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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everyone. And I want to start by wishing everyone – all of you, all of your families a very Happy Thanksgiving. It's going to be a different Thanksgiving. It's going to be a tough Thanksgiving, but we still have a lot to be thankful for every one of us. And we have to be thankful for each other and the way we've all protected each other, taking care of each other through this crisis. We have to be thankful for the fact that 2020 is almost over and we're going to get to turn that page on the calendar soon, which we cannot be happy – more happy than that. It's going to be a beautiful day when we finally can say goodbye to 2020. But, in the meantime, let's celebrate and be thankful for something else. This city faced with an extraordinary crisis unlike anything we've ever experienced, we asked the people of New York City to answer the call, go out and get tested. Nothing will be more important than testing. Said it from the day-one – day-one, that testing was the difference maker. I've constantly said to people, please, please go out and get tested. And New Yorkers have heard and they have done something about it. Right now, I'm reporting to you that we have now had over 1 million tests given in New York City. Over 1 million New Yorkers went out and got tested in the time we've spent fighting the coronavirus. That's a staggering number and it's just the beginning, because the way forward is going to be with more and more and more testing. And remember this had to be built from scratch. It didn't exist back in January, February. We didn't even have the right to do local testing. The federal government didn't even give us that right. But once we were finally given the authorization, this city surge to the head of the nation and create a vast testing apparatus, a vast test and trace corps., and it's making a huge difference. So, thank you. To every single New Yorker who got tested, thank you. And go get tested more – get tested every month. If you haven't been tested at all, go out and get tested. It makes such a difference. And we're going to need it to keep fighting back this second wave that is bearing down on us more every day. We have to fight it back and testing is the key. So, thank you to everyone that did get tested. And, everyone, let's keep it getting tested.

Now, I'd say the second wave is coming on strong. It's affecting every element of our lives. We've got to keep fighting against it. So, many people are suffering as a result of the coronavirus and feeling this uptick. And nowhere is that more true than with our small businesses. They have gone through hell this year. We're talking about small businesses people built with their own hands, with all their sweat and all their tears to make it finally work. And now, we're seeing these businesses threatened. We've lost so many, more are threatened. We have got to help our small businesses in every way possible. The City has done everything from grants and loans – we did that even before the federal government – to giving out free PPE to keep stores and their customers safe, to opening up streets and sidewalks for outdoor dining, for open storefronts, for retail, all the things that make a difference to help a small business. We really need the big X-factor – of course, a federal stimulus to put money right in the hands of small businesses. And we're going to keep fighting for that. And that's still possible. We've got to keep fighting for that.

But, in the meantime, there's something every one of you can do right now to help the small businesses in your neighborhood. I'm going to ask you to not do things the way so many people have gotten used to, which is going online, but instead to shop at your local business. Now, some of them obviously can sell online too, and that's great. But I mean, most importantly, go local. Go local. Shop your city. Shop your neighborhood. It makes a huge difference. People are constantly asking what will help? What can I do? I'm asking you to do something that's so simple, but so powerful. The money you have to spend – and a lot of people don't have as much as they used to – but the money you do have to spend these holidays, keep it in the community. Buy from a neighborhood store and it will help that business, that family to make it through this crisis. Our small business services department's been doing so much with every challenge thrown at them to keep fighting back. And here to tell you more about this bi-local effort, our Small Business Services Commissioner Jonnel Doris.

Commissioner Jonnel Doris, Small Business Services: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And on behalf of the 240,000 small businesses in this city, we appreciate certainly everything you've done, pushing us ahead and pushing us forward to address the needs of our small business community. It's been a long road, as the Mayor mentioned, for our small businesses, and we are committed to making sure that the resources they need, they get to get them back on their feet. Our small businesses have been creative and resourceful during this pandemic. I've visited small businesses in every borough. And, as a former small business owner myself, their innovation and commitment really inspires me. We will continue to help them at every step of the way to make it easier, faster, and better for them to do business in the City of New York. And let's be frank, COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on Asian, Black and Latinx communities in our city. And that includes businesses in those neighborhoods, as we have seen, have been hit the hardest.

We have delivered over 108,000 services to small businesses in our city. We have helped 4,600 businesses receive \$113 million in financing. But there's still need out there. There's still more need and we have to do more. As the Mayor stated, we all have to do our part. We have to play our role in helping our small businesses comeback. Today, we're announcing a city-wide campaign to highlight local businesses called Shop your City. Shop your City encourages New Yorkers to spend their hard-earned dollars locally. These winter shopping months could be life or death, break even or not for small businesses. But together, we can redirect our resources to keep our dollars circulating in our communities and to find what we're looking for in these diverse businesses. We are taking this campaign on the road and we're going to do a five-borough tour starting this Saturday, Small Business Saturday. So, we want to remind everyone to shop your city.

Today, we're also building on the work of the Racial Inclusion and Equity Task force announcing the investment of \$37 million to support businesses across the city in LMI communities. First, we invest in \$35 million in zero interest loans to LMI storefront businesses. Second, we are working with 11 community-based lenders to reduce business debt. And third, we are making sure community organizations have the funding they need to support small business owners. And across each of these new initiatives, we are making sure that help goes to the businesses who needed the most by focusing our efforts in low to moderate income communities.

These new programs will bring us the much-needed support to our small businesses across the city. But if you're a small business out there and you need support and you have not been able to

get that support that you need or get the resources that you need, please reach out to us at our hotline 888-SBS-4NYC. Or, get us at our website, nyc.gov/SBS. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone. And remember to shop your city.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Commissioner. I liked the sound of that. Now, I want you to hear what this means for our small businesses. I want you to hear from a small business owner who can tell you, every one of you, how important it is when you spend your money locally, what it means for a small business and their ability to survive, how much they need you. They need you to take this action to keep them alive, to keep their families and their livelihood. So, here to tell you about her experience and about what she is doing to continue to serve the Williamsburg community, the owner of wonderful cafes and restaurants – Portenas and Mercadito. My pleasure to introduce Carmen Ferreyra.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you very, very much, Carmen. And thank you. I can hear how much you've been through and I know you're tired, I know it's been a lot, but thank you for also reminding people how much strength and resiliency there is in our small business community. And you fought your way back and you're employing so many people. Thank you. Thank you for that. You're helping keep them – keep these families in their livelihoods. So, what a good example of the strength of our New York City small businesses. Everyone, please, please take encouragement from this example and shop our city, buy local. You can make a difference. Here's the chance to do it.

All right. Now, Thanksgiving is upon us and people are going to celebrate. And I've said, please – and our health leadership has said, celebrate safely, focus on the people closest to you, and small gatherings and virtual gatherings and avoid travel to keep everyone safe. It makes such a difference. So, look, it's going to be different this year, but some things, even with differences, any gathering, we're going to feel – it doesn't matter if it's in-person or virtual – we're going to feel the warmth and love of family and friends. And another thing that we have depended on for generations is the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. I want to thank Macy's. They have been extraordinary this year. They had to deal with so many challenges, but they still managed to give us a wonderful 4th of July. And now, they're going to give us a wonderful Thanksgiving. It will be different. It will be smaller. It will be made for TV. It is not a spectator event in person. We're letting people know it's going to be a very limited area and we're not asking people to show up. And, of course, there will be plenty of measures to make sure there are no crowds, but you will be able to see it on television. It's going to be exciting. There will be floats. There will be balloons. Spoiler alert, if there's any very young children in the room right now, you might want to escort them out of the room, because I'll say there will also be a very important visitor from the North Pole at the end of the parade. So, it's going to be great also because Macy's went to the extent of making sure that some of the other parades that we didn't get to have this year got some representation. So, they'll have some wonderful performances from the West Indian Day Parade, from the Puerto Rican Parade, things we normally look forward to all year – and from the cast of Hamilton. It's going to be something very special. So, thank you to Macy's and thank you for coming up with a plan, working with all of us, City and State, to make sure it was a safe, smart plan for this moment. And I look forward to next year when the whole, giant, special Macy's Parade can come back in all of its glory.

Now, another important point about Thanksgiving, I'm thankful to all New Yorkers, but I want to offer a special thanks to everyone in our schools, to our educators, to our school staff, our food service workers, who, right now, continue to provide crucial support to families who need that food. They're doing that every day, even when schools temporarily shut down. I thank them. I thank everyone in the school community, school safety, the crossing guards, the custodial engineers – everyone. You did something people said couldn't be done, you got the school system open again. We are closed temporarily. We will be back. And next week, we're going to announce the details of how we will come back. It will be in stages. We will find a way back through this pandemic, because we proved we could keep our schools safe. But we're going to have to come back a different way given some of the challenges we're facing with this second wave bearing down on us. So, next week, we will put forward that plan. And it's going to take a lot of engagement with parents. We need a lot of help from parents to make it work, but I know parents want their kids back in school and they'll be our partners. So, that will be coming next week, that update, and then we'll start to implement it in the weeks ahead.

Now, another important point, I mentioned those food service workers in the schools. And there's other people – I want to express my thanks to everyone in the food pantries and soup kitchens all over the city, everyone in the City government, everyone who's helping to provide food to New Yorkers in need. No one – no New Yorker should go hungry at Thanksgiving. So, anyone who does not enough food for tomorrow, please, all you have to do is go online nyc.gov/getfood or call 3-1-1. If you need food, we'll direct you to one of the school sites or a soup kitchen, a food pantry. Or, if you're someone who cannot get out of the house, we can deliver directly to you. But we want to make sure everyone has a meal they deserve for Thanksgiving. And every New Yorker is safe and sound on Thanksgiving Day.

All right, let me do the indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold 200 patients – today's report is higher, and this is something we're watching very carefully, 141 patients. So, that's a concern. That number has stayed down for quite a while. It's going up. Positivity level 45 percent confirmed positive for COVID. Again, overall, our hospitals are doing very, very well, but that jump is a concern. We're keeping a close eye on that.

Number two, new reported cases, seven-day average threshold, 550, as we all know we're well, well past that, 1,447 reported cases in the last 24 hours and now – I'm sorry, on the seven-day average, my apology on the seven-day average. And then number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent, today's report 2.74 percent and the seven-day rolling average 3.05 percent. So continues to tick up, but knock on wood and let us pray, ticks up slowly and that's what we have to do. Stop that growth, turn it around. That's all of our business. A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's 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 Commissioner Doris, by Dr. Ted Long, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Yeah. Hi, Mr. Mayor, and a happy Thanksgiving to you and your family as well.

Mayor: To you and your family is also Juliet, very happy Thanksgiving to you.

Question: Thank you, thank you, I appreciate that. Actually my question is there was just a tweet from a Corp Counsel, it said we made important updates to our charts detailing all activity restrictions in COVID cluster zones. Is this something new or some new information about these zones?

Mayor: I'm not exactly sure about the tweet you're referring to, but we're going to keep people updated as any changes occur. Obviously the State is making adjustments as new information comes in. People have gotten a good sense of what those zone restrictions are, but we'll keep updating them and clarifying them as we go along. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay, and the other question is regarding, I know you said you're making the announcement next week, about schools, but can you shed any more light on the logistics for the additional testings when the – testing when the schools reopen, you know, on site or mobile locations every day, once a week, what's – how is that going to work?

Mayor: So, first of all, every child will have to have a consent form on file because testing will be more frequently. Right now, the norm in the schools has been once a month, that's going to increase. We're going to work out the exact amount, but that's going to increase. We want to have every child able to be tested at any point. We're going to focus first on special education schools, District 75, and then early childhood and elementary school. We're going to also work with the State in terms of the different zones and how to address those. So there's a lot we're working through. I spoke to the Governor in detail about this yesterday. We're going to come back with the plan in a few days and then start implementing it.

Moderator: The next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Good morning, Mayor de Blasio and happy early Thanksgiving – or happy Thanksgiving to you, which is a holiday to me.

Mayor: Early, doesn't matter, it's still happening.

Question: My question my question is about what you had hinted to what could be the reopening plan. You said it would open in phases, starting with District 75 students. This question is, I guess these 75 students have been exempt from the city's testing plan. They have not been tested. So will that change when reopening begins?

Mayor: We're working on that right now, Katie. We want to make sure whatever we do is very sensitive to the reality of our special needs kids. Different kids have different situations obviously, but that's something we're working on right now with the State, for sure, and the other stakeholders. Go ahead.

Question: Thank you. And my second question also relates to school reopening, I've heard from parents whose students have – whose children have IEPs but they are not in District 75 schools.

Most – the majority of students with IEPs are not in D75, but they obviously want to get as much schooling as possible. Would you ever consider some sort of reopening where you would, you know, allow specialized programs in general education buildings to reopen early as well? Or does it have to be within each building?

Mayor: That's another, it's a very good question. I know you care a lot about this topic, and I appreciate that very much, Katie, because it's so important to keep it front and center. It's a really fair question. I think given the sheer logistics here where we're starting – starting, is let's go school by school because it's the way we can at least get started. Start with those D75 schools themselves. But again, the goal here is to quickly move to early childhood and elementary. That's the way we're conceptualizing it right now, but we'll certainly going to look at the point you put forward.

Moderator: The next is James Ford from PIX.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor and happy Thanksgiving Eve.

Mayor: Happy Thanksgiving to you, James.

Question: Thank you very much. I'm quoting you here, if you don't mind?

Mayor: I'm in trouble.

Question: It's going to be profound. So regarding Thanksgiving Day Parade, you said that plenty of measures to make sure there will be no crowds will take place. Can you elaborate on that? How are we going to keep people away from the parade route? And if they even get close, how will they stay socially distanced?

Mayor: Yeah, remember it's happening over the course of about a block. So it's a very limited area. It's quite easy for the NYPD to segment it off and just say to people, hey, this is not a place to gather. It's going to be all televised. That's the best way for people to see it. Look, this was a compromise. Macy's was fantastic and we worked closely with the state to figure out something that was safe, that was really compact, but also could bring the joy of what they do, not only to us, the whole nation watches this parade, and it's a great representation of New York City. So the simple answer is it's a very small area. It's going to be clearly demarcated so that people know it's not a spectator event and I think we'll succeed in keeping that small.

Question: I appreciate being able to quote you straight to you. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: [Inaudible] let's do it again, James.

Question: Also – I'll try not to, instead, I'll ask a question from my colleague Kala Rama, she says she wants to know, look, it may be premature, but will a COVID vaccine ultimately be a requirement for students to return to the classroom?

Mayor: Now at this point that is not the plan. It's a perfectly fair question, but that is not the plan. The first of all the vaccine, you know, we could get as early as next month, obviously, which is fantastic, but it will take time to get the quantities we need. We're looking now again at

opening in stages, but consistently. Lot of testing, the schools have proven to be very, very safe. So over time I think as the vaccine gets distributed much more widely, that's going to allow us – it's going to certainly help us to keep a school strong and get more and more kids back in the schools. There's even a possibility at some point in the school year, going back to five-day if the vaccine is widely distributed enough, but for now the plan is to rely on testing heavily and phase in the reopening.

Moderator: The next is David Cruz from Gothamist.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good David, happy Thanksgiving.

Question: Happy Thanksgiving. So you've hinted at the bigger role testing will play when schools reopen you. You mentioned the plan is to test the entire student body, which is roughly – or more than 300,000 students, as well as faculty on what seems more than once a month. And that's a considerable amount of testing. So can you explain what logistical hurdles the city has raised in and resolved with the State and school labor unions in realizing and sustaining this higher demand for testing?

Mayor: Well, David we haven't resolved the whole package, but there's been very good conversations. As I said, I've talked to the Governor in detail about this. I've certainly spoken to our labor colleagues. I think what is starting to emerge is a picture that is just a focus on more testing and other measures to just intensify. We already had a gold standard for keeping our schools safe. It worked, we want to go even farther given the second wave of bearing down on us. We want to beat the second wave too. And the other restrictions coming are going to certainly help us do that. But the – I think the simple fact is we are going to sort out the pieces, get everyone in maximum agreement, announce a plan starting next week and then implement it in phases, and we'll make adjustments as we see it play out on the ground. And that's the other thing we always learn dealing with COVID, you know, it's one thing to have it on paper. It's another thing on the ground. We're going to figure out the right way to make it work. Go ahead, David.

Question: And a question from my colleague, Jake Offenhartz. Last night, your office sent sheriffs to a Hasidic event in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, after going into the building, they found roughly 300 unmasked men celebrating a post wedding ceremony. They ultimately left the scene without taking any enforcement action and we were told by Sheriff Joe Fucito that the reason for this is that religious gatherings are allowed to happen at 50 percent occupancy regardless how many people attend. So was this an error by the Sheriff's Office or is it true that hundreds of people without masks are in fact allowed to gather inside for religious reasons?

Mayor: David, the standards for religious gatherings set by the State are well-known. My impression from the briefing I got this morning was that the Sheriff found what was there within the standards. So I don't know if that report is accurate, honestly, the way you described it or Jake described it. I need to confirm that what I got back was the Sheriff following State guidance saw a religious gathering within the State limits and appropriate. But we'll get you more details to confirm that.

Moderator: The next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and happy Thanksgiving to you and to your entire family.

Mayor: Happy Thanksgiving, Marcia. We, you know, we're not going to be able to go to Massachusetts this year, but – that's an inside joke – but we're, we're going to enjoy it anyway, right?

Question: Mr. Mayor, my first question has to do with schools. I wonder if in laying out these plans, you'll be able to open schools even – or some schools, even though the positivity rate is over three percent because parts of the city certainly are below three percent. And so I'm wondering when you talk about phases, is it not only the phases in terms of the age group, but also phases in terms of parts of the city that have lower test rates?

Mayor: That's exactly what we're talking through with the State, but remember, because we're adding additional measures, you can have schools open. I mean the State guidance is clear and this is what's happening already around the State and it's even happened here with non-public schools that if you follow the additional measures, even when you're in an orange or red zone, you can be open, but it is about additional safety measures. That's what we're talking about in general, phased in approach, as I described. And we're going to talk to the State about what will be done on a city-wide basis, what might be done on a more localized basis.

Question: So Mr. Mayor, since you've told people that you're not going to go to Massachusetts for Thanksgiving, I wonder exactly what you are going to do for Thanksgiving, whether you're cooking, you have a special dish, a specialty, what you like to eat for Thanksgiving? Do you like cranberry sauce, stuffing, Turkey, vegetarian Turkey, what's going on in the de Blasio household this holiday season?

Mayor: Let me tell you, Marcia, first of all, you do not want to ask me to cook, a bad thing would happen. I love eating. I have no ability to cook. When I retire I'm going to work on cooking, but not now. I am just a total traditionalist, Marcia. I am into Turkey, sage stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce. I think it's like an amazing meal. It's kind of funny that most of us have it only once a year because it's like the perfect meal but that's what I'm into. And we're going to have a very small gathering and it's not going to feel normal in the least. And I've said, I'm really, it is very – look, we all have to find the good Marcia, but it's going to be just plain weird to not be with some of the people I'm closest to and that's sad for all of us. But I also am just profoundly clear, we just have to get through one Thanksgiving this way and then the next one will be better, so that keeps me going.

Moderator: The next is Jillian Jonas from WBAI.

Question: Hey Mr. Mayor

Mayor: Hey, Jillian how you doing?

Question: How are you? I'm okay. I want to wish my condolences about Mayor Dinkins. I remember how close you were.

Mayor: I was and thank you, that's very kind of you Jillian.

Question: Yeah, so my first question kind of piggybacks off of the Gothamist question, but it is actually something I've been thinking about for a while. You've talked about how your priority for COVID safety enforcement is more about education. But with that wedding in Brooklyn, and now this event that they were talking about, it really underscores what I've been thinking, which is what about the attendees? How many chances do they get at this point some eight months into the pandemic? Clearly the organizers of the wedding and their participants were aware because of their efforts to hide it. And by now most people simply know better. Dr. Chokshi said as much yesterday. So, basically, you're not Kristi Noem and we're not in Sturgis so, what is the City going to do about this behavior?

Mayor: Jillian, I give you points for a colorful question there. Yes, we are not – this is not South Dakota, but look, I think it's exactly right to say, everyone knows the rules by now. And so not the event last night, which again, what I've heard from the Sheriff was, it was within the proper limits. But let's go back to that wedding a few days ago, which we certainly confirmed was a wedding, that there was an effort to conceal it from the City government, and it was clearly too big. How big we don't know exactly, but clearly too big. A \$15,000 fine and the cease-and-desist order had been issued. God forbid, anyone violates those rules again in that building, that building will be shut down, period. It will be padlocked. And we don't want to have to do that, but we will because of the very point you're making, people should know better by now. I will say this is a little sad to me because when we were going through so much, a few weeks back in Brooklyn, actually the Williamsburg community responded intensely, led the way in terms of getting people tested, which was great and helpful, and a lot of education was done. I don't know why we see suddenly this slippage back in the wrong direction, but we're not going to tolerate it. We have to address it. Go ahead, Jillian

Question: So, does that mean you're going to fine the attendees, the people who get caught, not the organizers?

Mayor: What we said from the beginning is, because of the scale of things and everything else, we focus on the people who organize the events, and we focus on the location. And the fines are really substantial. And if there's a second offense, we're closing it down, we're paddle locking it. I think that makes the point as clear as anything could be that if people can't even use their building anymore, including, God forbid, a house of worship. I don't want to have to do that to people with a house of worship. But if we have to – we did that back in the beginning of this crisis, we would do it again. So, I just – look, you started exactly in the right place. People know the rules, they should follow the rules. If they don't, we're going to have to be very, very rigorous in terms of the consequences.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, I guess I wanted to stay on the same issue as far as fining or not fining individuals who kind of attend a massive event, like the wedding that was planned in secret. And at the same time, as you're not issuing fines to attendees, you're threatening travelers who come to the city who don't follow the rules with fines of between \$1,000 and \$2,000. So, can you just comment on that discrepancy please?

Mayor: Well, they're two really different things. Yoav, I think the point about the fines, remember we're talking about \$15,000 fine in the case of the organizers of events or people who run a building where an event happens. There's obviously – we have issued fines to individuals before, and I'm not saying it's an impossibility. I'm saying the way that we focused our enforcement, the way we thought was going to be most effective was to put much bigger fines on the people who put together the events because they're really the ones who have the original sin here. But quarantine is an entirely different reality. It's not, you know, one hour or one day. It is a two-week period that people are supposed to observe, and they have to observe it. And it's also, remember, it's with folks who have very particular realities, folks who either have a positive test or been exposed to some of the positive tests or coming from someplace with high levels of COVID. So, those are really high indicators that trigger quarantine. So, look, we're going to keep doing very aggressive work to stop the events. We're going to keep doing aggressive work to make sure people observe quarantine. There's going to be consequences. There's going to be financial penalties, no one likes financial penalties in the middle of this crisis, but we'll keep doing it. If it comes down to needing to go farther with individual fines, we always reserve that, right. That's certainly a tool we have. If we have to use it. Go ahead, Yoav.

Question: Okay, thanks for that. And I just wanted to see if I could get a better understanding for why there wasn't a school reopening plan in place when the city hit a three percent threshold. You've said that there were, kind of, a variety of, I guess, conditions that made it tough to have a plan in place. But, I mean, the fact is the conditions that the city – that the rates were increasing and that they would be at three percent at closure that was known obviously. And if anything, the conditions seemed to have been better than one would have thought because the positivity rate was so low inside of the schools. So, just want to see if I can get a clearer notion for why there was a plan in place, because it seems like certainly between last week and this week that a delay in getting the schools open right now is hinging on the City's ability to formulate that plan after the fact.

Mayor: Yeah, Yoav, it's a really fair question. And I will say honestly, I have to hold myself responsible. The better situation would have been clearly to have that plan all worked through in advance. But I think what really happened was as with everything COVID we had a moving target. We were trying to see if there were measures we could take to avoid ever going past the three percent. That's really where our energy was going, deploying the testing, trying to take actions that we thought might avert the original, you know, measure being hit. And honestly, we were putting tons of energy, all of us, into trying to keep making the schools better, trying to address the huge numbers of questions that came up with blended learning, with remote learning, and so many other things. I think we didn't have a plan-B and we should've had a plan-B, but I also understand why we didn't because we were really dealing with so many day-to-day, hour-to-hour issues, and trying to find a way to avert getting to that three percent. No, in retrospect, clearly it would have been better. But the important point is getting to the three percent meant something. It meant there was a problem. It meant that we were dealing with this second wave bearing down on us. That's a real thing. We did see a number of schools have to close individually more than we had seen before. Something was happening unquestionably. And so, the three percent did serve a purpose. It said we had to reset, and we had to come up with more stringent rules. And that's what we're doing right now. That's not easy. There's some big, complicated questions as we just talk about. Are we going by zone? Are we going by different levels of schools? There's a lot to work out. In a perfect world though, unquestionably, it

would've been better to work it out in advance, but even as we're doing it now, Yoav, it ain't easy. We will get it done though. And we'll announce it next week. Go ahead.

Moderator: The last question for today, it goes to Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Question: Thank you. For many, the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of Mayor Dinkins is the Crown Heights Riot. He was quoted as telling police to let them vent their rage and some have blamed him for restraining police and allowing the riot to turn into a pogrom. Now you were an aid in the Dinkins administration. Can you share your thoughts both then and now on how Dinkins dealt with the riots and whether it in any way informed your decision-making in dealing with the riots this past summer?

Mayor: Well, look, we're on the verge of Thanksgiving and I want to be benevolent to you. And you often ask me pointed questions and I think we sometimes don't agree, but I know you ask very honest and important questions, but I just – I have to call out, I think there's a bunch of things in that question that just don't reflect the reality. I don't think that's accurate at all about what happened at that time. I think we all now know, looking back, the horrible combination of things happened in an absolutely unpredictable order that created tremendous tension. As you remember, it was on top of that, a lot of the key police leadership was either out of town or had been changed. There's just a lot of things happening at once that made it such a hard situation to address. So, that's the first point.

The second point, I think there's so many more important things to think about with David Dinkins than that one very sad moment. And I think it's important particularly having lost him that we honor the good he did in terms of trying to bring the city together and helping us to move forward in terms of safety, which he unquestionably started the ball rolling on. I think in terms of what we learned, we clearly learned that when you are dealing with situations like that, which was a different situation than what we have had in 2020. And I just don't – I've looked at everything that happened in 2020, those were protests and some of them had some violent people in them and they were – it was unacceptable to see any violence, but I don't think it's accurate to compare it to what happened in Crown Heights, which was a very different reality.

But we have learned that when you see a situation like that emerge, address it very immediately and forcefully. And certainly, I learned from that and it is something I remember very vividly with a lot of pain for everyone, for the loss in all communities, but it certainly gave me a firsthand experience with the importance of dealing with something like that assertively and clearly and quickly so that we can get past it and go back to the work of peace. And the final thing I'll say, Reuvain, is the Crown Heights community deserves respect that there was a bad moment, but everyone in the community came together in the 30 years since and created tremendous unity. And that really needs to be honored. Every part of the community found a way forward. A lot of leaders did great work to find unity. And that's also the thing that really must be honored the most. Go ahead, Reuvain.

Question: Yeah. I don't believe anyone's asked the question to doctors today's [inaudible] everyone was talking about the vaccine and you know, how that may finally bring an end to the pandemic. And my question is, I mean, there are so many people in the city already, certain areas close to 50 percent of – more than 50 percent that have antibodies. The purpose of a vaccine I believe is to build antibodies. And my question is why people with antibodies are not being treated differently. If people who have the vaccine will eventually be treated differently, whether it's being allowed at the schools or whatever, why are we not doing that with antibodies now? And I just want to – even though antibodies and cells may wear off after four months, there've been studies that show that once you have antibodies, you might actually be immune for a very long time.

Mayor: That's a smart question. I'm only going to say to Dr. Varma then Dr. Choksi, I'm sure you could spend all day on this topic but give us the brief version of an answer.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah, no, thank you very much for the question and I'll do my best to keep it brief. I think the basic answer is that even though there have been studies looking at duration and degree of protection from prior infection, we really don't know enough to actually plan public health policy based on that. You know, when we plan policy, we always plan around the most credible, sort of, worst case scenario. And so, what we know right now is that a prior infection may give some people protection, but we really don't know the duration of that and the degree of it. And so, what we are really planning around is the assumption that people can potentially be reinfected and that's the way we make our plans. The news about vaccines is great. We do have to recognize, of course, however that these are all still preliminary studies. And that we're going to learn a lot more over the next couple of months as there's follow up both on the studies, as well as from people who get vaccinated in real life.

Mayor: Dr. Choksi, make it brief and effective.

Moderator: Sorry, we don't have Dr. Chokshi today. We have Dr. Long.

Mayor: That's my bad, I'm sorry. Dr. Varma gets the last word then. My apology. And listen, to everyone as we get ready for Thanksgiving, I'll just finish on this point -- again, people have done so much for each other. This has been the story of 2020, a painful difficult time, but also New Yorkers, really, really standing up for each other, really helping each other, showing tremendous compassion. I'm thankful for all of you who have helped us through this really difficult year. I want to ask you, please do everything you can in the weeks ahead and the remainder of 2020, do everything you can to help us move forward. Stay safe, wear the mask, get tested, buy local, buy local, help our small businesses keep going. That's so important. Do the things that will help us move forward. And the last thing I'm going to say is next year is coming. Thank God. Next year is coming. Next year will be better. Next year we will all be together in one place for Thanksgiving and all the holidays. We're going to fight our way through. We're going to get there together. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone. Stay safe for this Thanksgiving season. Thank you.

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