receiving vaccinations with people who live in congregate housing, or shelters, or something of that sort?

**Lehrer:** Malcolm, you're a very humble guy, because you couldn't be more on topic with anything than a question like that. Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Exactly, Malcolm, please leave your information with WNYC. I want to make sure you know exactly when vaccination is going to happen. They have begun, we just got authorized. This is one – when I fought last week for the freedom to vaccinate, this is one of the groups of people I wanted to reach, folks in shelter. We finally got that authorization the last few days from the State of New York. We are beginning this week to vaccinate individuals who are living in shelter and congregate settings, and staff who work on their behalf. We're going to accelerate that into next week. So, I want to make sure that folks where you live are getting that vaccine. So, please, please give your information to WNYC. I do want to say to you though, to Malcolm, but to everyone, we have a fundamental problem now we are facing, and this is something I want to give you the most up-to-date numbers, Brian, because they are quite striking. Through yesterday, Thursday, we, for the week, vaccinated 125,000 people, between Monday and Thursday. Our goal is 175,000 for this week. At this rate, we're going to surpass that goal. To date, since a month ago, when we got the vaccine – 300,000 New Yorkers. This number is going up very quickly and we are running out of vaccine.

We're going to be – I'm giving this a formal – we've gotten the numbers. I checked them again last night, we will run out of vaccine next week in New York City, if there's not a very different approach from the federal government and the state government and the manufacturers. We're going to run out. You've seen the news, Brian, Mount Sinai Hospital, NYU Hospital, they are no longer taking appointments because they are out of vaccine. We have a fundamental problem here, and so many people need it, and so many people want it, and we're speeding up the process of getting people to vaccine, but we are not going to have enough vaccine by the end of next week, and we need maximum pressure on Washington and Albany, and on the manufacturers to deliver us hundreds of thousands of more doses, immediately.

**Lehrer:** So, here's a related question from a listener on Twitter. Listener Corey writes, “Can we be sure that for each person who got the first dose this week, that they will get the second dose? I was told, I would receive a scheduling email and have not yet,” writes that listener.

**Mayor:** Everybody who goes to one of our vaccine centers gets – if they will take a new appointment, they get an appointment for the second dose. In the case of one vaccine, that's three weeks later. In the case of the other, it's four weeks later meaning Pfizer, Moderna. So, one is three weeks. One is four weeks. So, we give anyone an appointment who will take that appointment, but the increasing problem now is there's not enough supply of vaccine to keep up with the first appointments, let alone the second appointments.

**Lehrer:** And related to Malcolm's call, what about the homebound, sick and elderly people who don't live in congregate facilities, per se, as he says he does, but like the kinds of people who receive Meals on Wheels in their homes, they're not in institutions of any kind where the vaccines are being brought to them. They're at home, but there's currently no mechanism in place, as I understand it, to bring vaccines to the homes of people like that, even assuming the vaccines are available, and they would, in many cases be among the most medically vulnerable. Is there, or is that in the works?

**Mayor:** Yes, it is in the works. We're working and we're going to be announcing shortly a variety of new approaches to help every senior, because now at this point, remember, folks 65 and up are authorized to get the vaccine by the state. We are going to have new announcements on ways we are getting seniors who have any possibility of leaving their home, to a vaccination center. But we know there are some homebound seniors who literally cannot leave. We're working out a way to serve them directly in their home. It is obviously very labor intensive. So it is a meticulous slower process when you have to go home by home or apartment by apartment, but we're going to get that done. We'll announce that shortly. You said the most important part though, Brian. The more fundamental problem is will there be vaccine to go with this effort to reach our homebound seniors? I want to emphasize; we will run out next week. I'm telling you at this rate, there will not be any doses left in the City of New York by the end of next week, if we don't get any major resupply. We've been getting resupply right now at a very paltry level of about 100,000 doses a week. I am telling you that we went through 125,000 in the first four days of this week. And our numbers are increasing every day of how many people we can vaccinate. Yesterday we did almost 34,000 people. That number is just going to keep going up. And if we don't get a serious supply, we're going to have to stop taking appointments just as happened at Mount Sinai Hospital and NYU Langone. That if there's no supply, we've got to freeze the appointment system. That would be insane after all the progress that has been made, setting up a system so people could actually get appointments, people are showing up nonstop. There's tons of appointments booked, everyone's ready. But if Washington and Albany and the manufacturers don't find a better way to get us vaccine, we're going to run out. And I would argue, I know there's all parts of the country that are suffering right now. But there's few places that can move the vaccine as quickly as we can. So the notion that the vaccine is in some parts of the country, going to wait prolonged periods of time before they have the ability to get it to people. Whereas we're speeding up every day. We should get the supply commensurate to our ability to give the vaccine. We're all Americans, everyone needs to be protected. And this, it just makes no sense that we're being starved of the supply we need when we're vaccinating at this high level.

**Lehrer:** So are you saying that this is mostly a matter of policy and decision-making in Washington or even in Albany that says X amounts of vaccine go to New York City, Y amounts go to somewhere in Illinois, or wherever and they could snap their fingers and change that?

**Mayor:** There's two points. There's some – your summary is largely correct. But the first point is, first of all, we are calling upon, I know the current administration won't do it, but I'm certainly calling upon President-elect Biden and his administration starting next week, to end the practice of holding back the second doses and get them to us immediately. There's been a reserve approach previously. We need those second doses and we need the flexibility to use them immediately for everyone who needs to be vaccinated even for the first time. So right now the federal government has not moved that supply and they haven't given us that freedom. Second of

all, yes there are parts of the country who are getting supplies, but can't use them as quickly as we can. I think until the supply increases much more nationally, go where the ability to vaccinate is strongest. Get the supply to where it can be implemented, not sit in a refrigerator somewhere, but be implemented. As soon as we get it in now, it's going right back out. It's going into people's arms. That's not true everywhere because they just don't have the infrastructure. So let us have the supply we need and as the manufacturers get more and more going – and by the way, new vaccines, you know, Johnson and Johnson now, it looks like it'll be a relatively soon that vaccine. That will increase supply. But why should New Yorkers not even be able to get an appointment for lack of supply when we know there is supply in this country not being used?

**Lehrer:** Marabell in Rockaway Beach, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Marabell.

**Question:** Hi, good morning, Brian. And good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for having me. I'm a Rockaway Beach resident. I own a Venezuelan restaurant and I'm the managing partner for Rockaway Beach Club, the company that ran the three concessions on the boardwalk from 2011 to 2020 through Sandy and its aftermath as well through the pandemic. On December 23rd, the Parks Department announced that we lost the bid for the next license. We worked really hard to build these concessions into what they are today and gave fair rent to all the food businesses that have created a strong economy in Rockaway and have created hundreds of local jobs. The community massively expressed at a public hearing this past Monday Mr. Mayor, their discontent with the [inaudible]. These new contracts show incredible increasing rents that will clearly impact us, the little guys after a year where we have seen how fragile the hospitality business is, but how important we are to this economy. I personally had to close a 17-year-old restaurant to –

**Lehrer:** Whoops, did we lose you Marabell? Alright I think you've got her question, she did drop off.

**Mayor:** Brian, let me say – Oh, there she goes. Marabell, can you hear us?

**Question:** Yes.

**Mayor:** Okay. We lost you for a second. Continue.

**Question:** Okay.

**Lehrer:** What's your question ultimately?

**Question:** Yeah, my question is if he doesn't – do you think this is a step in the wrong direction? This is the direction that can allow the City to get more revenue in the short run. It will definitely disintegrate our community of solid businesses that offer New Yorkers fair prices and listen and work closely with the community.

**Mayor:** Marabell, I'm so glad, really glad you called because sometimes City agencies do things that I find mistaken and I need to know about them to be able to address them. It's a huge city and a lot going on. And sometimes the only way I find out that something needs to be fixed is by someone like you calling this show. So thank you. Please give your information to WNYC. Look, it makes no sense at all to me that a historic business that's been part of the Rockaway

community through thick and thin after Sandy and all the rebuilding – I would not, I don't understand how on earth that happened, honestly, that you are not continued. I want to get to the bottom of this. We want your business to thrive. We need your business to thrive. We need the people that depend on you for employment to have employment. I'm also going to review this question. I don't understand how there could be a rent increase in this environment. So this entire thing is troubling to me. I will personally follow up and I'll make sure someone gets to you today and let's see what we can do to fix this.

**Lehrer:** And other people have talked to me about that particular situation. And I know they have a lot of support out there in the Rockaways. So Marabell, it sounds like you've got the Mayor's attention and in a sympathetic way. So we'll connect you. Different kind of restaurant question, it looks like from Susanna in Harlem. Susanna you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi.

**Question:** Hi. Thank you so much for taking my call, Brian. I'm a huge fan. Mr. Mayor, I own two restaurants now. I've owned one restaurant for 10 years in Harlem on a 117th street. And in December reopened the second one. They're both currently closed. For the first one delivery and to go wasn't economically viable. We tried to keep the new one open because we had a small outdoor patio and we were using the individual plexiglass pods and our parking lane structure, which has four by four windows on both sides that open completely. And about a week and a half ago, the Health Department came by and said, you absolutely cannot have any guests inside unless an entire wall is completely open, it's considered indoor dining and you're not allowed to have any guests. So we said, okay, I guess it's not economically viable to have our second place open either. And we closed. Meanwhile, you know, not that I want anybody else to have the same – by the way the Health Department said if you use these again, there'll be a large fine and we can revoke your liquor license. So I wasn't going to take that risk. And I don't want anybody else to have those same troubles, but I see other people all over the city using the exact same pods and the parking lane structures that don't have an entire wall open. And they're operating and they're full. And it's been ten years of me owning a restaurant. My biggest hurdle has always been the City, the constant surprise inspections. Like it's a gotcha moment. And the constant fines and the constant regulations. One inspector will say one thing and another one will come a week later and say the opposite. But I've dealt with it because, you know, I love the city and I love, I love having a restaurant here. But now I'm closed and I've laid off 45 of my employees and I take their livelihoods as my own responsibility. And I take it really seriously. And it's breaking my heart. I gave out bags of food to some of my guys last week. And then I was in here yesterday painting and I got a note stuck in my door from the DOT saying, you need more reflective tape on your outdoor structure, you have 24 hours, or there could be a \$1,000 fine. It feels as if you're trying, like purposely trying to kill small business in the city. I mean, this has been years of it, but the inconsistency and the constant every time I turn around, you know, an inspector in here. And can you imagine if you were in your office and you were doing five different things and somebody walked in and said, I have the power to make you stop what you're doing and have an inspection right now. So I'll stop speaking, but I guess my real issue is that I just, I'm on the Frederick Douglass Boulevard Alliance. I'm part of the New York City Hospitality Alliance. I speak for many restaurants when we feel like we're not having any support in these like super difficult economic times. And we're trying to keep our small businesses and our people employed and our streets clean and our tax revenue paid for. And we're just every time, I mean a \$1,000 fine yesterday. I'm sorry. I'll stop that. That's my question. Where's the support? And where is the like, thought that, you know, we're not necessarily always going to be here?

**Lehrer:** Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor:** Susanna, first of all, please give your information to WNYC so we can fix the specific issues. I want to say, I appreciate you laying out everything you've been through. Because I don't want to see you or anyone else go through all that. I also will say that the effort to keep people safe whether it is to make sure there's ventilation in outdoor dining, which is the entire concept of outdoor dining, or to make sure that people are safe from the traffic around outdoor dining, those are really important efforts. They need to be done fairly. They need to be done in a way that gives you plenty of opportunity to address issues. There's been a lot of information put out on the way to keep people safe and the rules. So I want to affirm – I want, because I do feel like there's a little more to this story, not about your specific case, but the broader case. Our commitment to saving small businesses led us to outdoor dining. That's the whole point. We did Open Streets. We did Open Restaurants. We created an approach that never had been done before in New York City. It is now permanent. So you and every other restaurant owner knows you can use that space consistently for years to come. And that's going to be part of bringing us back. And I want you to do well. And I want your employees to have their job. We need that. But we got to keep people safe too. We have seen an incredibly intense increase in the number of coronavirus cases. We see more and more people going to the hospital. We see people losing their lives. This is serious stuff. So I care deeply about the restaurant industry, the people who work and the folks who built these restaurants from scratch. I want you to thrive, but we got to save lives too. So when someone says, Hey, you need ventilation or you need to make sure that the traffic can see your outdoor structure, that's important. But we got to do it in a way that's fair and not arbitrary. That gives you ample time to correct. We have been putting out a lot of information about how to get this stuff, right. We'll keep doing it. But in your case, I'll make sure senior people get to you today. Let's fix these situations. I want to fix them so you can keep going. And I believe there is a resolution we can find here.

**Lehrer:** Susanna, thank you. We will take that contact information. And as we run out of time, Mr. Mayor, I do want to get one question in about, and let you say something about the preliminary City budget that you released yesterday for the fiscal year that begins July 1st. And it kind of reveals part of the shocking economic disparity that the pandemic has both caused and revealed. If I'm seeing this right, property tax revenue went down in the current fiscal year, but personal income tax and business tax revenue went up because investors and many professional class workers actually have done better during the pandemic than before. So how are you looking at the budget? Both in fiscal terms and in moral terms for what it reveals?

**Mayor:** Year 2020 is the epitome of the old phrase, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It's quite troubling. It really is. I mean, for God's sake, wealthy people got so much more in this year. We did an update yesterday, 120 New York State billionaires increased their combined wealth by about \$77 billion during the year 2020. So we need to tax the wealthy. This is my bottom line. Albany needs to get it together and tax the wealthy to avert the kinds of horrible cuts that could be coming to human services, to health care, to education. That is the tale of two cities that's happening in 2020 is unbelievable. We're trying to answer that in this budget, with all the tools we have by putting resources, redistributing wealth into the 27 neighborhoods that were most deeply affected by the coronavirus, that felt that horrible disparity, racially and economically that we saw in the coronavirus crisis. We're trying to redistribute wealth and services to them. But meanwhile, folks are getting wealthy during this crisis and they got a tax



break a couple of years ago from Donald Trump. And Albany needs to right that wrong and make sure the wealthy in New York City and New York State pay their fair share in taxes.

**Lehrer:** And that is the last word for today from Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, we appreciate it as always. Talk to you next Friday.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much Brian. Take care.

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