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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. Well, some really good things are happening now in our battle against COVID. I am really, really excited, because last week we passed the milestone we have been waiting for – more than half-a-million vaccinations in a week. We proved it could be done. It is the shape things to come. We expect more weeks like that, going forward. And that is supercharging our vaccination effort, and that is how we win the race against the variants – more and more and more vaccination, this is the X-factor. And when you're reaching more than half-a-million people a week, that is a game-changer. Now, let's give you the numbers. As of this moment, we have vaccinated – we have provided vaccines – 4, 601,756 vaccines to-date. Vaccinations, more than 4.5 million vaccinations to-date and climbing steadily. To give you perspective – I always love to give comparisons – that is more vaccinations than there are people in the entire State of Kentucky.

So, now that we finally have supply and that we finally are able to reach more and more people, we want to make sure we're reaching those in greatest need, and that still remains our oldest seniors. So, we've had a pilot initiative last few days for seniors age 75 years old and up, where they could simply walk up to some of our biggest sites and get an appointment right away – not have to make an appointment online or to call in, but just literally walk up, get an appointment. That has proven to be really effective. It's really encouraging seniors to come out who previously didn't come out, so we want to do more. So, we're now expanding from three sites that was part of our pilot program to 25 sites – 25 City-run sites all over the five boroughs. We'll have walk-up opportunities for senior 75 years old and up to come in, get a vaccination right away. This is the group we need to reach the most. This is a tactic that we know is working. It's been working around the country too. So, we're going to be doing more of this – 25 sites, lots more outreach to the oldest New Yorkers. And we will be setting aside appointments at all our City-run sites, Health Department, H + H sites for seniors, because we really need to focus on the folks who are the most vulnerable.

And at the same time, today, of course, marks the beginning of a universal eligibility for anyone 16 years old and older. That's good, because it will make things simpler in many ways and, obviously, we want to see everyone get vaccinated. The more supply we get, the easier it will be. So, we still need to keep pushing this to the federal government, to the manufacturers, to the State. We still need supply, supply, supply, but things are really getting better. Now, with a universal approach, we look forward to reaching people of all ages. And one of the best parts of more supply is more Johnson & Johnson vaccine. This is the one I got myself. I believe in it. It's been proven to be effective and it's one dose – one and done. It is so much simpler, particularly for reaching folks who are hardest to reach and are amongst the most vulnerable in the city. So,

I'm talking about folks – for example, homeless folks, folks who are undocumented, folks who have particular needs. We need to make sure, when we do reach them, that the single dose gets the whole job done.

So, one of the new approaches that we're using is a mobile vaccination bus. And this bus is really exciting. It's going to be a game-changer as well. We can do up to 200 vaccinations per day through this bus. This is an approach that's really going to help us reach a lot of people who are being missed so far, but this will take the vaccinations right to them. First week of this effort, we're going to focus on restaurant workers and restaurant delivery workers. These are folks who have been heroic during this whole pandemic. They have been making sure New Yorkers are fed. They've been out there. They've been vulnerable. Obviously, a number of them happen to be undocumented folks. We need to reach them. So, the bus will be, starting tomorrow, in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. And this is a great partnership with a wonderful organization, ROAR, which stands for Relief Opportunities for All Restaurants. I want to thank everyone at ROAR for the great work you're doing, helping, working people through the toughest of times. Thank you. This bus is going to make a difference. It's another new approach. We're going to keep innovating new approaches. We just talked about the walkup appointments for the oldest seniors. Now, this bus, and new approaches all the time to reach deeper and deeper into communities.

I want you to see this bus. I want you to understand what it feels like to get vaccinated there. So, we're going to our morning briefing correspondent, Dr. Ted Long live on location. The bus is outside City Hall and Dr. Long is going to give us a tour. Take it away, Dr. Ted Long.

Executive Director Ted Long, NYC Test and Trace Corps.: Thank you, sir. I'm excited to be here today to announce the first of its kind mobile vaccine bus. This bus will be the latest addition to our mobile vaccine fleet, which currently has 20 vans driving around New York City today. This bus will tear down barriers to getting vaccinated by bringing the vaccine hundreds of doses a day, literally to your doorstep. Now, come inside. Let me show you around.

So, as you can see here, you come in the entrance here, if you're a patient. And then, there's going to be six exam rooms so that we can be doing six vaccines at any given moment here. Each of the exam rooms is safely separated by six feet between. And, as you can see here, this is where you'll register as a patient. And then, these are two of the exam rooms here. One of our vaccinators will sit here or here, having an iPad. And then, the patient will sit here and receive the vaccine. This is our refrigerator here, where we keep all of the vaccine. And between these six vaccinators, we'll be able to 200 vaccines in a single day through this bus. Also, importantly, as we tear down old barriers for New Yorkers to get vaccinated, I want to show you this here, which is our ADA Hoyer lift, which allows us to give the vaccine to any New Yorker that's interested in coming onto our bus here.

Now, for tomorrow, we're going to be going live in Sunset Park. In addition to everything that I've shown you here, in Sunset Park we're going to have in-person staff that speak multiple languages. They're going to speak English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese, all in Sunset Park tomorrow. Starting tomorrow, we're going to have a focus on restaurant workers and restaurant delivery workers. Now, with this new mobile bus that we could drive anywhere in the city, plus

our 20 mobile vans that we have today, New York City's vaccine effort is truly on the move. Thank you, sir. Back to you.

Mayor: Dr. Ted Long, I liked that ending. On the move – exactly right. Thank you, Ted. And thank you to everyone who's a part of this effort. A special thank you to Promobile Kitchen, who's the bus operator. Thanks for their efforts here. And Daybreak Medical, they'll be providing the medical support. Thank you to everyone. This is an exciting new effort. It's going to reach a lot of people and we're going to keep innovating and finding new approaches.

All right, let me turn to something else that is crucial to our recovery. And I talk about a recovery for all of us. It begins with the vaccination efforts, right? A best way to foster our recovery is to hit that goal – 5 million adults vaccinated in New York City by June. But then, a recovery for all of us means bringing people back to work, creating fairness and equity, getting this city ready to take off again, to get to where we were before the pandemic, and then go farther.

So, there's an idea I talked about in the State of the City, and I want to frame it very personally. I always say, when I was growing up, there was a reverence for what was done during the New Deal to help people who are struggling. My family here in New York City, during the Depression, suffered. We had a family business in the Garment District that was lost. People went through extraordinary challenges and a lot of people that they knew went through even worse. And I would hear these stories as a child time and time again, and there was a deep appreciation that even in the most difficult circumstances when folks didn't know what was going to happen, there was tremendous fear in the beginning of the Depression and no way out was visible – and then, two New Yorkers really led the way, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Fiorello LaGuardia. And they were talked about so often when we had family gatherings, Easter, Christmas, you name it – when everyone was around the table, they would tell the stories. And I often felt like there was a chair there for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and a chair there for Fiorello LaGuardia, because they were talked about so often. What FDR did in particular with the New Deal saved this city, turned this city around in the depths of the Depression. He was a New Yorker who loved this city deeply and did something about it by creating a whole new vision. So, we, in our time we borrow humbly from what FDR did. And I think emulating his success is another way of paying tribute to the way he changed this nation in this city.

So, one of the stories I used to hear about that was often one of the most emotional ones was about the Civilian Conservation Corps., and how folks were unemployed and hopeless got an opportunity to do something positive and productive and help to beautify this city and this country and help to create beautiful spaces for people and things happen that never could have happened otherwise. And the folks who were part of the CCC would talk about it as a moment where they really felt they made a profound contribution. So, it was something so good, but it was also something that mattered right down to the individual level. It did a good thing for the City, for the country, but it also mattered to each individual participated. They felt they made a difference. We want to emulate that here. And I want to take a moment to thank our president today, Joe Biden, who clearly is taking the great lessons of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and putting them into action right now with the stimulus, with his infrastructure vision. President Biden understands what those times were like. I know he heard the same stories when he was a kid growing up that I heard. He's putting that memory and that vision into action today, and I

thank him for it. And now, we want to take some of that stimulus money and do something special here in New York City, that's going to employ 10,000 New Yorkers, give them an opportunity to get back on their feet, do something great for the city, also help the city as a whole recover. And we're borrowing from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC, we've got our own new version – the City Cleanup Corps.

And we have created images to express what this is about and we're obviously tipping our cap to the extraordinary times of the New Deal, and helping people understand that the City Cleanup Corps., it's – if you just want to talk about people getting opportunity and jobs, 10,000 jobs, that that's going to help a lot of families. But I also want you to think about what it means for our whole recovery. The energy that's going to be created by the big spring cleaning and summer cleaning of this whole city. Folks will be out there, eradicating graffiti, beautifying parks, helping our wonderful Open Streets program to be as beautiful as it can be, making sure there's less litter on the streets – you name it. We have so many things that we need to do. And now, having a dedicated group of New Yorkers who are going to go out there and make this city shine, that's going to speed the recovery. So, we are hiring now. The first 1,000 jobs are being posted and there's an opportunity right now for folks to get to work doing this important service to the city. Where are we going to focus? We're going to focus in a variety of different ways, because 10,000 people is a lot of people. We're going to be listening to elected officials and community leaders about some of the areas that most need to be cleaned up in their communities. We're going to focus on the 33 neighborhoods delineated by our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity and make sure there are special cleanup efforts there where needed most. We're also going to focus on business districts, commercial streets, places where we depend on our economic recovery to happen. We want to beautify them. We want to show New York City is open for business and moving forward. So, anyone who wants to be a part of this extraordinary effort, you can go to nyc.gov/CCC. Jobs will be posted continually. The first 500 are up, there'll be another 500 behind that very soon and continued hiring, hiring, hiring until we hit the 10,000. And I'll tell you something, this is going to be part of what brings New York City back strong. So, we're very, very excited. This is going to help us achieve recovery for all of us.

All right, let's go to today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, good number, 176 patients. So, again, we're watching every day and we're not drawing any conclusions until we get a lot more data, but that at least is a good number. Confirmed positivity – 58.24 percent. Hospitalization rate, 3.59 per 100,000. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – today's report, 3,193 cases. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19 – today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 6.63 percent.

A few words in Spanish, and this is about the City Cleanup Corps.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we turn to our colleagues in the media. And please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Ted Long, by Chancellor Porter, by Amy Peterson from the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations, by Dr. Chokshi, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Steve Burns from WCBS 880.

Question: Hi. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Steve. How are you doing?

Question: I'm good. Dr. Long has got a future as a reporter if he wants a far less well-paying job.

Mayor: Dr. Long is a very enthusiastic reporter, you're right about that.

Question: Yep. First, I wanted to ask a little bit more about the Cleanup Corps. I may have missed it, is there a total price tag and how much these workers will get paid?

Mayor: The workers are going to get paid \$15 an hour and we'll get you the total price tag. It's all going to depend, of course, on exactly when everyone comes on board, but our goal is hire up as quickly as possible, get this in gear this spring, this summer so you really feel the impact. I think you're going to see a whole lot of activity in this city, this summer, and a huge amount of outdoor activity, cultural activity, open restaurants, open streets. We want that whole situation beautified. And then, especially for the fall, for September, we expect lots of businesses to reopen, lots of workers to come back, schools coming back full force. But we'll get you the exact dollar figure as it develops. Go ahead, Steve.

Question: All right, I appreciate that. And I know the overall vaccination goal for a while has been five million by June. If I'm not mistaken, given the pace right now, you can hit five million next week. So, what is going to be changing it once we do cross that line? I mean, what does that signify for the city? And could we be seeing any broader changes once we hit that big goal?

Mayor: Again, that's vaccinations that were over 4.5 million vaccinations, but remember, most of those are folks who need two doses. So, what we're saying is five million fully vaccinated New Yorkers by June. We're obviously well on the way to that. But remember there is that wait period with Pfizer, Moderna, three or four weeks until second dose, and we have to make sure people get their second dose. So, very confident we will hit the five million in June. If we can go even faster and get even more, of course we want to, but job one is to hit that goal because I think that is one of those critical mass points, and this is something I worked with the – our health care leadership on, what would be an amount of full vaccinations that would be a game changer for New York City. We agreed at five million would make a huge difference, New York City residents fully vaccinated by June, and we're going to do it.

Moderator: The next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Shant, how you been?

Question: Not too bad, not too bad. Actually, want to ask a State Budget question, I understand it may include a fast track to – for authorization for casinos in New York City. Just wanted to get your latest thoughts on the prospect of a casino in Times Square or somewhere else within the city limits?

Mayor: Look, Shant, I think the bottom line here is, I think the legislature is being very smart about this. They clearly value local land use decision making and the right to localities to have a say, and I appreciate that deeply. I've always been clear about the fact that I think there's a bit of a mixed bag when it comes to casinos and we need to be very careful how we approach things. But we'll work with whatever the State Legislation does. I think in the meantime, you know, casinos get a lot of attention, but much more important is how we bring back our whole economy, and that's why things like, you know, continuing to bring our schools back, cleaning the city, all these basic things I think are really what's going to bring back the much larger economy. Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah, thanks for that. And different issue, yesterday a judge ordered the city to provide Wi-Fi in all shelters by the end of August. I know the City has already made a commitment to get Wi-Fi in all shelters, but can you just share your thoughts on the judge's order? And can you say how many shelters currently have Wi-Fi?

Mayor: Shant, we have all agreed from the beginning we want every shelter to have full Wi-Fi capacity. And in the meantime, we reached out to families and kids and made sure that they had alternatives because we wanted to keep kids learning. Some of these buildings are obviously real challenges, and that's been – the logistics have been a challenge, but we all agree that we need to get done. I have not seen the judge's order, but I can get you an update, the team will get you an update today on where we stand. We just want to get this done as quickly as possible even though we understand there's some challenging logistics, we will get the job done.

Moderator: The next is Jeff Mays from the New York Times.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for giving me a little HDTV there with that tour of the bus.

Mayor: It was pretty dynamic, wasn't it, Jeff?

Question: It was pretty nice, pretty nice, not bad. Anyway, I'm calling them with a more serious question. There was a – unfortunately, there was a what looked like a domestic abuse related triple homicide in Brownsville last night. We believe the – one of the women, a mother, may have worked for the city as a manager at one of the city's hospitals. I'm wondering if there's anything you can tell me about that incident, and also, you know, domestic violence has spiked during the pandemic. I'm wondering if you can talk about what the city has done to deal with the spike in domestic violence incidents because of – related to the pandemic.

Mayor: Yeah. First of all, a really troubling and tragic situation. I don't have new details for you, but we'll be getting them more in the course of the day, but a horrible, horrible situation, and my heart goes out to the folks who have been lost. Look, you're right, Jeff, we have seen on top of all the extraordinary challenges of this pandemic, we have seen another horrible blight, which is more domestic violence. What we tried to do is combine a lot of the outreach work that extraordinary community organizations do supporting survivors of domestic violence and working to prevent it. We've tried to double down on those efforts, support those efforts, and obviously the work that the NYPD does to try and many ways to avert domestic violence, to keep a close eye on any situation where there's been domestic violence to make sure that the perpetrators know that there is constant follow-up and constant vigilance and to support the survivors. So, we've tried. I do think we've got a lot more to do, and I do think it's one of so many reasons why we've got to bring the city back and our life back is to, you know, do everything we can to fight back against domestic violence. Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Thank you. Another question, Mr. Mayor, was about the Cleaning Corps. you just announced. I'm wondering, does this differ at all from what the city does, for example, during snow days and hiring workers? is this like a temporary sort of job? I've heard some concerns expressed about hiring during the pandemic and whether that is the best use of the stimulus money. So, are these going to be long-term hires or are they temporary hires? Could you give a little more details about the status of these folks –

Mayor: Yeah, Jeff, these – it's different than what we do on, you know, that very, very temporary basis. This is for the remainder of the year and we'll assess obviously toward the end of the year, but the goal is for the year 2021 to maximize the cleanup really, you know, roll out the red carpet all over this city that the city's coming back. We definitely saw more littering on sidewalks, you know, during the pandemic, we got to clean that up. We saw some more graffiti, we got to clean that up. We got to get to where we were before the pandemic and even better to really foster a recovery for all of us. So, the goal here is hire as many people as possible, as quickly as possible for employment in 2021 and only 2021, and then as we get to later in the year, we'll assess what makes sense to do going forward.

Moderator: The next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: I'm good, Henry, how you been?

Question: I'm good. Very good. Thank you. I wanted to ask you about the State Budget. It appears that the Governor has gotten his way, and there's a \$1.3 billion item in there to support this expansion of Penn Station which will involve using eminent domain, there's a lot of local opposition to it. The local Council people are opposed to it, and it appears that the State can overrule any local land use oversight on this. What's your feeling about this?

Mayor: Henry, I want to check the latest because that's not what my understanding was as of late yesterday. What the Governor proposed is a mistake. It's not that Penn Station isn't an important area for the city, it is, and I certainly believe we need more development as part of

how we come out of this pandemic, but it has to be the right kind of development. It has to be with communities, not against communities. It has to include the voices of communities. It has to respect what people need in a community and achieve something for that community and not just be a giveaway to big developers. So, the Governor's plan was very developer friendly, not community friendly. Last I heard the legislature was taking measures and steps to create balance, and I want to get the latest on that. We absolutely need that kind of balance when it comes to Penn Station. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Okay. Well, I'm probably going to want to hear from your staff your reaction when you find out the latest on this. My second question, I guess, has to do with the unions concern about schools that a lot of the new infections are occurring in young people, they're occurring in school age people, partly probably because they're not vaccinated, but for the teacher's union and other people who are in the schools, they think this raises the risk that the schools could still be a vector for infection despite how well the schools have been able to prevent that from happening. What is your view on that?

Mayor: Well, I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi, but I would say this just to put in perspective. I'm really struck by what Dr. Chokshi said yesterday, after 700,000 tests in our public schools. I think the composite figure was 0.57 percent positivity. That's just night and day compared to, you know, everything else happening in New York City. I mean, they have been the safest places in the city, continually, well before people were vaccinated. Further, we now know that over 65,000 school employees have been vaccinated, and more getting vaccinated every day. So, even with the challenge of the variants, I think we are clearly doing very well in the schools, and in fact, our position gets stronger all the time as more and more people get vaccinated. So, I would say, I think regardless of some recent developments, that fundamental formula still holds very, very true, but first Dr. Varma then Dr. Chokshi.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Great. Thank you very much. I would echo really the points that the Mayor has made. So, first of all we went through a difficult second wave in January where we peaked at over 6,000 cases a day, and during that time, we were able to demonstrate that all of the measures that we use to protect adults and children in schools continued to be effective. So, we know that our defensive measures, our methods to prevent infections, can work even when there's high levels of community transmission. The second is, as the Mayor has rightly pointed out, we have now added the single most powerful layer of defense, and I would strongly encourage any adult – or really anybody now, 16 and older, that participates in in-person learning in some way, to get vaccinated. That is the single most powerful layer of defense that we could have to help protect against you know, people getting severely ill. And I think a related point to that is from our detailed analysis of cases from October through December, over 80 percent – or I'm sorry, approximately 80 percent of the incidents that involve transmission occurring in the school setting involved an adult being the index case. So, yet another way to prevent and make our schools safer is to protect adults from infection through vaccination, and we know vaccine isn't a 100 percent effective at protecting adults from being infected, but it is tremendously effective. So again, I would really lean into the importance of one, our defensive protective measures have worked, and second of all, we now have this additional layer of vaccination.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Mr. Mayor, I'll just add that we are following the numbers very closely, not just that 0.57 percent test positivity rate that you mentioned, but also looking at cases and test positivity among children across New York City as a whole. When we look at those case rates and that test positivity, even as we do see the variants increase in the city, those have held stable. We are not seeing increases in the burden of cases or the positivity rate among people age zero to 17. So that's something that we will continue to follow closely, but Dr. Varma made the most important point, which is that we do know that vaccination of school staff will help because the cases that we do see within the school setting are predominantly brought in by adults. So, this gives us a very important layer of protection that we think can make our schools even safer for in-person learning.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Jillian from WBAI.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: How are you, Jillian?

Question: I'm well, I'm well, I'm sorry. I didn't get called on when James Oddo was there. I've rarely agreed with Staten Island Borough President in general, but he was right about the Mets, about Bartolo Colón home run, and about city planning.

Mayor: It was a rich combination of topics that he brought into one soliloquy, wasn't it?

Question: Yeah. He was extremely entertaining. I didn't know he had that in him.

Mayor: Yeah, he does. He does.

Question: Yeah, well, so my first question is about the city-wide phenomenon, which has been going on for the last two decades, where neighborhoods are losing affordable grocery stores often because landlord won't renew a lease. This is now going on in Prospect Lefferts Gardens in Crown Heights with an Associated Supermarket that's been there for 50 years in what is considered a food desert. The landlord didn't renew the lease. He wants to build a luxury building, which usually means a luxury grocery store or something like that, and there's a big campaign now to save the Associated. So, that particular community board participates in the FRESH program, which gives a little extra height – I know, you know what this is, but for edification it gives a little extra height in exchange for things like transportation improvements or to build a supermarket. But the program does not mandate an affordable store and there's been minimum space requirements, so nothing small like a bodega can be built, and those tend to be affordable as well. So, I surveyed a bunch of people like academics and activists about FRESH, and they had some objections like the lack of public review, somebody called the transportation improvements a ruse, and overall it was seen as a quote agent of gentrification and displacement, especially in Black and Brown areas. The neighborhood itself calls a what's going on or a racist

attack and “it affects the health and livelihood of middle-class communities of color.” So, can you intervene while you intervene to help save the market or do something else or anything at all?

Mayor: It's a very good question, Jillian. Look, I – this is something I've seen a lot evidence of and been very concerned about that we're losing some of the things that working people depend on, like affordable grocery stores, like laundromats, and we've talked here at City Hall about measures we can take to try to stop that, to reverse that, to address that. It's something we got to focus on more and come up with better solutions because the private market clearly is not doing that, and Jillian you, and I think we both agree that the private market alone doesn't solve enough human problems. So, there has to be some kind of government intervention on a bigger level here to protect the services that working people depend on. I will get to work with the team, trying to figure out how we can do that on a city-wide basis.

In terms of this particular grocery, I don't know the details, but now I will look into it. I clearly want to save groceries that, you know, working class people and lower-income people can use. That's a really high priority. So, I have to see what we can do in this case, and we'll give you an update in the next few days, and then the FRESH program – look, the FRESH program to me has been an authentic effort to try to address food deserts. I have not heard some of those critiques that you offered. I'll look at them, though. If there's something we need to do more or differently, we will, because there really is a food desert problem, and we've got to address it in this city. So, I will accept that as noble homework and we'll come back with some answers.

Question: I think that is appropriate. A noble piece of homework. So, bear with me on this next question, because it's a little long and there are several parts.

So, you publicly disclosed your opposition, at one of your daily briefings to the big tower, otherwise known as the Monster, plan for the area near the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. But it was still continuing while, or after you said that you were opposed to it. The judge issued a TRO stopping [inaudible], and that was based on the virtual hearings, which he deemed, I guess, violations of the law. It's supposed to be where the public participates, but it was limited to about a hundred people and community board members were shut out. Now, you've talked a lot about New York City's digital divide, and this is a working community of color, some of whom can't or don't have internet access, but despite your opposition, you issued an emergency order nullifying in-person hearings. Plus, there's important information that the community has not had access to in the form of a restrictive declaration, which is relevant to manufacturing industrial large-scale developments, and it contains details like the number of buildings, and the community benefits agreement.

So, at the same time, in another site that's part of this, there's a developer that's been working without a permit. There's a TRO on that side as well, and the rezoning from last year was nullified. DOB came out once and shut them down, but hasn't been back. So, he just keeps excavating. So, I guess there's a lot of confusion, that is probably a normal thing. There is a perception that there's a rush to get this through while you and Laurie Cumbo are still in office, whether that is correct or not, and so, you got a situation where one developer is facing no ramifications and you know, the whole thing of the cost of doing business which we've

discussed, a not properly informed public, and then the issue of this emergency order. What is your definitive position?

Mayor: Okay. A lot there, I'll try and do a quick answer. On the site where you're saying there's been a shutdown order and we need to understand what's going on there, I do want to understand that one better. I don't know which site you're referring to, but we'll get you an update on that. I am concerned anytime a building site's not being handled properly, we need to be really rigorous about that. We'll follow up with the Department of Buildings. We'll get you an answer.

On the development site that I spoke out against. I absolutely oppose that development plan. Look, if developers are going to come back with something very, very different, we'll always, we're always willing to have a conversation. I think the community is too, but not, not what was proposed, that will not work, and I think that's abundantly clear and I believe the City Planning Commission feels the same way. So, that's not going to happen is the bottom line.

The online hearings, I'd only say we need a way for the appropriate development process with community input to keep going on. Online offers opportunity for a lot of people to participate in some ways better than an in-person, and in-person also offers opportunity, but we're in the middle of a pandemic. It makes sense that we're going to do online for the foreseeable future. I don't know all the intricacies of the court case and all that. I do know we need to keep approving good development, which means development that comes with affordable housing, with community benefits, with the voices of community included. That should not stop. We can do that effectively with online hearings. That's what I believe. But again, we will follow up on the specifics of that a judge's order and the specific update on what's happening at that development. But again, as it was proposed, no, I really fundamentally believe that's not going to happen.

Moderator: The next is Kemberly from WABC.

Question: Hi, Mayor. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Kemberly. How are you?

Question: Good. Second dose yesterday, Pfizer, HSS. All is good.

Mayor: Congratulations. It's going to be a bright future for you. Congratulations.

Question: Thank you. So, I have a sort of COVID-related question. Many of the restaurants in New York City, to their credit hustled during the cold months, late fall, winter, and came up when you opened up some of the streets for structures and so forth. They really hustled and came up with creative ways so that people could eat outside when it was colder – some of the greenhouses, some of the wooden structures, really fantastic. Well, today, it's what going to be 70 soon. We're heading into 80 and 90. You can't sit in those for obvious reasons when it's getting warmer. So, few restaurant owners have asked me, please ask the city, what should we do with them? We didn't really have room to store them. Should we sell them? We invested a lot of money in these structures. They're not the collapsible kinds, and from my understanding is this area say the curb side in the street, the one lane they are going to, that's going to remain, that they

will have that space. So, they're asking me to ask you, please, you know, what do we do? Help us figure this out?

Mayor: Well, that's a great question, Kemberly. Thank you. First of all, the point you said at the end there is the most important point. We have made the Open Restaurants program permanent. It's been a huge success. It has, I think, really improved the city, something that came out of crisis, but proved to be a really good thing. It excites people to do outdoor dining in a whole new way, and by the way, for the restaurants, it gives them a lot more opportunity to bring in customers and to survive this pandemic and thrive, and that's going to be now true for years and years to come. Even when we get past the pandemic and they can fill up their inside, on especially nicer weather they're going to want to have the outdoors full up. So, what we need to do is work with them on just modifying those structures. Some of them, if they've got a structure that's just for winter and they want to bring it in and store it until next winter, that actually might make a lot of sense. But if they want to keep the same structure in place, we can work with them on the right way to modify it so it's more open and airy, and they keep that structure there because that space is now theirs to use if they want to use it, and I think the vast majority of restaurants will want to use it because it's a great opportunity for them. So, we'll work with them on how to modify that appropriately. Go ahead.

Question: Would that be a case where you would say, I'm just throwing this out here, some [inaudible] house somewhere in the city, in the outer boroughs maybe, or somewhere where there's space and you could provide free rental place, a spot for them to store in for the winter, and then they could come back in the summer – in the summer, store, come back in the winter and get it.

Mayor: We'll look at, you know, a variety of options. I think what's going to be most typical, Kemberly is that they'll modify what they have. I think, you know, with some smart work together, we can figure that out, and so that, that would be my first instinct, but we'll look at different options to see what will help them. We want them, we want them to come back strong for sure.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Dave Carlin from WCBS.

Question: Hello, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Dave, how you doing?

Question: I'm good. You know you've been asked this a couple of times. The last time you were asked about relocating the homeless from hotels back to some higher capacity shelters. You did say the city needs several more months, time to assess the science, time to look at the vaccinations, but I'm wondering if given some of the issues surrounding that, if the timeline has not been moved up from several months to something a little more urgent.

Mayor: There's definitely urgency, but we have to do it safely. Dave, I want to get you a firm answer on this. This is something the team's been working on. Obviously, we're watching the variants, we're watching the data and the science as always. But we never wanted to see folks in

hotels, we wanted them to be in shelters where there's better services. We've been for a long time, going back to when I announced it in the spring of 2017, the goal is to get out of all hotels everywhere and only have shelter be in permanent shelters. Get out of scattered sites, and we've been moving aggressively, the pandemic set us back, what we really want to get right back to that goal. So, we do feel a sense of urgency, but it has to be done safely. We will get a timeline for you soon on when we can start doing that. Go ahead.

Question: Wondering if, you have a threshold, personally, like a vaccination level, where, in the back of your head, like we've hit this benchmark or this threshold, and now we can do it.

Mayor: Well, that's what I want to—

Question: Is there one?

Mayor: No, it's a really good question. That, and I think there's two elements to that. Dave, there's getting folks who happen to be homeless vaccinated, which is something we've been doing more and more, but obviously is, comes with some particular challenges we have to overcome, and then there's the general population where I'm really confident, especially given the results the last week that we're going to get 5 million New Yorkers fully vaccinated by June, and that's going to help a lot, but again, we need to do it the right way and we need to be mindful of what we're doing with the variants. So, I think there's still a little bit more work to do, but I am anxious to set a timeline for when we can get folks back to the shelters and to be public about that. So, we'll have more to say on that shortly after we do a little more work.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, it's great to hear the sound of your voice. I can't believe no one has mentioned that a Mets pitcher had two hits last night, including an RBI single, which was obviously very exciting for real baseball fans like me. But my question today is actually related to—

Mayor: Gersh, you are—

Question: Unless you have a comment about that?

Mayor: You are consistent in all ways, Gersh. I want to give you credit for that. So, when you know, when lightning strikes and a Mets pitcher gets a hit, we should celebrate it. But otherwise, we should go to the designated hitter. Look, Fernando Tatis Jr. managed to get injured, batting yesterday. I mean, if it could happen to him, I assure you that I see a lot of injured pitchers, unless we go to designated hitter. I'm standing my ground on this.

Question: I'm glad to hear that. Okay. So, my question is related to basic street safety. In Spring 2018, the City promised that it would complete the fourth segment of the redesign of Queens Boulevard that year. So, now it's three years overdue. In that time, there have been about 400 reported crashes, just in the segment in question, that's just Yellowstone Boulevard to Union Turnpike and scores of people were injured in those crashes. Last year with the project already

delayed by a year and a half, at the behest of Council Member Karen Koslowitz, you asked the DOT to reconsider a design that it had already rejected, and now since then, we've heard nothing. Now, given that the first three phases of the Queens Boulevard redesign is constantly cited by your administration as a major Vision Zero achievement, what is with this delay?

Mayor: Well, it's a good question, and I want to get it resolved. Obviously, I felt we had made a lot of progress to resolve it and you're right. We do talk about the first three phases because I've been a singular success and we got to get this one done too. I cannot tell a lie. My attention really hasn't been on the four segments since the beginning of the pandemic, but I will put it back there now because I want to get it done. So, good question. We owe you a good answer.

Question: Okay, I appreciate that. But, do you – so you say your attention has been diverted and that's fine, there was a pandemic, et cetera, et cetera, but are you up on like what could be delaying? What is the actual delay because DOT is saying something has to do with federal officials, but as you know, federal officials would have been involved in the first three phases of the project and in that, they weren't delayed?

Mayor: No, I actually have not gotten an update in quite a while because of the pandemic, but we need to cut through this and get this done, and I certainly want to make sure it's all nailed down before I leave this building. So, I'm glad you're raising it. I don't know what the specific delay was. I will get you an answer, and more importantly when I get a plan, to get this done.

Okay, with that, everyone, look, what I appreciate deeply, and I want to always thank New Yorkers because the way we move forward is with all of you. The fact that we got to over half a million vaccinations last week, the fact that we had over a hundred thousand vaccinations on Friday alone is because you came out. New Yorkers are doing an amazing job, responding to the opportunity to be vaccinated, and you're doing something even more. You're helping other people get vaccinated, your loved ones, people in your life who need a little bit of help, need a ride, need a little help signing up. You've been doing that. We need you to keep doing that. Especially now, the vaccination is open to the age groups that qualify. That's a major, major moment. We want to keep building on this. This is part of how we recover. It takes everyone's involvement, and I mentioned earlier, something really new and exciting. Our City Cleanup Corps is a great opportunity for folks who are looking for work and looking to contribute to the City's rebirth. Here's a way to do it. You can start signing up for those jobs today. It all comes together in the idea of a recovery for all of us so much happening in this city where we're moving forward. Everyone has a role to play in that, and I want to thank everyone. Who's helping New York City come back. Thanks, everybody.

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