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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT WITH CITY  
COUNCIL ON CLOSING RIKERS ISLAND**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Stanley, thank you. I've had the joy of hearing Stanley before. And whenever you speak, and you said the word redemption, that got me right here in the heart. This is what it's about. And, in all of the discussions we have about incarceration we don't talk enough about redemption. But if you want an example of the power of redemption here he is, right here. The man who turned his life around and now is helping so many. Thank you, thank you.

[Applause]

So, the cycle of incarceration can be broken. People's lives can be changed. This is what we're here to talk about today in essence. How we move forward as a city and a society. Move away from the era of mass incarceration. I said again last night the era of mass incarceration did not begin in New York City but it will end in New York City once and for all.

[Applause]

You're going to hear from some of the people who have been most crucial to this work. Who have been the innovators, and the visionaries in the effort to close Rikers Island and create a better correction system. You're going to hear from the leadership and the members of the City Council who are going to be in the front line right now of making these changes with us. I also want to say and I want thank the members of my time who have been working constantly since we've made that decision. And it was a decision we took very, very seriously.

We've spent a lot of time over the first few years making sure that if we said we were going to close it once and for all that we knew we could do it. And that we would never have to go back to Rikers Island again. That was a decision we made very seriously after 85 years the city has had that facility. When we said we were leaving. We had to be certain we were leaving for good, and never going back. It took a lot of work, a lot of people contributed to it. And some of them are here with us and I want to thank them, and I want to thank our Corporation Council Zack Carter, our Commission of Correction Cynthia Bran, and the director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Liz Glazer. Let's give them all a round of applause.

[Applause]

Now, you're going to hear from the Speaker and some of the council members. But I also want to thank for their help and their support, Councilmember Keith Powers who's chair of the Criminal Justice Committee and Councilmember Carlina Rivera. Thank you both.

[Applause]

I spoke last night, and I want to start with this. I spoke about Officer Jean Souffrant and our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family. He's getting excellent medical care and we are all praying for a speedy recovery. We are going to hold the heinous individuals who attacked this officer fully accountable. I can tell you this; they're going to be doing a lot more time because of what they did. And that's a sad statement. Those individuals are going to be incarcerated for a lot longer. But it is unfortunately what they brought on themselves with their actions.

We simply will not allow our correction officers to be attacked. I want to be very about that. We will not allow our correction officers to be attacked.

We have put an in immense about of resources into securing Rikers Island. It's been almost \$200 million spent on more officers, more training, better equipment, security cameras all over the facilities. A number of measures to increase safety for everyone, we've got more to do. And additional measures were announced this morning and we will keep adding. Because we want to make sure our officers are safe, we want to make sure everyone at Rikers is safe.

But now back to what has brought us here today. Last March we gathered, we made an announcement that was historic because it had never had been said before in 85 years. Rikers Island is definitely going to close. That's what we said. And since then we have preceded with the actions necessary to make sure that this happens. We knew it would take a tremendous amount of work. And I want to say this is a true compliment to the members of the City Council. It would take a lot of political will and a lot of political courage as well. And you're going to hear from them in a moment. But I want to say upfront to the current Speaker, to the former Speaker, and to the members whose districts will have these new facilities. You're showing the people of New York City something very powerful. You're showing them political bravery, and a devotion to something bigger. It's not an easy thing to ask of an elected official. But these individuals are standing up for what's right, and what's in the long term interest of the people of this city. Let's thank them all for that.

[Applause]

So today we announce that we are a big step closer to the closure of Rikers Island. We announce today a plan that we have agreed upon with the City Council to move four sites for new jail facilities in four boroughs near the court houses in those boroughs. These borough based sites – and you heard Stanley talk about will change fundamentally the way families can connect to those who are incarcerated and that too is part of the rehabilitation process. It will make for a lot more efficiency. There will also be new and modern sites that will allow us to do the kinds of

things we need to do to create a safe environment and a rehabilitative environment. The four locations are the Queens Detention Center in Kew Gardens, the Brooklyn Detention Center in Downtown Brooklyn, the Manhattan Detention Center in Foley Square, and a new facility which we built on the current site of the Bronx Tow Pound in Mott Haven.

I want to thank again Speaker Johnson, and all the members for their leadership in determining with us that the best way to proceed is to act on all of these sites simultaneously. It will be a single public review process for all four sites. And this will be a streamlined process that will help us get these more humane and modern facilities online as quickly as possible.

It's a big day, it's an important day. It's a big step forward for fairness in this city. Well, we've got a lot more work to do and we're quite clear about that. For this plan to work in addition to the new facilities we have to keep driving down the jail population. I'm going to say this every time we talk about this issue. We now are at about 9,000 individuals in our jail system on any given day. That number must go down to 5,000 for this overall plan to work.

Now, that's going to take a lot. We believe it can be done. And we believe when it's done it will be crucial to breaking that cycle of incarceration. So how you get there? It starts with neighborhood policing. I want to remind people major crime is down 13 percent since this administration took office. We are at record lows all over the city. This is one of the most essential realities in reducing jail population, reducing crime, reducing arrests by definition, reduces jail population. We've got a lot more we will be doing on that front. Other reforms, we've been able to do ourselves here in the city. Alternatives to incarceration, and targeted forms of enforcement all matter of things that are helping us to reduce the population.

We've found new approaches to reducing recidivism. Most importantly five hours per day – we announced this with you Stanley, five hours a day for every inmate education and trainings. So when they come out of incarceration, they can be viable again in our society. Re-entry planning from the moment they enter Rikers and the other jails, and the jail to jobs program, a transitional job for anyone coming out of Rikers who had been sentenced. These are the kind of approaches that'll pay off in the long term. And this will be part of how we reduce the number of people in our jail system. And we know from what we've been doing already that is having a very tangible result. The population on Rikers is down 21 percent since 2013. In just those four years down 21 percent. We have the lowest jail population overall that we have had in 35 years in this city. And here is a fact and I think everyone here and thank you to everyone here who had been a part of this important effort. I think this fact is going to move all of you. New York City, New York City has the lowest incarceration rate of any major city in America. That's something to be proud of.

[Applause]

So, we said in the announcement last March, reduction to 5,000 in jails within 10 years and we are on track to meet that goal. We said we had to break that cycle and the actions we're taking are breaking that cycle of incarceration and all that pain it causes so many families. To complete this mission to get everything done, we need to get done. We need help from Albany. I talked about it in my testimony in Albany; I've talked about it in the State of the City last night. And everyone, this year is our chance to make the changes and these are the most important changes

necessary to speed up our effort to get off of Rikers. New York State holds the key here and we need to hold them responsible. So, we need to make sure the state approves legislation for speedier trials, legislation for bail reform, legislation that would allow us to give those incarcerated who have exhibited good behavior the same opportunity for earlier release that the state gives its own prisoners.

We also need the state to address the fact that it has hundreds of its parolees in our jail system. The state needs to take responsibility for those individuals and get them off Rikers to relieve the burden. Those actions are the single most important things to improving our ability to close Rikers faster. Everyone here needs to join us in Albany to get that done. And we need everyone in the criminal justice system to participate. We need the courts and prosecutors to help us in every way they can to speed up the trial process. We need all of our partners at the city level to help us find new ways to reduce that population. In the meantime what we're doing today is also a crucial, crucial building block. And I am confident now more than ever because of the leadership shown by the council that we are moving not only on schedule but that we have a chance to get ahead of schedule. With everyone's help here, and with a strong effort in Albany in the next few months. Let me see a few words in Spanish before I turn to speaker Johnson.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Now as I turn to the Speaker, I just want to say only weeks on the job Mr. Speaker but you have shown a real zeal for completing this mission. And from our first conversations we've talked about moving this rapidly and moving it together, and having all the Councilmembers in the communities concerned be a part of this effort. And I want to thank you for being a man of your word in helping getting to this day Councilmember and Speaker Corey Johnson.

[...]

**Mayor:** Okay, you all know the drill. We're going to be taking questions on this announcement and matters related to it, then I know the council members are going to be going to their next gathering. I'll stay and take off-topic questions at that point.

So questions about today's announcement – Gloria?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I just want clarify, it sounds like you're embracing a new timeline for the closure of Rikers. You've spoken about the ten year timeline, but there is a lot of talk today about doing that faster and sooner, so do you – have you changed your view on that? Do you think it could be done faster? And then I have another question after that.

**Mayor:** I think Judge Lippman said it exactly right, we want to go as fast as we can. I've tried to level with the people of this city in saying that with what we know today, ten years is the timeline. But we get the reforms in Albany, the Legislature votes for bail reform, if the Legislature votes for speedier trials and votes to make sure that inmates that exhibit good behavior can get out earlier, if the State takes those parolees back and puts them into the State's own system, those are the single biggest factors here, Gloria.

If all that gets done, then we can speed this timeline up by years. There is no question about it. But I want to also be scrupulously honest that those things aren't done yet, we've been – I think this is something we can all agree on, we've been disappointed in Albany before. So it's really going to be in the next four months the moment of truth for Albany, for everyone in Albany.

They're going to move these reforms and allow us to close Rikers years earlier, or if they don't, we will have to stay to that ten-year timeline, or the best we can do within the time we have and the power we have. Brigid?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor I want to ask about the [inaudible] process and to what extent that will impact the community notification. And specifically, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. issued a statement already saying that he was surprised to learn that the administration had already selected a new site for the jail in the Bronx, described it as a situation there was not outreach, and raised some concern about the input that people from that community will have to this process.

**Mayor:** Look the site in the Bronx is a site owned by the City of New York. It is a very smart site in terms of its closeness to the courthouses. There is going to be a full community process but let's be clear, we're going to talk to everyone, we're going to listen to everyone, we're going to try in every way possible address community needs and address other benefits that communities need.

That being said, up here are the people who ultimately have to make the decision – the Council, represented by the Speaker, the members who represent those individual districts, and me and my administration. So we will talk to everyone, we will respect everyone, but we know where we want to go, I am confident that we will get there. The process will begin this year. The final votes will happen next year, and design and construction can then happen immediately thereafter next year. That's the pathway we have to go on if we're going to close Rikers on the fastest timeline possible.

Juliet?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor so assuming you will get the population down, will these facilities house the remaining population, or will there be plans to open others?

**Mayor:** With the facilities currently have, and these new ones, and with no Rikers Island whatsoever – everything gone on Rikers – that would bring us to about 6,000 beds which is what you need in terms of the population we're talking about. About 5,000 – you know 6,000 beds because you will need them in different places to accommodate. That would get us there.

So these four new facilities would be all we would need to close a Rikers once and for all, presuming again we keep getting that overall population down.

**Question:** Speaker Johnson, could you just talk about what do you need to get to this expedited process, to start to get things underway this year? When do you expect that's going to happen?

**City Council Speaker Corey Johnson:** Well I don't want to walk us into a particular month, but the Mayor just said that we are going to certify ULURPs at some point this year, probably in the fourth quarter of this year, and then we will go through that process. There does need to be meaningful community engagement, and that's what the Mayor's staff and his commissioners are going to be doing with the council members. I know that a conversation does have to happen, and I apologize to the borough president in the Bronx. We have to do a better job at keeping him in the loop and the local community boards, so we're going to ensure that it's a robust, meaningful, community engagement process, but we also know, as the Mayor said, where we are going – which is we have sites, we have members that are supporting them. That's typically the biggest hurdle, we have gotten over that hurdle, and so I look forward to getting this done, and I think one thing that will additionally shave time off of the process besides the important criminal justice reform methods – reforms the Mayor just flagged, bail reforms, speedy trial reforms, discovery reform, all those things which we need Albany to take care – we also need design build.

**Mayor:** Amen.

**Speaker Johnson:** Because we need design build, so we can shorten the timeframe on getting the facilities designed and built, and these facilities are going to cost a lot of money to do modern jail facilities on irregular lots in residential neighborhoods. So they're going to be expensive. So if we can save a significant amount of money on these facilities and shave time off it, it's a win-win all around.

**Mayor:** Let me just quickly 'amen' the Speaker and thank him for coming back to issue. Design build is not the sexiest issue around, but it's incredibly important. Let me give you an example. When I was up in Albany testifying – I don't have the exact examples for these facilities, but I will give you the one that came up for the work that has to be done on the BQE Triple Cantilever. Hugely important project for the future of the City. The design build authorization would allow us to do the project two years faster and will save us I think between \$100 and \$150 million.

Every time you get that design build authority that the State gives itself, you save the tax payers a lot of money and you shave a huge amount of time off of each project. So I really want to thank the Speaker for standing up and making that point so clearly – a note to the Governor and everyone in Albany.

**Speaker Johnson:** And by the way, just one more thing, the Governor seemed open to it, so, let's – let's –

**Mayor:** Hope springs eternal.

**Question:** [Inaudible] do you agree with the Mayor that the timelines can't be shortened unless Albany takes the step [inaudible]?

**Judge Jonathan Lippman:** I agree that it is a critical part of the project to have [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Hold on, hold on. Television age, there you go.

**Judge Lippman:** The question is, do I agree that we need action from Albany in order to bring down this timetable, and the answer is yes. We laid out two parallel tracks that have to be done. One is criminal justice reform where you are driving down the population, and the other is what we are announcing about the sitings, the timetable, and moving it very, very quickly. The two join because, as the Mayor laid out before, you don't get the population down to 5,000, you are going to have too many people to put even in these new facilities that we're building.

So the answer is yes, the issue is – criminal justice reform 101. These are things that are around the country on a state and local level there is agreement. Bail reform, speedy trial, early discovery, the parole system here in New York, the State parolees, this is the most basic stuff and we take nothing for granted, but there is absolutely no reason in the world why we can't have these fundamental criminal justice reform here in New York that will allow us to, again, combine the reduced population with the sitings, the process, ULURP, and all of that, and they come together and you get timeline that can be way, way reduced. Because again, the political will is here. We are seeing it.

**Question:** Judge, my question was a little different, do you think –

**Judge Lippman:** [Inaudible] I'll answer your question if it's a little different.

**Question:** [Inaudible] only with those steps taken by Albany?

**Judge Lippman:** Let's put it this way, I think what the Mayor has said and the Speaker has said is that we're going to do everything that we have within our powers – in their power – to get this done and criminal justice reform is an essential part of it.

Could we double down our efforts, and do without it? It's a very difficult – these are things that are just basic. I think we will have it. They will do it, and it will allow us to bring the timeline down. The answer is yes, we need criminal justice reform to complete this process, and we have to get, and we have to get it this year.

**Question:** Do you believe the Governor about those issues you lobbied about?

**Judge Lippman:** I've been lobbying the Governor for many, many, many years on criminal justice reform.

**Mayor:** Yes, he has.

**Judge Lippman:** And, I would say that many of those things have happened, and we need these basic things to happen that I personally, and 70 people in this room, have been talking about for many, many years.

**Mayor:** Alright, yes?

**Question:** Yes, Mr. Mayor, speaking of basics, some of the critics including the Department of Investigation say that closing Rikers won't solve everything and perhaps may not solve anything if the basic issues of violence, security, and management are not addressed. How confident are you and the current administration of the DOC?

**Mayor:** Absolutely confident, especially given the extraordinary challenge that the leadership and the men and women who work in our correction system face every day, and you just heard I think the most eloquent testimony from Judge Lippman who's spent a lifetime serving the people of the City and the State that what our correction officers and everyone at the Department of Correction have had to deal with, is antiquated laws, antiquated rules, antiquated buildings, which have made their work extraordinarily hard.

And yet I would tell you it's extraordinary how much good they do every single day, how many lives they do turn around, how much they achieve under very tough circumstances. I mention we've invested \$200 million just in the safety measures alone, the security cameras, the additional personnel, the additional training, a whole host of things.

That wasn't done in the past. I want to emphasize that. For a long time the broken situation on Rikers was left to fester. There is a lot of attention on it now. I'm glad there is a lot of attention. We're putting in a lot investment. This Council has supported a lot of investment. We're going to keep doing that. So yes, I have confidence that give these good men and women the actual modern tools they need, and they'll be able to achieve a lot more.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, the State correction commission today called Rikers the most problematic facility in the state and suggested perhaps a State takeover of the facility. [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Look, I think the State needs to be constructive here. If they actually want to be a part of the solution, they should step forward and achieve the reforms that we've talked about, and Judge Lippmann said it nicely, I'll say it a little more bluntly. Judge Lipmann and a lot of other people have been talking about those reforms for years and years, and Albany hasn't acted on them, so why doesn't Albany step up and actually help rather than just criticize it.

[Applause]

**Question:** You said that these would all be one public review process. Why put these all together, when one in particular the new site in the Bronx seems to be quite a different circumstance to the existing sites that are already used as jails – they're being used as a jail and will be again, why – why?

**Mayor:** Because it's a matter of priorities. We all believe we have to move as quickly as possible. Getting to this approach took some time, and it's a different approach, but it's the right approach for this kind of situation. Instead – you know, I honestly I think a lot of us thought, 'oh here are four isolated situations.' Then we thought wait a minute, this has major citywide ramifications, the issues are essentially the same in each place. Let's unify this process, let's all work together, and say to the City of New York, this is going to be a City priority. This is a priority for all of us.



We will do the hard work to do this fast and to make sure communities get the answers they need. I thought the council members spoke powerfully about how you could build facilities that address simultaneously community issues that need be addressed and bring benefit, so I'm convinced this is the right way.

**Question:** If I could just follow up, [inaudible] there have been some recent spikes in violence in the Manhattan House and in the Brooklyn House, so how do you ensure that these new facilities are safer, fairer, or what have you been to Rikers?

**Mayor:** I will speak from my perspective, if the commissioner or if Director Glazer want to come and join, but here is what I know as a layman. Again, the Judge said it, antiquated facilities that were not built for rehabilitation – let's just break it on down.

The old assumption was not really about correction in many ways and redemption. It was about punishment, and it was counterproductive. And it backfired. The whole era of mass incarceration backfired, did tremendous damage to this city and this country. Modern facilities emphasize safety for all and emphasize rehabilitation and are built for that purpose and people get to do their work in an atmosphere that suggests that they can actually succeed, not that they have both hands tied behind their back. So I'm a big believer in that. Commissioner, you want to add?

**Department of Corrections Commissioner Cynthia Brann:** Good afternoon, I would just echo what the Mayor said. Modern facilities are built for safety and for enhanced programming and give those in our custody the ability to access those programs in a way that helps them reenter the community and be productive. It also helps our staff have enhanced sightlines so they can see what's going on in a housing area and not be exposed to blind areas where they can't control what goes on. I would also that what the Mayor said about punishment. Prior administrations had increased punishment, and we have instituted a different way of doing corrections. And it has been a learning curve for us to go from punishment to behavior change, and that's the real safety that we can achieve with long term behavior change.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Well said, well said.

Alright, where am I? Who has not had one yet? Let's go over there.

**Question:** So as you reduce the population at Rikers and in general, will you maintain the proportion of corrections officers to inmates, and you know given your goal at what level do you expect you'll have corrections officers at once you reach it?

**Mayor:** Well first of all, we've said every correction officer working for us now will be working for us for their whole career. There's a lot to be done, and in fact there's certainly areas where we want to apply more and more correction officers to the task at hand. Remember, we for the last few years have been constantly hiring more officers. We've had a huge issue with overtime. As we've hired more we're starting to bring that overtime issue down, but we – we're going to

need all the officers we have to continue to make everything safer and to continue to further the rehabilitation model.

Do you want to add anything, commissioner? Covered it? Alright.

Good, Grace?

**Question:** Earlier today there was a story about the State Commission of Correction essentially threatening –

**Mayor:** That was asked just a moment ago.

**Question:** Yes, I guess I'm wondering if the timing of all of that – is that a coincidence and is that going to sort of force your hand to move more quickly on this?

**Mayor:** Our hand is not being forced. We determine our own destiny here in New York City, so God bless the State of New York, but again if they actually want to help there's lots of ways they can help. If they want to make noise, they can make noise. But let's be clear I have not gotten that offer of help. Been here four years – I'm easy to find – I have not gotten an offer of help, and so I'll make it really plain. I'll look into the cameras. If the governor and the legislature want to help us close Rikers more quickly, they have the power to do so. And if they don't, then it's on them that it's going to take longer.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, will each of these newly rebuilt facilities have to be larger than the previous facility, and any idea of how long it would take and any ballpark on a price tag of this whole thing? Multiple billions?

**Mayor:** I will start, and if anyone has something firm come forward. And if not, probably my very broad answers will have to do for now.

The – yes, we foresee expanded facilities. Timeline – this year the process begins, vote next year, design and construction begin immediately. We need to then construct in one case, you know, on site – or three cases I should say – on sites that already have existing buildings, and that's a whole endeavor unto itself. In the other site it's a more open site that we can build on. So each one's going to be different. Obviously building buildings of this size is a matter of years. We can come back as we know more with a clearer estimate, but we're going to move - the judge is right. The message to everyone up and down the administration – and the Council is saying it so clearly too – is move everything as quickly as humanly possible. We'll pull out all the stops. The resources will be there. It's no question – I'll look to the Speaker, and he can nod if he agrees – there's no question this will be a budget priority for the administration and for the Council to make sure the resources are there when they're needed. But I don't have a price tag for you yet.

**Question:** Multiple billions?

**Mayor:** Billions for sure, but I don't have a specific price tag for you.

**Speaker Johnson:** We need design-build.

**Mayor:** And we need design-build because that could save us hundreds of millions at minimum.

**Question:** Commissioner, I believe that when you first talked about this a year ago or last year, you said that what you wanted was a facility in every borough, so where is –

**Mayor:** No, the judge said that in his report – and God bless him – and I said I did not think we needed one in every borough.

**Question:** Let me go ahead and say where is Staten Island today? Why is there no talk today about a facility –

**Mayor:** Because the simplest answer is there are very few inmates who come out of Staten Island, and this is a big endeavor, and it just did not make sense given how much we have to do. These four facilities will allow us to achieve our goal.

**Question:** Commissioner, in the State Correction Commission report that came out today [inaudible] data comparing last year and the previous year at Rikers Island in terms of a variety of violence incidents, and many of them have large increases, just a couple of them – inmate, group gang assault are up 160 percent, inmate on personnel assaults are up 34 percent, inmate introduced contraband up 120 percent – many others. Talk about why – what's going on in Rikers that things are actually getting worse instead of better?

**Commissioner Brann:** I have not had an opportunity to read that report, and so I will today and look at that and see where they got those numbers from. We have and will continue to work with the SCOC to look at those issues that they have identified and resolve them.

**Question:** You have your own numbers, so in the numbers that you have do you see increases in violence in various categories at Rikers Island?

**Commissioner Brann:** In the two most prevalent categories where we focused our greatest attention – and that was with the 16 and 17 year old and the young adults 18 to 21 year olds – those violence numbers have actually gone down.

**Question:** What about –

**Mayor:** Let me just make a blanket statement. We're going to answer that commission report in a detailed manner, and that's something we will do publicly. And I think there's – as with all statistic there's certain interpretations going on. We want to show the whole picture. Clearly a lot has been invested at Rikers, and major changes have occurred, and there's many areas that have improved, there's other areas where we have to do better, but we're going to answer that report point by point.

Go ahead, Gloria?

**Question:** I've got a question. The Council has been having a conversation about fair share and the question of certain facilities in certain council districts. With this joined ULURP process, are you going to lose some of your power to bargain benefits that some communities should get in exchange for getting these jails since it's all going to be go into one deal for lack of a better different word.

**Speaker Johnson:** It's a totally smart, fair question, and it's one that I thought about leading into this process. The answer is no, because there is a – I believe – a good faith effort, and there will be honest communication between the mayor and myself, his senior level management team, the commissioners that are involved in this, and the individual members on ensuring that in each one of these facilities they're built appropriately for those neighborhoods, and if there are some other things in communities that have been left unaddressed this is – the fair share's argument is real. I mean Councilmember Ayala I think alluded to it. I could be a little more specific and say that, you know, there's a concentration of homeless shelters in the South Bronx. There's a concentration of methadone clinics in the South Bronx. There's a juvenile detention facility not too far from this in the South Bronx. Now, are we going to be able to close all those things? No. But if there are individual circumstances where there is a particular spot that has been problematic and because we're all overwhelmed or there are many other issues going on we haven't had the chance to address it, in the past – at least in my own district when I've had an issue that I've been able to leverage a little bit through the land use process – the Mayor's been responsive on these community issues. So I believe the Mayor and his team will be responsive and good faith partners when they work with each of the four councilmembers on the things that relate to their districts.

I want to add one thing related to some of the questions that were asked before. I think, you know, this is – I don't have the statistics – but if you look at two of the main things that are contributing to the population on Rikers and the violence on Rikers Island, sadly our jails – not just Rikers Island but across the country, across New York State – and Rikers Island is the biggest symbol of it has become a home for the mentally ill. We've criminalized the mentally ill, and that is why it's so important to ThriveNYC and other mental health efforts to get people the help that they need, so that they don't end up on Rikers Island. That's another way to drive the population down, and then lastly we have –

[Applause]

The Mayor probably knows the statistics better than me on this, and the Police Commissioner definitely does, but there are still issues with gang violence in New York City, and we have to do more gang prevention and gang intervention efforts for young people across the city. We saw in the – Officer Souffrant who was so violently attacked, those were members of a gang who were under the age of 18 years old. It is sad that these young men are being recruited into gangs at 14 and 15 years old, getting involved in violence and crime, ending up on Rikers island, and then committing an atrocity like this, which they're going to be locked up for a very long time now for the rest of their lives for doing this to this correction officer. So we also have to focus on gang violence, gang prevention, and gang intervention, which will also hopefully mitigate some of these issues on the island.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Okay, see if has anyone not gone?

Okay, we're going to go around and do a few more, and then we'll go to off topic in a couple of minutes.

**Question:** To go back to Willie's question about Staten Island, I know a central part of this plan is to put people closer to their court house, closer to their family. Obviously that would be an opportunity [inaudible] if there may be fewer inmates on Staten Island, from Staten Island that they won't be able to be housed closer to their families or their court houses. Where are you going to put them and what would you say to them if they don't –

**Mayor:** Look, again, this is acting as quickly as we can to make a major change and get off of Rikers Island. That's what the mandate is here. This is the way to do it. There are very few inmates proportionally from Staten Island. We'll find a best opportunity to get them as close as possible, but we're not building a facility on Staten Island. It's as simple as that.

**Question:** [Inaudible] Willie's question – why should someone from Staten Island, why should family have to schlep all the way to Rikers which is the farthest from Staten Island?

**Mayor:** Rikers, again, is going to be closed in this equation.

**Question:** Why should they have to schlep to another borough?

**Mayor:** It's – again, we have made a decision that to move this agenda four facilities are what we need. That's where the numbers are. That's what we need to do. It's a lot of work. It's a lot of expense to do the four. We're not going to do a fifth. It's not going to have enough impact. This is the best way to get to the goal.

**Speaker Johnson:** I agree 100 percent.

**Question:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Could you just give an overall blueprint of what the designs of these new facilities are going to be? What's like really going to make them 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**Mayor:** I can only tell you broad strokes – and commissioner if you or Liz if you want to add – again what you've heard. First of all, Judge Lippmann said something very powerful. Take the negative away. You've got aging facilities that have been falling apart, that were not built to create a positive environment for rehabilitation. They're not places that people enjoy working, and they're certainly places that don't help us to rehabilitate inmates. They're not built for those kinds of sightlines that increase safety and security. There's so many reasons why they don't make sense. It's like so many other things in life. You know if I told you about most things whether it's a building or anything else in our society that's 50 years old or 60 years old or 70 years old, mostly that would be antiquated and not up to modern standards. Well we can safely say that's true of the facilities on Rikers Island.

Anyone want to add?

**Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Elizabeth Glazer:** So I would say there are two things. Our jails right now – and it's not just New York City, it's in Chicago and a lot of other places across the country are far from any place. We put people away where we don't see them, and that's not good for the people who are incarcerated, for officers, or anyone else. So the first thing is that people need to be near their families, near their lawyers, near the justice system. The second is that jails can be civic assets, and I think a number of the council people raised this. They should be integrated into neighborhoods. They can have storefronts. We see this in Denver and San Diego. A bunch of more modern jails that we see across the country, and they need to have light and programming as we've sort of addressed.

**Mayor:** A few more, and then we're going to turn over – Juliet?

**Question:** How is it helpful or meaningful to the community to have input after the fact, after a site is already announced or disclosed?

**Mayor:** Because this is – remember this is directly related to the reality of the criminal justice system. So if I'm talking about affordable housing or a lot of other things, there's all sorts of places you can put it. But when you're talking about proximity to criminal justice system and sites that we control – remember we're talking about in all four instances, city-controlled sites which allows us to be much more able to work quickly and get the job done. So no, this is exceptional situation. It is not – it's not your garden variety land use issue. It's not something where we're thinking just about the impact on an individual community, although we are certainly thinking about that. This is for the good of the whole city. This is a major reform. That's why we decided let's do it all together, and that the sites are really – to us – the obvious sites and the necessary sites to act on. But we'll have a lot of community process.

Willie?

**Question:** Is the expectation that some or all of these existing facilities might need to be demolished in order to build the new facilities?

**Mayor:** I can't say that now. That's part of why we've already brought on a firm to determine with us the best way to create these designs.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** I don't have the name. It's been publicly announced, but that can be spoken to –

**Question:** [Inaudible] four borough combined ULRUP?

**Mayor:** I will let experts speak to that because I am not an expert. There certainly was full agreement when we looked at the procedural issues, and we looked at the commonalities of what we had to achieve in each neighborhood. We believed it made a lot of sense in every way.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor –

**Mayor:** Hold on – media questions only right now. My apology.

**Question:** How many beds do you estimate you'll have in the Bronx facility and the already existing ones?

**Mayor:** Again, we'll come back as that plan is developed, but the goal is to have a system overall of 6,000 beds excluding anything on Rikers – Rikers being closed totally.

Alright – I think we have covered it all, so I know members of the Council and the advocates, everyone has to go do other things. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your support.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Okay, everybody good? Okay – other topics. Yes?

**Question:** [Inaudible] gender-specific activities, like the father-daughter dance. A lot of parents are really upset about this, they think it's [inaudible] how to look up to role models, etcetera. Were the parents asked for their input where this was stated?

**Mayor:** I don't know the history of what happened in this case. Let me just say very broadly – first of all, we respect each school community to figure out what makes sense. I think the goal is simply to create something that everyone could participate in. Obviously, I'm a father with a daughter. I think it's a beautiful idea to have a father-daughter dance, but that doesn't mean other people can't participate at the same time who happen not to be fathers and daughters. SO, I think this is something we can work through school by school, figuring out something that works for everyone.

**Question:** What about the DOE's gender policy in general? How far does it go? Do you foresee a time when students will be listed on the roll as not male or female?

**Mayor:** I don't think that way, honestly. We want to respect all of our students, and in this city we respect how anyone identifies themselves, which I think is an American value – that people get to decide for themselves who they are. But I am not worried about how we're going to list people on a graduation [inaudible] or anything like that. What I'm trying to figure out now is the best things we can do to educate our children and to address the equity gaps in our school system – that's where our focus is.

Go ahead, Grace.

**Question:** It was a question for you and the Corporation Council, but a few weeks ago we asked about tracking the number of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct in the city, and then also any payouts that were given through the Law Department to settle complaints or cases. Do you – is there any update on –

**Mayor:** Yeah, in the next few weeks we will be publishing both of those.

Yes, Gloria?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, there was some reaction in the Council to some of the campaign finance proposals you talked about last night. There's been several bills introduced that would do some of the same things that you're proposing. They are saying that they should be done legislatively as opposed to a commission. Do you plan to involve the Council in any way in this?

**Mayor:** Look, I'm calling a Charter Revision Commission – this is a given. It's been a while since we've had one in this city. It's important to have one to look at where things stand overall. I'll appoint a group of people who I think will be seen universally as highly respected, who will think about these issues, who will talk to New Yorkers all over the five boroughs about our government, what we need to do to make it better. So, that goes beyond any single issue. On the question of campaign finance reform – I believe in public financing. It's time for it. It's time to have a much stronger system than what we have now. This is a good one, by the way – this New York City finance system is one of the best in the country, but we've got to go farther. And, by the way, we need to go farther for ourselves, Gloria, but we need to go farther also to send a message to our State. The State of New York needs public financing badly. The State of New York has some of the most backwards campaign finance laws in this entire country. It is not surprise you've seen so many problems in Albany – it is directly related to not having a progressive campaign finance system. So, this is something I want us to do for here, but also to have a bigger impact beyond our borders. I think the right way to do it is through a Charter Revision Commission, but I'm certainly happy to engage – and I will engage the Council, and I think there's lots of ways we can work together, and we can look at legislative options, and what could be done on the ballot.

**Question:** Just one more question – you've proven in the past, if you don't agree with a policy you're willing to reverse it. Are you willing to look at this policy and potentially reverse it?

**Mayor:** Again, I want to say – one, I think you're referring to something which in my view has been an issue about one school so far. I don't know the details about that school. I've told you what I broadly believe in. Let's let each school work it out with the broad sense of inclusion. I think there's a way to do it.

**Question:** Do you think there should not be a DOE blanket policy.

**Mayor:** No, listen to what I'm saying. There should be, obviously, a clear requirement of inclusion in everything we do – that's everything we do in New York City. But each school can work that through and figure out a good way to do it, in my opinion. But, to me, I think one instance is being made into something much bigger than it is. This is one place where one issue came up. I think there's going to be a positive outcome there, and then we can look from there on the best way to handle things like this citywide.

Yes?



**Question:** Mayor, last night you said in discussing the lobbyist disclosure updates that New Yorkers deserve to know who lobbyists are trying to influence, what senior staff they're trying to influence. Why won't you address reporter's questions about your [inaudible] sitting down with Emma Wolfe?

**Mayor:** Look, guys, I've set very clear standards on the lobbying question. I've been disclosing lobbying meetings for a long time, even though it was never required. The fact that New York City is now going to have the strongest lobbying disclosures of any city in America is something we should celebrate. But on everything related to those other issues, which have been well investigated, and the outcome is clear, I have nothing more to say. I've said, we've handled everything ethically and appropriately – that's all I have to say on it.

Okay, last call – a few more?

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** I'm going to act in the manner stipulated in the City Charter. So, I'll be naming the commission. I'm happy to talk to my colleagues in government about people they think would be right to serve, but I will name the commission just as previous mayors did.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, there's a poll out today that says a majority of New Yorkers don't believe Cuomo, Gillibrand, or you should run for president. Do you think the next president should come from New York?

**Mayor:** Well, all I can say is the current president from New York is not working out so well.

[Laughter]

But that is not a statement on the future. I've said to you very clearly, I'm doing the job – in fact, last night, I gave you the timeline. As of last night – three years, 10 months, 15 days in this administration to get a whole lot done. That's what I'm focused on. But there's no way to have a blanket view on where a president or anyone else should come from. What we need is the best president and the most progressive president we can have – that's the only standard I'm looking at.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, today is Valentine's Day. Have you received a Valentine? And have you sent any? Do you send candy? Flower? Do you do any of that?

**Mayor:** Wow, these are very personal questions, Rich. I said Happy Valentine's Day to my Valentine this morning. That is so far all that has transpired in the celebration of Valentine's Day. Chirlane and I – you know, our way of celebrating is just to spend time together, and we'll be doing that tonight, and that's all we need. We don't need a lot of material things, we just need time together.

Alright, last two – go ahead.

**Question:** Back to Jillian's question on Singh. I know you don't like hypotheticals, but, you know, you're a Brooklyn guy – as an observer of politics, if you're hearing somebody – you have Singh pleading guilty to bribery, and you're refusing to take questions on this – I mean, how do you expect New Yorkers to interpret –

**Mayor:** Again, it's been – I think New Yorkers are really, really smart, and they understand there was a full investigation, and they have watched this administration for over four years, and they know we do things ethically and appropriately and that our focus is on serving the people of this city. That's all I have to say.

**Question:** [Inaudible] lobbying disclosure [inaudible] retroactive. Are you going to require your commissioners and other officials who they –

**Mayor:** That's starting now – I'll check the exact way that it's being applied. But, you know, we're starting it now – again, the most extensive disclosure system in the entire country, and I'm proud of it.

Thanks, everyone.

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