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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON PIX 11

Dan Mannarino: New York City could be back in business very soon but not in time for Memorial Day weekend. So, what will the unofficial kickoff of summer look like for New York City residents? We are checking in with Mayor Bill de Blasio this morning. So, good morning to you. You're live at City Hall this morning. We thank you for joining us once again here on PIX11. So, we'll get into the summertime in just a second, I want to begin with the city hitting the benchmarks, right, to reopen. What exactly is the magic number of testing that you would like to see moving forward that you would feel comfortable with for a reopening?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, Dan, we have shared with the people of this city now for weeks, three key indicators that help us determine if it's time to start to relax some restrictions. The State of New York has seven indicators. We're looking at all those and they've been moving absolutely consistently in the right direction, but not quite enough yet to get us to relaxing of some restrictions. So, we still need at least a few more weeks. It's going to go into the first half of June. And then we have to make sure whatever we do, and I know the State feels the same way, that we are not going to allow a boomerang of this disease. We're not going to allow a resurgence that could obviously shut us down for a much longer period of time. So, you know, we're looking like we're making steady progress, but then when we get to that point we'll take some measured reopening steps and then see how those go and then go farther from there.

Mannarino: Mr. Mayor, data released yesterday showed there is a clear disparity, right, between wealthy, non-wealthy communities that people living in neighborhoods with high or very high poverty levels are more than twice as likely to die of coronavirus than those in other neighborhoods. We knew this, we've been reporting on this. So, moving forward, what can you do for those communities in particular besides ramping up testing to make sure we kind of close that loophole and keep them safe moving forward?

Mayor: Dan, it's a great question. So, for now it's more testing, it's more investments in community health clinics, outreach to communities to make sure people have the information they need to protect themselves and their families. There's a lot we're going to do right now, but the big question is going forward, how do you create a city where these disparities don't exist? Well, part of it is making sure everyone has full access to health care. We're guaranteeing health care for all New Yorkers going forward, either insurance they can afford or what we call NYC Care, which means if you can't afford insurance, you can have a doctor assigned to you in our public hospitals and clinics. So, that's part of it. Getting health care to people who haven't had it historically. There's a lot of New Yorkers who have just not had quality health care available throughout their lives because of the cost. That's part of it, but we have a lot more to do to create

a healthier city in other ways, more wellness, more efforts to fight obesity, better, fresher food in neighborhoods that don't have enough. There's going to be a lot of steps that we have to take here to really guard against these disparities ever having this kind of impact again in the future.

Mannarino: I don't want to spend too much time looking in the rear view mirror, but these disparities, you knew, the city knew moving into this, that there were issues in these communities. So, is there a lesson learned here for you and your team on how maybe you could have handled that better for those specific communities? Was it getting testing to them earlier than we're seeing now?

Mayor: Well, it's a great question, Dan. I'd say in the big picture before the coronavirus, it was a year-and-a-half ago that I noticed the plan to guarantee health care for all New Yorkers and to obviously address the – you know, we have 600,000 people who don't have any insurance at all and that plan was meant to reach all of them. So, that was something well before the coronavirus but what we are learning from this situation – look, we needed testing in the beginning, we didn't have it. That was the federal government's responsibility. That's the whole core of this painful story, Dan. If we had had testing when I first called for it in January we might have been able to avert a lot of this. Now we're creating our own tests kits here in New York City. I mean this is what it's come down to, Dan.

We cannot depend on the federal government anymore. So we're building our own test kits in New York City. We're working with New York City based labs and labs in the metropolitan area. We're doing it ourselves and now we're able to do 20,000 tests a day and obviously disproportionately focusing those on the communities that have been hit the hardest. So, from this point forward, we're actually going to be able to expand testing constantly, huge test-and-trace program to follow the contacts of anyone who tests positive and get people whatever they need, including if they need a hotel room to isolate and be away from their families. So, I think we're in a much stronger position now, but back then we just didn't have access to testing and that's what tied our hands.

Mannarino: And so, I want to get now to enforcing social distancing. It continues to have its challenges, we know this. A yeshiva in Brooklyn, busted with nearly a hundred people inside. My question for you is, why wasn't there a summons issued here, right? This is more than just not wearing a mask in public because there were children that were involved here, the most vulnerable as we move forward with this inflammatory syndrome as well.

Mayor: Yeah. Dan, first of all, it's absolutely unacceptable what the folks of this yeshiva did, they'd been warned, everyone had been warned so many times. Now, Dan, remember this is absolutely the exception. The rule has been all over New York City. You've seen very consistently across all communities, people are not gathering, they've gotten the point about how to protect each other and protect themselves from the coronavirus. This was truly exceptional and with the message I gave on Friday was the NYPD, if they find any gathering, they're going to break it up. But the first goal is just for people to disperse and not come back. Summons is there for anyone who resists. So, in this case, as I understand it they immediately dispersed. They will not be coming back, I assure you. And if we have to shut down that building entirely, we will. But the goal here is not to get to summonses if we don't have to, but only if they resist.

Mannarino: Yeah. I don't want to put this idea out there, but it almost sounds like a get-out-of-jail-free card. Right. So, if a barbershop or a business or a speakeasy, if they are caught, are they going to – are you going to tell them, hey, just disperse or is there a summons involved there?

Mayor: Look, with the business community, we've seen, again, a high level of compliance. Remember when we closed the bars and restaurants, that's the decision I made quite a while back and said, we're not going to have people eating in, we'll just do takeout and delivery. Unbelievable compliance, Dan. NYPD, FDNY, Buildings Department, Sheriff's Department, they went out all over the city and found almost no need to give summonses. They did give few because some places resisted, but the vast majority just agreed. And if people agree and do what we need them to do, we're not here to add to their economic hardship. If they don't agree, if they don't act quickly, that's when the summons comes.

Mannarino: So, I want to talk about Memorial Day weekend now and, of course, the beaches, you know, that is a big topic of conversation now. Long Island came out and they said they are taking a bit of an issue here. They want to start screening and checking IDs at their beaches right now because New York City's will remain closed. What are your thoughts right now on the idea that Long Island doesn't want New Yorkers from the five boroughs coming to their beaches because they don't want to overcrowd?

Mannarino: Well, you know, Dan, that's not the impression I have. I spoke to Nassau County Executive Laura Curran and she made the point that, you know, people come to their beaches from the city, you know, have for generations but they're going to put limits on the total number of people in their beaches, obviously, because they need to do that. That's part of the State guidance to begin with. Look, this should not be about any ill feeling towards people depending on where they come from. This is about, there are real clear limits on the beaches that will be open and everyone needs to respect that to keep us all healthy and safe in the entire metropolitan area. In New York City, it's just not time for beaches yet. We saw when Florida, California prematurely opened beaches, they had massive crowds, you know, no social distancing. We can't allow that here. We're going to – we're the epicenter of this crisis. So we're going to be really cautious –

Mannarino: I'm curious, Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: But I am hopeful that later in the season we might be able to open the beaches.

Mannarino: I'm curious as to what your thoughts are on people who are this weekend may take a beach chair to Coney Island, right? You're saying people can freely move about, they can walk around, but if they want to sit down and they want to sunbathe is that actually allowed? And if it's not, how does that differ from taking a beach chair to Domino Park or Piers 45 and 46?

Mayor: Yeah. So, first of all, Dan, start with the basics. We don't want people on the subways. We don't want people on the buses unless it's essential travel. Obviously, though, and Coney Island is a great example. There's, you know, tens of thousands of people who live really near to the beach. We understand that, as a community we want to respect that. People walking on the

beach, sitting on the beach, that's fine. No swimming because there'll be no lifeguards, no parties, no sports events, NYPD will be out there, Parks Department be out there. If people simply walk on the beach, sit on the beach, and stay socially distanced, fine. But if it starts to seem like a typical summer beach scene, that's what we can't allow right now.

Mannarino: Understood, here. So, I also want to switch gears here now and talk about 4th of July fireworks, right? That has been a topic of conversation as well, allowing that to happen, saying it's going to go off. Any more details on what we could possibly see on the 4th of July and where the fireworks would actually be?

Mayor: It's too early to give you details, Dan. It's obviously still May. Macy's is going ahead with it, and I've blessed that because I think, you know, there's something very powerful about celebrating our nation's birthday, especially in the middle of a national crisis. So, we're going to find the right way to do it, but it's going to be safety first. It may be very, very different than what you've seen in previous years. We'll have more to say on it as it gets closer, but what I've made clear is there's going to be a celebration on July 4th, but we're going to do it the safe way.

Mannarino: New York City Health Commissioner, she issued an apology yesterday over comments made towards the NYPD. The unions would still like to see her resign. Curious to ask you about why she hasn't necessarily been on those daily briefings. I know you say the lineup changes every single day, but there's been this big issue with this inflammatory syndrome here affecting so many children. She is a pediatrician after all, so shouldn't we be hearing from the city's doctor daily on this issue?

Mayor: Again, we put up a lineup of people, all of whom are fighting this crisis. Our Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services is a doctor as well. The head of our public health system, my senior advisor on the coronavirus, all of these folks participate along with Dr. Barbot as health commissioner, all of them bring expertise. So, we put together different lineups each day. She'll be speaking as part of our group today. But, look, I think the important thing is we're watching very closely – and to all the parents out there, all the family members, this syndrome I know everyone's very, very concerned about it, the one thing we are seeing that is at least hopeful is early detection makes a huge, huge difference. So, parents, family members, if you see any of the signs, the rash, the vomiting, the fever, if you see these signs in children, please immediately alert your doctor. It's very important to act quickly.

Mannarino: Mr. Mayor, we are out of time, I know you have another interview to get to. I want to end on a lighter note. It is Takeout Tuesday. We feature a lot of places in New York City that are small mom-and-pop shops, right. I want to know what exactly you, your takeout place is, your takeout place of choice.

Mayor: Well in my neighborhood in Brooklyn, unquestionably, because it's on my own block is Bar Toto, 6th Avenue and 11th Street in Brooklyn. I don't know, honestly if they're doing takeout lately, but that's the spot I would go to.

Mannarino: There you go. Mr. Mayor, appreciate your time this morning as always, and thank you for what you're doing.

Mayor: Alright, take care, Dan.

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