

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Holds Media Availability on FY23 Executive Budget

April 26, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams: We have a long budgetary season. This is the second, third, got one more third to go to get that handshake that we are all looking for and deal with the real crises that are in front of us. And we are just extremely pleased with the work of my team and the City Council as we continue to push through these important items with this current budget of \$99.7 billion. And we really focus on those needs that are important to New Yorkers. I know and you know, you are probably more excited than we are, because this is the time that Sally enjoys the most. Oh, there he is. So why don't we open the floor to questions?

Question: Can you tell us what the amount of fiscal federal stimulus is that has been spent already of the 26 billion that the city is getting or have gotten? What has been spent? And what's the plan spent for FY23 agenda out here?

Mayor Adams: Okay. Jacques is going to be doing a deep dive into all of those numbers. You going to do it today?

Jacques Jiha, Director of the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget: Yeah.

Mayor Adams: Later today he'll be there and you could deal in all of those numbers that's on there.

Question: So first of all, are you increasing police spending? And then can you talk about the decision to hire 570 more correction officers?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Very interesting. Number one. Yes, we are increasing money in the police department. Number one, some of it is dealing with the detectives' contractual dollars that's associated with it. The second is overtime, which we're really going to take a deep dive into overtime in many different areas. I always stated that our police

department is not properly deployed and we are going to really examine that as well as in overtime. We're going to be looking at the civilianization. But right now, money's going to the detectives' contracts overtime and then new initiatives that we put in place. My gun safety team, cameras, there's some real things we did around public safety. No one knows it better than the crew of you here. We've been talking about the violence in all of my initiatives. It costs money, so this is not spending.

Mayor Adams: This is investing. A safe city is going to be a productive city, and that's what those dollars are going for. So some of it consists of NYPD detectives' contracts. Which is very fascinating. Department of Correction, five hundred... Is it 80?

Jiha: 78.

Mayor Adams: 78 correction officers, you know what it's for? All those who stated they wanted to end the solitary confinement. So we are moving to a model of punitive segregation where people are going to open new housing areas, and with the opening of those new housing areas, you know what you need? You need bodies, you need correction officers, nine new housing areas to make sure those inmates are receiving the proper supervision, but it's a different form of making sure that they are not in their cell all the time like solitary confinement was. But keep in mind, many of these inmates are dangerous, and so we must make sure you have the proper police correction officers there to get it right. So advocates call for ending solitary confinement that I support. No matter how much I say that, I keep writing stories saying Eric wants solitary confinement. I don't support solitary confinement. Punitive segregation comes with a price tag, new correction officers. And that is why we have those new correction officers.

Question: Mr. Mayor, so what's the spending then for the Department of Education? It appears there's a cut. Can you explain that? And then also DHS, could you explain the funding there?

Mayor Adams: Tell me more.

Question: Comparison between your proposal in February and now. We just got the briefing books.

Mayor Adams: Uh-huh. Okay.

Question: Just want another comparison. Is there a cut? Just what happened to the funding there?

Mayor Adams: Well, there's a couple of areas. Number one, school safety agents, which is fascinating across the entire city. School safety agents. We have money available to high school safety agents. The problem? Can't get anyone to take the job. And all of our agencies are struggling right now to get people to take the jobs. A great career, we're hoping that people will come and take the jobs. And so the areas that Chancellor Banks is making cost savings are areas that's not going to impact on education at all. Is there some particular-

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Yeah.

Question: What about DHS is basically federal aid grant that we have not yet recognized at this point in time.

Question: What's the total spending then for the-

Jiha: I can give you the numbers, the technical [inaudible].

Speaker 4: Mayor, I was wondering if part of your [inaudible] was reducing spending by a little over 2 billion. I wonder if you could tell me, it seems like [inaudible] overall budget, so I guess how do you square those two?

Mayor Adams: You said it was decreased?

Question: Yeah. And where [inaudible] those two concepts?

Mayor Adams: Right. So there were a lot of vacancies that were not filled in agencies and they were not needed in some of those agencies. So we were able to bring down headcount, but we also looked at the areas where we needed to invest in. We invest almost a half a billion dollars in parks. The number of headcounts, I think, we went up to

700 in parks for long needed park enforcement repairs. Everything that's needed. This was a good investment, and what we promised to do around parks. And so when you see those headcounts, that is one of the areas where the most went to, and that was with parks.

Question: Around 700 parks, we got 500 in corrections, any other major increase [inaudible].

Jiha: We'll give you the formal details.

Mayor Adams: Right. That's why we gave you the book, so you can flip through them and then you could ask whatever you want.

Question: [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Huh? We're going to give it to you.

Jiha: I'm going to have a technical briefing after. We'll provide you all the details that you need.

Question: Could you talk about the decision not to do a second pay, given that the out year gaps, it looks like they are higher than they were in January by quite a bit. So I know you reinstituted the PEG after years of not having one, but it looks like now the out year gaps are even larger without a PEG to kind of offset them.

Mayor Adams: But the historic levels are manageable. We are going to continue to look for savings inside agencies. We're going to continue to streamline what we're doing, and we're going to really call on the agencies to do what we're asking every other New Yorkers to do at home. And that's managing our budgets better. And if we see a need to have an additional PEG in the out fiscal years, we're going to do so.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. On housing, your executive budget is laying out the path for spending \$5 billion in capital funding over 10 years. During the campaign, when you mentioned housing advocates, you said you agreed with their proposal to investing \$4 billion per year. So it's falling short of that. Can you explain why you're not making

good on that promise? And what you'd say to housing advocates who think your proposal is insufficient?

Mayor Adams: We're adding \$5 billion to already an existing \$17 billion. So we are at the area of 22 billion now, and we're going to continue to do so. We're going to continue to evaluate during these tough fiscal times. And the numbers we are at now is higher than where we have been historically. We're at the highest level right now, and we're going to continue to work with our housing advocates to get this right. And I'm confident at the end of these four years of my administration, they're going to see that we are in the targets that we deserve.

[Crosstalk]

Question: So this is an education-related question. I know originally the preliminary budget you had planned on ending the policy of [inaudible] schools harmless for enrollment offices. Is your administration considering closing schools in the coming future? I know there's supposed to be savings realized from that on a staffing level, too. So are you guys considering closing any schools?

Mayor Adams: No, we don't want to do that. Chancellor Banks has not mentioned that during my briefings on Sundays, and we want to really reconfigure how we use school spaces all together. We believe they're not utilized at their full capacity. And so there's no plans on closing schools. We want to encourage those who left the school system to return. We've lost a significant number of students and families, and we want them back in our school system, but there's no desire to close schools.

Question: Yes. Mr. Mayor, given that the MTA is putting together this blue ribbon panel to look at fare beating, do you anticipate using or deploying more transit cops in the system to deal with that?

Mayor Adams: I am disappointed in the deployment of transit police personnel. I've shared this before. All of you who take the train, you walk downstairs and you see five transit officers standing at the booth, looking at their phones. We just can't continue to do that. And I have been meeting with the chief of transit and the police commissioner to talk about better deployment. I want police officers on the train. I was a transit cop, I rode the trains, and I rode it by myself. So fare evasion is a problem. I thought it was the wrong idea to state "we are no longer going to prosecute fare evasion." That sent the

wrong message. Now, we are matching it with reduced fare MetroCards. People who can't afford, we are giving the money to those who can't afford, but those who have money in their pockets and just decide they're going to break the law, that's not acceptable. And so we're going to make sure police are deployed at those stations that...

Mayor Adams: Can I have some water before they think I have COVID again? Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: We're going to identify those locations where you have rampant fare evasion. And even if the choice is not to prosecute, we're going to arrest. Our job is to arrest when a crime is carried out. Prosecutors must make sure that they prosecute. We're not going to take the position where we know you're not prosecuting, so we are not going to arrest. No, we're not doing that. But we are also going to encourage those people who can't afford to look at the reduced fare MetroCard, because we'd rather you do that. And there are steps you can take if you can't afford to get on the train. There are things you can do to get entry for free. But jumping the turnstile, not paying your fare is not one of them.

Question: So the officers no longer give a first warning or a civil summons? It'll be an arrest?

Mayor Adams: Well, listen, you could give a summons. It doesn't have to be an arrest. I should say you're going to take police action. It may be a summons. If a person has a warrant, that's a different step. If a person is a habitual transit offender, that's a different step. So we don't want to be heavy handed, but we do want to return the message that any and everything can't go on our subway system.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor. The budget adds almost \$2 billion for the labor reserve over five years with inflation in the past year alone at 0.5. Isn't it likely that city workers are going to be asking for a raise that would require more than that? For example, the CDC said that even with a 3% raise, most of that money would already be spent.

Mayor Adams: Yeah, we're going to be smart. We put in half a percent and we are going to continue to evaluate as these contracts come up. And so we are very much aware of that. We're starting with a half a percent, but we're going to continue to make sure that we were paid for whatever contractual agreement comes out of this

conversation. Many of these city contracts are up and it's going to our Department of Labor. And the budget team is going to sit down, and we will be prepared to pay for whatever increases we have to pay for.

Question: The funding that you had spotlighted in your speech for preventative violence prevention measures like B-HEARD, do those just serve to placate City Council members and others to your political left who are going to gripe about you increasing the NYPD budget?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry. I didn't get that.

Question: The violence prevention measures that you spotlighted in your speech.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Is that just to offset or placate or serve as a compromise for City Council members who are going to take issue with you increasing spending on NYPD?

Mayor Adams: No. I think what many people fail to really acknowledge, and I'm just amazed how my entire career has been hijacked because I ran for office. All of these things are my things. Before people would talk about crisis management team, it was something called SNUG. SNUG was guns spelled backwards. We allocated the first crisis management dollar when I was the state senator. And I was able to convince Albany to put money in crisis management teams. These are my things. These are all of Eric Adams' visions. And then new people came along and started rewriting history. So I'm not placating. I'm placating Eric. I'm finally the mayor that can put the investments that I fought for 32 years.

Mayor Adams: I'm not new to this. I'm true to this. I was doing this before everyone was doing it. I'm just amazed who's going to finally write the story of how long I've been doing this. I feel like Rodney Dangerfield. Come on. So how am I placating people for finally doing what I have been saying for 32 years? Finally, I run for mayor and everybody forgets it. I'm the bad guy now. So I'm not placating them. I'm placating me. My dream came true. I can now fund the things that I knew would make our city better. And I am so happy.

Question: Mr. Mayor, when can New Yorkers expect to see the change in police deployment on the subway you describe from the cops on the subway, on the platform playing with their phones to being on the trains? What day is that going to start?

Mayor Adams: I'm glad you said that. A number of times, New Yorkers send me pictures. They say, "Look at these cops." And what's interesting is when I'm out there, two, three in the morning, cops come to me. Cops are frustrated. They're saying, "Listen, we're doing patrol, and there are those who are out there that just are not doing their job." And so this is a conversation I'm having with the chief and the police commissioner. And that's why I'm out there every night, because you have to see, if you don't inspect what you expect, it's all suspect.

Mayor Adams: And so we are going to start taking very aggressive actions to make sure police are patrolling our subway system and not patrolling their iPhone. And so, you are going to see a visible difference in policing in the next couple of weeks to get those officers who are not doing their job to join those officers who are doing their job. And you need to see that. And if you see it, send me a picture. Let me know, because I'll go to that district the next day and see exactly what's happening. Send me a shot. New Yorkers, you see that? Send me a photo and I would be at that station.

Question: Okay. One of the things is not in the budget is [inaudible] and capacity for the transition of [inaudible]. Could you talk a little bit about why that's important?

Mayor Adams: Say that again.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: That's one of our problems that you keep me up at night talking about all the time. Why don't you explain?

Jiha: Yes. We continue to work with Albany to try to get this legislation enacted, because we need that capacity for capital, for the capital program. Otherwise, you can't fund the capital program if we don't have that capacity. Because we're warning very low in terms of giving the power that we have.

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