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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As we mentioned before the break, the five boroughs are officially in the fourth and final phase of easing social restrictions joining the rest of the state. Now some activities outdoors have been given a green light, but there are other major restrictions that still have to be respected. There's no indoor dining, malls and gyms remained closed. And all of this contributes to a very uncertain economic future for the city. Joining me now to talk about that and much more from the Blue Room Inside City Hall is Mayor de Blasio. Welcome Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good to see you Errol, how you doing?

Louis: Just fine thanks. And let me just ask you about that – with the city in a fiscal crisis, have you considered making kind of special outreach to some of the business leaders, some of the frankly very wealthy New Yorkers, some of the hundred or so billionaires who call this city home, to find out if they could open their Rolodexes or otherwise lend some assistance and try to get through this very difficult period?

Mayor: Oh, absolutely. You know, I met with the co-chair of the New York City Partnership last weekend. You know, I've had numerous conversations with some our leading business community members and folks in my administration have been speaking with some of the folks in the city who have done the best in their own lives and who want to help the city. And what we first said is help us in Washington because a lot of them have very strong relationships in Washington, help us get the stimulus because this is the single biggest piece in the equation going forward. But we've also talked a lot about investment in New York City. Investment in working people, hiring back working people through their companies, focusing on communities that were hit the hardest by the coronavirus, public housing and neighborhoods hit the hardest hiring from them. We've talked about the focus on small business, how larger businesses can help patronize New York City's small businesses and help a lot of them survive. So it's been a very vibrant discussion. I think it's going to be an important piece of the equation. I don't think it comes anywhere near the importance of the stimulus. I think that's what we all need to focus on and that looks like it finally may be beginning to move. But I found a lot of leaders in the business community who are very invested in New York City and want to be part of helping us to move forward.

Louis: Can we expect, or should we expect a sort of a public statement from them? Because there's a lot of talk out there, worried talk I think, that people might decide to relocate a lot of their jobs outside of the city or to rely on a distance workplaces in a way that causes problems in the commercial real estate market and otherwise disrupts a lot of the economic life that we're hoping to get back to.

Mayor: Well, I think the more we do that, I think that's something the City needs to do, working with folks in the private sector and all the key pieces of our community, is like keep showing that confidence in the future in New York City. Errol you've seen New York City go through so much. What we went through in the 60's and 70's and what we've gone through with 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, the Great Recession and New York City comes back every time. And literally in fact comes back stronger and it will happen again. But I think those shows of confidence and that show – that commitment to investment. A lot of the companies have told me that is their plan. I think you're absolutely right. We want to make it as public as possible. And look, we understand there will be a transitional period until there's a vaccine. We're not going to be surprised by more remote employment during that time frame. I think once the coronavirus is behind us, which, you know, my sense is, is somewhere in the next six to nine months, we're talking about for a vaccine at this point. Then we're going to see a lot of people coming back into the city and reconnecting because what we have here is irreplaceable. And you just can't get it any place else. So I think we're going to get there, but I think you're right, that those shows of confidence really matter.

Louis: There's one particular rich New Yorker, maybe former New Yorker at this point, who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, to switch to another topic who is talking about sending federal law enforcement into the city. I suppose on one level they're probably already here, but he has talked about deploying them in cities like Portland. And he specifically mentioned New York as places where some of what we've seen hints about, folks going out on the street, breaking up protests, arresting people and otherwise taking on what are normally considered local law enforcement functions. Sometimes over the objections of the local elected leadership, the Mayor of Portland, the Mayor of Chicago. What's going on here in New York? And have you had any kind of conversations with the federal government?

Mayor: No. We see no evidence of that, Errol. A lot of times the President has blustered and threatened and then nothing happens. Which I think is the most typical scenario. But look, look what happened in Portland. It's been a fiasco sending in the federal law enforcement agents, totally backfired. It makes no sense. We have issues we have to work on here, but that's exactly what we're doing. And I have a lot of faith in the people of the city, who more and more, are coming out to address our own challenges. I have a lot of faith in the NYPD but I do not have faith in the notion of just throwing in federal law enforcement for obviously political reasons. That always backfires.

Louis: The jurisdictional hook, and to the extent that there was any kind of substantive argument behind it on the West Coast, I believe was they were extensively there to protect federal property from vandalism or from protesters and so forth. And I think about the level of graffiti that is on public buildings, including right behind your office, where you're sitting right now, on the Tweed building, where I saw it spray painted, you know, death to America, all kinds of ugly stuff on the surrogate's court. And all of that is just a few yards away from, the federal building at 26 Federal Plaza?

Mayor: Look first of all, that kind of graffiti, there's no place for it on public buildings. It will be cleaned up. But second of all, no, we haven't seen that affecting federal buildings. Not only do they have the NYPD, they have their own protection. We can't overstate what's going on here. There's been instances like that. They've been few and far between. But no, if he's trying to send

an outside presence, it's not because it's needed to protect those buildings. Again, it's the same way he's used ICE. He uses ICE as an extension of his reelection campaign, not to protect people. I just have no illusions here. So we do not welcome it and it will not work.

Louis: What would your reaction be if we start seeing reports of federal law enforcement snatching people off the street and otherwise taking action along the lines the President has promised?

Mayor: Every time we've seen the President do things that are illegal and unconstitutional, we've challenged him in court and overwhelmingly beat him and he's had to retreat. And I think we would see the same scenario here.

Louis: Okay, let me move on to another topic. The City has entered phase four as of today. Concerns remain about nightlife. We've shown a lot of footage over the congregation of people out in Astoria, in defiance of public health regulations and common sense. But businesses do need crowds to survive. You know, on the other hand, you don't necessarily want tourists to come here, but they've been a big part of what keeps these businesses alive. How do you sort of work through those kinds of dilemmas?

Mayor: Look, we are in an unprecedented moment of history and the vast majority of people get Errol. In fact, we've had a huge amount of enforcement out over months. And what we see consistently is compliance from bar owners, restaurant owners, customers. Sometimes people need to be reminded. Look, we're social beings. People get too close together, need to be reminded to put more space between them or put back on their face covering. Overwhelmingly that's what we get. What we saw in Astoria was something different and totally unacceptable. It was -- in fact a lot of it happened after the bar in question had closed. And so we're going to make very clear to people that up to now, look, I haven't wanted to close bars or restaurants that are struggling to survive. They're trying to bring people back to work. I have not wanted to give fines to people that don't have much money anymore, but if that's what's going to take for some people, that's what they're going to get, because there's been plenty of warnings, plenty of education. I think the word is spreading that that one in a bar in Astoria has been shut down. I think others will take head of that. But overwhelmingly, I don't think there has to be a contradiction between folks coming out to enjoy themselves the right way. And then, you know, going back home, I think the vast majority of people know what that looks like and how to do it the right way. That's why outdoor dining has been such a success. Vast majority of people have gone about it the right way, and everyone has benefited. But if there's places that aren't right, we're going to deal with it.

Errol: And then I guess something that I've noticed on social media, and it is a question I think that is out there, which is that if that same group of people had come together in Astoria and, you know, listen to a lecture about Black Lives Matter or otherwise engaged in some sort of a progressive leaning political demonstration, would the reaction from City Hall have been the same?

Mayor: Look, we are dealing with the reality right now, where people are being told how important it is, in the place that is bluntly, where a lot more people have been over weeks and months, which is where they go to get food and drink. The protests happen intensely for a few weeks. There's been a lot less now. What's going to be with us, long term is all those places in all

those neighborhoods where people go sometimes for hours and that's what we got to fix. So they're really apples and oranges to me. The message has been so clear for months, we've been sending people out to educate people at those sites, Errol. And say, you can't do this, and we don't want to have to come down on you. We don't want to have to take something away from you, but if you don't pay attention, we will. So that message has been given clearly, and we're now going to implement it.

Louis: Okay. Stand by Mr. Mayor. It is time for a break.

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Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm once again joined by Mayor de Blasio from the Blue Room at City Hall. Mr. Mayor, let's talk about law enforcement. There's this video that's been circulating for about a week now of an officer, really, I don't know how else to put it, beating up a homeless guy on the train. It looks awful. It seems awful. It seems like exactly the kind of overreach that people have been protesting for so long. I'm wondering what is – how are we missing – what are they missing about the message of what thousands of people have protested about, what you've talked about time and time again? You know, we're showing it on our screen right now. The guy clearly doesn't want to get up. And, you know, the guy just starts – the officer just starts punching him, throws all of his stuff on the – kicks it along the platform, pepper sprays the guy. Do you know if there was any enforcement action taken in that case against the officer?

Mayor: Let me give you an update on that, Errol. First of all, I think the way you lead in is exactly right. This is not what we're talking about. This is not what we're aspiring to. It was very painful to watch that video and, look, I don't like anything I see in the video because I don't like the actions of – any time it seems to be an officer using too much force, that's not what we believe in. We believe in de-escalation. We also – I don't like anytime I see someone refusing to follow an instruction by an officer. That's an obvious valid instruction. In fact, apparently from what we see in the video, the guy also, you know, strikes at the officer and that's not acceptable. So, there's just nothing good here. There is an investigation underway. There's another layer of this, which is the District Attorney involved – is in the middle of investigating as well. And that is affecting our ability to be public about the status of the PD investigation. This is this thing we've talked about before, when multiple layers of government are investigating the same thing. It's still an area we've got to make more streamlined and clear.

Because I think what's happening now is the public wants answers as quickly as possible. And we've got to get to a place to fulfill what I want to do regularly, which is within literally a day or two, NYPD being able to say whether there is going to be any immediate discipline in the case, and then finish the larger investigation, determine if any charges are needed. But that is hindered sometimes when there's another investigatory body involved. Either way, we will get the answer out very quickly –

Louis: In this case, the District Attorney who is going to prosecute the homeless person who'd gotten beaten up for, I think he kicked back once, and he was being charged with some pretty serious assault penalties that could have landed him in jail and in prison, frankly, for a long, long time. But there's nothing that stops the NYPD from looking at its own patrol guide, its own instructions – they sent those folks out there with guns to do something that night. Surely, they

could sort of take a look at this video and decide whether or not procedures are being followed, right?

Mayor: Again, Errol, I wish it was as simple as that. This is a –

Louis: It is as simple as that –

Mayor: I'm really troubled that this interplay of different jurisdictions is making things as complicated as it is. And I want to simplify it for the people of New York City because I don't think it's one size fits all. I've said very clearly to the leadership of the NYPD, the Commissioner, and other folks at PD, I want to get this issue resolved. Whatever happened here, I wanted to determine quickly what should happen in terms of the officer. I do think sometimes other investigations cause delays because one person or another has not yet been interviewed. And, look, we're all going to get to a result quickly, either way you slice it. And the most important thing is that the outcome be accurate and that it helps us make the kind of change we need to. But I do understand why people are frustrated when sometimes it takes as long as it does and what I want to try and figure out is how do we streamline that? Because I share your assumption, even though I know the law complicates matters, I would like it to be, can we just, de-link the internal discipline to the maximum extent possible from anything else happening around it and what's it going to take to get us there, so at least that piece can move quickly and everyone can see it moving quickly.

Louis: The frustration that was voiced by your Police Commissioner – he talked about it on our air this morning. I'm sure – well, I heard you talk about it this morning as well – where he was accusing a lot of the political leadership of the city of being cowards and of not supporting the police and so forth. I guess one piece of that I did want to, sort of, raise with you, which is that the Occupy City Hall folks, who are outside your office right now, there was that scene last week where apparently members of that group were involved in the physical back and forth that resulted in, among other things your Chief of Department getting his finger broken, another cop getting his head cracked in, and, you know, the Post, I think, covered the scene of the suspect in this case, getting bailed out, \$7,500 bail – this wasn't like one of these no bail situations – sort of leaving in triumph, and then going into a tent, under a tarp right next to City Hall there. This can't go on. I mean, it's just – it looks to me like the mirror image of the video, we just talked about. That's something that's clearly wrong. That should not be, you know, just kind of shrugged off as one of those things. And yet there it is.

Mayor: Yeah. Errol, look, we are going through a really tough time as a city, we have to turn the page here, we have to move forward. It means getting everything back on track. It means what we're doing with PD officers, getting out into the neighborhoods where they're needed most and deploying them where the biggest problems are. It means getting the community more deeply involved, getting prosecutors to prosecute the gun offenses, getting the court system going again. We've gone through a massive unprecedented dislocation, and we just got to be blunt about it. It's been hell for this city, but it doesn't have to be this way. We are going to come out of it. We're going to turn the page. I don't like situations like that one bit, I don't accept them, but I also don't think we're fated to live this way. We've been through the worst crisis in the city's history by many measures, but we are starting to overcome it. And we made, you know, the beginnings of some progress this weekend, and we're going to make more progress this week and the week after that and the week after that. That's the way I look at it.

Louis: Okay, let me ask one last question – for the third time in about a week, the Black Lives Matter mural on Fifth Avenue was defaced. And among other things, it looks like there's like a whole squad of officers there to protect the mural, which seems like a questionable use of police resources at a time when there's like shootings and other stuff going on all over the city.

Mayor: There's always a squad of officers there because it's Trump Tower. From what I've heard all along the compliment that's there, has been there for quite a while for very obvious reasons. And they can do that and also protect the murals simultaneously. And my message to anyone who would deface that mural is, first of all, it's incredibly disrespectful to millions of people in this city and this country. We're saying a simple thing. I would say to people of all other races, you know, think about it from your own perspective as well. All it is, is an affirmation of people's value who've been, for so long in this country, devalued and disrespected. How about just let it be and let it be a sign of progress. But if someone tries to deface it, that's an offense, they'll be arrested, and we will repaint it again. So, anytime – if anyone out there thinks they're going to do something that won't be addressed, it will be addressed and we'll put it back good as new and keep sending the message to the people of this city in this country.

Louis: Well, here again, I asked you a few minutes ago about the, you know, the lurid sort of anti-police graffiti that's all over public buildings outside of City Hall right now. And that's kind of like, oh, we'll get to it, when we get to it. A different kind of political statement, political graffiti, if you want to call it that, on Fifth Avenue gets an immediate response.

Mayor: That other graffiti is going to be cleaned up for sure. And there's technical and other reasons why it's not as easy as it looks, but it's going to be cleaned up, period.

Louis: Okay, we'll leave it there for now. Thanks for your time, Mr. Mayor. We'll talk again next week.

Mayor: Thank you, Errol.

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