



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As we told you earlier, the City and State have reached a deal to reinstate the speed camera program before school begins next week. I'm joined now by Mayor de Blasio to talk about that, and more. Good evening, Mr. Mayor – very good to see you.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good to be here.

**Louis:** I'm a little hesitant to throw confetti just yet about the speed camera deal.

**Mayor:** What's wrong with confetti?

**Louis:** I don't give it long of a shelf-life, but you never know. Did New York City have the authority all along? Is that what you all discovered over the last few weeks?

**Mayor:** This has been a discussion over the last couple of weeks, recognizing more and more that the Senate was not taking responsibility. I think honestly back at the end of June, there was a strong assumption the Senate would come back in July or August, because this issue was crucial, providing these speed cameras to protect children in hundreds of schools in New York City. I'm a little shocked, honestly. There's been tremendous outpouring of public concern. I've spoken to this issue numerous times, the editorial boards had spoken to it. I think this one got to a fever pitch that under normal circumstances, we all would have assumed the Senate would have had to come back, especially with an election looming. It's been disappointing.

So, everyone has been trying to figure out, is there something we could do in the event they actually won't act at all. And I want to give a lot of credit to the City Council. They kept looking for solutions. Our Law Department kept looking for solutions – obviously, the Governor as well. Everyone started talking in the last week or 10 days, and we've come to the realization at the city level that there was a legal pathway to pass legislation that would give ourselves the ability to put cameras up and to provide a penalty for people who are speeding through a different process than what the State legislation did, but one that we found absolutely appropriate and legally strong. It was not an idea that really had fully been recognized previously. We're thrilled to be moving forward with that legislation. I'm going to do a message of necessity to get it done in

time for the opening day of school. I'm very happy with the actions of the Council and Speaker Johnson, but also the State is playing a very positive and helpful role in terms of helping us get the information we need from the DMV to make the system work well. And so, I had a number of conversations with the Governor, and our teams talked, and I think this is a very helpful action.

**Louis:** As a former legislator, you've got to be a little hesitant, maybe in the back of your mind that you're basically stepping on the authority of the legislature. You're really doing a complete end-run around something that is clearly their prerogative?

**Mayor:** Actually, let me start by – as someone representing New York City, and I was a legislator in New York City, and now as Mayor – New York City, the children of New York City, the families in New York City, the people in New York City were not being served by a State legislature that could not come to an agreement even though everyone acknowledged this was an urgent matter. And even at times, Leader Flanagan and members of his conference acknowledged that action was needed, but it never happened. I think it's a pretty rare circumstance on something that is about public safety. The Assembly did everything they were supposed to do. The Governor was ready to sign the bill. So, I think we have an [inaudible] situation where the legislative process was all teed up for months and months, and then nothing happened. The City is using its own legislative power and, as executive, my power to put forward a message of necessity and sign the legislation. So no, I think it's actually quite consistent with that sense of where legislatures and executive power come together. The real problem here is the Senate had every opportunity to act and didn't.

**Louis:** Is it possible this could be applicable to other areas? Maybe we could do a DREAM Act? Maybe we can get some parking permits?

**Mayor:** I don't think it is applicable. [Inaudible] understand the theory – I don't think it's applicable because, again, you have an urgent public safety matter and the Governor, in fact, keyed his executive order to the fact that my message of necessity was another indication of urgency, in addition to obviously, the facts regarding speed cameras and the opening day of school coming, which I think was the right thing to do in his case. But you've got a situation I think is abhorrent because it's a narrow issue where there was ample opportunity for legislative action where one house acted, Governor ready to sign, the second house will not even treat the issue, which is pretty rare in the scheme of things, and a public safety issue, and the clock running to the first day of school. I think that is a rare circumstance. But in that rare circumstance, the City finding every possible action it could take was necessary and it was very good that the State took a complimentary –

**Louis:** And I take it the reason it's happening now and not even a few days from now is you need some time both to get the thing passed, to go through the motions, and also to get the cameras up, right? It's not like you can flip a switch.

**Mayor:** Well, the cameras – there is work to do, you're right, technically. The cameras have stayed in place, as you know. A few weeks back, I told you that a stunning figure of the number of people who were speeding ever since the law lapsed – just a few weeks ago. The cameras are

there, now the City law will allow us to expand further, which is something we want to do. Obviously, the Assembly passed legislation to double the number of cameras. We think that's smart and that's what we'll start to do. The first step is the legislative. The message of necessity allows for the Council to vote more quickly and then there's an aging period before I can sign the bill. I'll sign it the first available day that still gets it done before school opens. The technical work will be happening. We'll get the cameras we have up and running quickly. We then will look to expand to other schools that really need the safety that a speed camera provides.

**Louis:** Let me switch to a different public safety issue. It's come out in the news that some of these surveillance cameras that are used to help keep neighborhoods safe. That there's sort of the implication of the story is that there is a maldistribution of them. That there's 2,600 give or take citywide but only 388 are in the Bronx which has more severe crime problems per capita than some of the other areas. What really sort of threw me was that the notion of these cameras which are sort of expensive, \$40,000 each are sort of discretionary, they're treated as discretionary items in the budget. Where if the local Councilmember really pushes for it, he or she could get more done, more quickly. That strikes to me as maybe a bad way to handle something so important to public safety.

**Mayor:** It's a fair question, but I – and I have not seen the report you're referring to. But I would like to frame this just real quickly. But I would like to frame this just really quickly. I mean, first of all, the broad citywide approach to cameras, some of that were in response to 9/11 and obviously is focused on preventing acts of terror. And that means a focus on some of the most prominent locations in the city, many of which are Manhattan for obvious reasons. So that's one piece of the picture. You're talking about other types of surveillance cameras, a lot of them are in public housing. And a good number of them are, you're right, because local Councilmembers wanted to put those cameras in. When it comes to protecting residents of public housing there's a lot of different tools we use, most importantly the work of the NYPD. And we've really doubled down with NYPD's efforts in public housing. And you've seen a steady drop in crime. When I came into office that first summer we had a real problem with a spate of shootings in public housing. We created the map initiative. We went at the biggest public housing developments with a lot more police presence, with a lot more lights, a lot more youth programs, a number of things that really helped bring down crime.

So I think NYPD is the crucial piece of this, and obviously a lot of cooperation with residents. Resident patrols, and the Cure Violence Movement, and a lot of other things. The cameras are particularly helpful in investigations. To some extent they are a deterrent but they do not replace the work of police, the work of community members who are involved in inhibiting crime to begin with. They don't replace the impact that good lighting has for example. So I think it's fair to say, some Councilmembers have felt them to be a priority, we continued to work with them. But I don't want people to think cameras stop crime to begin with in most cost cases. They are mainly an after the fact tool, but a very valuable one. But I'll certainly look at the report and see if it tells us anything else that we need to do.

**Louis:** Okay, we've got some more things to talk about. We're going to take a quick break, then we'll be right back with Mayor de Blasio. Stay with us.

[...]

**Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm once again joined by Mayor Bill de Blasio. I wanted to ask you about something that happened since the last time we met. Sanitation Salvage, one of the largest of the commercial haulers – we've done some stories on it, there have been big investigations of it. The Business Integrity Commission, which people forget is a City agency, shut them down. That was something that in some ways was possibly long overdue according to the reporting I read. What was the process there?

**Mayor:** Well, first of all, thank you to you and to NY-1 because that reporting was really helpful in drawing attention to just how bad to the situation was. The bottom line is this company had a record that was profoundly unsafe. Sixty crashes – six-zero – 60 crashes that its trucks have been involved in, in recent years including two fatalities, one I believe with one of their own workers.

The Business Integrity Commission looked at the facts, saw such a pattern of creating a public safety danger, they decided to do a full and total shutdown. They are not allowed to work in New York City. That is a permanent exclusion. This is a very, very strong step. I believe it's only been taken once previously in the Business Integrity Commission's history. We want to see a lot more of this.

We think there are other companies that deserve this kind of treatment or some other very serious sanction. But that's just the beginning. I've been in conversations with the City Council about strengthening the Business Integrity Commission. It was started obviously as anti-corruption, anti-mafia but what is also true now is we have problems that go far beyond those traditional crime-oriented problems. We have a safety issue in this industry that's profound, and if there isn't accountability, we're going to see more people injured or God forbid lose their lives.

So, you should expect a lot more aggressive action from the Commission but also hopefully new legislation from the Council to increase the penalties that we can bring and to make it easier for the Commission to take these enforcement actions.

Part of why this took a while was having to collect a really extraordinary body of evidence to be able to key into City administrative law that allowed for the action. We think the bar is very high right now. We'd like to see that made easier when you're talking about dealing with bad actors like this.

**Louis:** Beyond enforcement, you were also on your way to – I guess an early draft of it was released – the idea of a zone system where there would be a rationalization of [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Which is another issue, to be fair. Two separate concepts – strengthening the Business Integrity Commission and giving it the ability to shutdown companies and sanction companies much more quickly, much more effectively; and starting a zone system for these private sanitation companies.

**Louis:** I imagine they will take you a lot more seriously though. You shut down one of the most – one of the biggest players that had been arguing against the idea of the zone system saying that the status quo could be improved but should essentially be left in place.

**Mayor:** Look, we – I'm confident, and I give the Council a lot of credit, I give Corey Johnson a lot of credit. There's a real desire to get tough on this industry in terms of the bad actors. There's plenty of good actors too I'm sure but the bad actors need to feel that there's going to be real consequences.

The zone system is about reducing truck traffic, reducing congestion, reducing pollution. It's a smarter way to do things. We saw – we just did legislation on equity in the way we do waste management – Council Member Reynoso's bill. That was a long time coming and the previous administration, they would not entertain the bill. We believed it was the right thing to do. There was a lot of opposition in the industry but ultimately a lot of progressives in the Council, to their great credit, said the most important thing is equity. I think they're going to say going forward, safety, reducing congestion, reducing pollution – those are all going to be much more important than the influence and power of the industry.

**Louis:** Okay I want to switch to housing. There are advocates who have said that part of what has happened that they are unhappy about is that you've had sort of two housing plans. There's been a plan for NYCHA, the ten year plan, and then there's been the main affordable housing program. What they've said is that political priority which is the main affordable housing program and if NYCHA units had been considered part of it, there would be additional political will, capital, and energy behind it. This has been something I know that's been brought to your attention before. Is there ever sort of a point at which you might say, you know what it doesn't hurt us to merge the two plans or at least make them related?

**Mayor:** Well, at first blush let me just talk about up until now and then I'll talk about, very, very broadly, the what I think we're going to be doing going forward in terms of NYCHA.

I mean, up until now, I would say you had two huge priorities that had to be acted on simultaneously. I respect the advocates but I think they are missing a crucial fact. All of the resources that we have put into the affordable housing plan, first of all, they're leveraging a vast amount of additional investment. The production we're putting together on affordable housing literally has never been seen in the history of this city before – 30,000 apartments financed and/or produced in the last fiscal year. There has never been a number like that before. That's 30,000 families that will have long-term affordable housing. That's just one year.

So, this plan is 300,000 apartments and you and I both know we could fill all 300,000 apartments with working class, middle class, and lower income New Yorkers who need housing and want to stay in their own city, and still need a lot more affordable housing.

So, I would argue, no, we could not go one bit slower. We couldn't put in a dollar less into that affordable housing plan and really serve this city the way it deserved.

At the same time, NYCHA – there was a very aggressive plan, NextGen NYCHA, which did start to make a whole series of important changes in how we addressed NYCHA. And now our grand total investment even before we talk about what we agreed to with the federal government recently, we have almost \$4 billion more we had put into NYCHA separate from the Housing New York plan, separate from the agreement with the federal government. Four million new dollars from the City.

There has never been anything like that in a four-year timespan in the city's history. So, both were proceeding aggressively, but I think where I would say there's an important evolution that's going to occur is that we need to, with NYCHA going forward, first of all get the federal government into this work much more deeply. That's a political change question, in part, but it's also part of what was behind the notion of cooperating on the consent decree to come to an agreement with the federal government that would hopefully unlock a lot of different types of support.

For example, we would like to get much more deeply into the RAD program. It was very limited until now. It's gotten much bigger in the last year or so at the federal level. We think we can be a prime recipient of that. That's going to open up a lot of space. We didn't have that in the beginning. We need a lot of waivers to speed up the work we are doing in NYCHA.

So, I would say that and then we also – the 2.0 concept was the right direction. We're going to have to go even farther meaning – I'm sorry the Next Generation concept was the right direction, we're going to need to go even farther and have an even more aggressive vision going forward. And that's what Stan Brezenoff and Vito Mustaciolo are working on right now.

**Louis:** What people are getting at, Mr. Mayor – another group of people on social media today, they put out some video of you at a town hall being asked about setting aside some of the affordable housing units – ten percent in fact – for people coming out of shelters, something that I think Mayor Dinkins had done or Mayor Koch.

They have you saying, no, you're not going to do that, that's not what the affordable housing program was for. People are trying to get into what seems to be a very high priority. I mean I've heard this for five years now that it's the number one priority of City Hall. It gets top attention. It gets top resources. People who care about the homeless and getting people out of shelter and into affordable housing are saying maybe we can latch into that because that always gets the Mayor's first attention. NYCHA advocates are saying the same thing.

**Mayor:** Okay, again, I understand the concern but I just think there's illogic that needs to be named. First of all, the number one priority for anyone who is watching over these last five years is pre-K and 3-K and always has been. That's the number one thing I'm trying to make sure that we secure in the time I remain as mayor because I think that's what's going to have the biggest impact on the future of the city.

But in terms of this, you have now introduced a third strain which is homelessness. We have the Next Generation NYCHA plan which I think is the right direction for addressing the underlying challenges at NYCHA. We're going to upgrade that plan. We also must have a federal role or we

cannot ever get to where we need to be in NYCHA. We all have to fight for that and demand it. And the State – the State actually has to contribute. They're still holding back a huge amount of money, hundreds of millions of dollars.

On the homelessness front, the plan I put out about a year-and-a-half ago is broadly working in the sense that we're creating purpose-built shelters. We're getting out of hotels. We're getting out of cluster sites. We're getting people shelter back in their home communities. And now in the last four, five years we've had about 90,000 people who were in shelter who now we've placed in affordable housing.

So, that system is working we're getting more people off the street. There's almost 2,000 people we managed to get off the street and keep off the street. That's beginning to work. So, I'd say we have a homelessness plan that's showing some real promise, we have a NYCHA plan that's moving in the right direction but needs a lot more resources including being able to use some of the private resources through the RAD initiative. And then there's the main body of the affordable housing plan which if you think about it, we have 8.6 million people. We have literally hundreds of thousands, probably millions who need affordable housing. NYCHA is 400,000 people. We want to serve them better.

There's about 60,000 folks who are homeless. God forbid – it's a much too high of a figure. We have to drive it down but that's the fact. But the affordable housing plan – the Housing New York plan – will serve over 700,000 New Yorkers.

It's by far the biggest piece and it's new affordable housing that we desperately need. If we had just stood [inaudible] with trying to address the folks who were shelter and trying to address NYCHA, a huge number of people would have to leave the city. They just wouldn't be able to afford it.

This was a moment in history where there had to be a vast new investment in building new affordable housing and in subsidizing existing apartments so people could stay in their own community. That's how it all came together.

**Louis:** Understood. We're just about out of time. Let me ask you just real briefly – I'm going to see you on the parkway probably for Labor Day so we're not going to talk next week, or maybe we'll do it while we're bouncing down the street but –

**Mayor:** I'll be in costume.

**Louis:** But the time is upon us. Are you going to make any endorsements for attorney general, for lieutenant governor, for governor?

**Mayor:** So, we're getting close to the election. Most people are going to start paying attention after Labor Day. I'm going to make my decisions very soon. Obviously, I might choose to get involved in races, I might choose to stay out, but it's about that time, and as soon as I do you'll know.

**Louis:** Okay, we will see you out there. You took Dante to Yale for the final year.

**Mayor:** Yes, sir. Final time.

**Louis:** Man, oh, man. They grow up so quick.

**Mayor:** They grow up fast. When I was running for mayor, he was a high school student and college seemed like a faraway concept. And now I literally dropped him off this afternoon, this morning he –

**Louis:** Two tuition bills from being free and clear. Congratulations. Good to see you. I'll see you out there on the parkway on Labor Day.

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