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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, LOWER MANHATTAN LEADERS ANNOUNCE NEW \$100 MILLION CITY COMMITMENT TO COASTAL RESILIENCY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** So, I want to thank all of the community leaders, and all the elected officials who are here. We gathered earlier for a roundtable discussion, which I'll talk about in a moment. But let me just talk about what I think is on the minds of so many of us here in the city – all over the country, and I just want to express my sorrow and I think the outrage we all feel at the horrible shooting in Virginia. It was senseless, and it took two wonderful young lives; and I think people are feeling such a deep connection to these two young, promising people whose lives were literally snuffed out before our eyes. I know for so many folks who work in journalism this is a particularly tough day. I just want to express solidarity because I can only imagine what it feels like. The loss of Alison Parker and Adam Ward, again, I think everyone's feeling it; I think people who work in this profession are feeling it particularly strongly. The other victim, Vicky Gardner – thank God appears to be doing pretty well, and our thoughts and prayers are with her.

Now, in terms of this city – thank God there has been no threat reported that suggest anything like that could happen here, but as everyone knows yesterday and continuing today we have the NYPD on alert – making sure that media locations are getting extra protection and extra support. That protection, again, remains in place today. We will access going forward, but as is our strategy whenever we see an attack, we make sure that NYPD is in position to ensure that nothing like it happens here.

The young people we lost – we feel their lost personally. We can all relate to them, and it reminds us of the challenge we face in this nation. Clearly, the individual involved acted out of hate and acted out of a profound mental health problem. And we have to deal with the challenge of mental health if we're going to stop this scourge of this random violence. We obviously also have to deal with the problem of the availability of guns – that will only truly occur when there's a national solution that ends this easy availability of guns to anyone and everyone even those who have profound and documented mental health problems. So, we here in New York City are trying with everything we have to address both gun violence and mental health challenges and where those two intersect. That's what our NYC SAFE plan is all about. And I have to say, I think the way we honor those who have been lost – those we lost in Virginia; those we lost in Newtown; in Aurora; in Charleston, is to act on these issues, and not let this horrible pattern continue over and over again. I think we are all so saddened and we all don't want to have to time and again talk about those we've lost when these losses were avoidable.

Let me talk about the meeting we just had – I again want to thank the elected officials; Congresswoman Velasquez and Senator Squadron; Councilmember Chin; Borough President Brewer; and all of my colleagues from government; all the community leaders. The Alfred E. Smith Houses are historic – one of the true original public housing developments in this city, in this nation, we honor them. We honor the man they're named after – one of the greatest of all New Yorkers. So, it's fitting that we're here to talk about how we have to protect the people who live in public housing in every way. We have to make their buildings safer and healthier. That's why just a few days ago at Queensbridge Houses we announced \$300 million dollars to fix roofs for NYCHA developments all over the city; and address the mold problem, which has been so persistent for years. But we also have to protect our residents in terms of resiliency. There's a lot we're doing in terms of big investments

I'll mention, but it's also important just to help each person know what to do – that they need a plan; they need a go bag; they need to know where they'll meet up with their loved ones.

This is National Preparedness Month coming up – September I should say is National Preparedness Month, so we're preparing. And we know it's hurricane season. And we know we've felt the brunt of hurricanes before. So, the message today is people need to be prepared. And getting prepared isn't hard. Our friends at the resiliency office; our friends at the office of Emergency Management have put out a lot of information to New Yorkers on what you can do. It's easy to make a list of the things you need. It's easy to have a go bag. It's easy to know where you're going to meet up with your loved ones. People need to do that. The bags need to include things like a first aid kit, flashlight, water, medications, childcare supplies, and copies of IDs – this is really important – a simple copy of your ID, your insurance cards, and other important documents. God forbid there's a disaster – having those copies available and with you wherever you go makes a world of difference.

Besides the fact that it's about to be National Preparedness Month, it is a sobering day all over the country because it's the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. It's probably one of the greatest national wakeup calls we've ever experienced about a lot of things, and one of them was the Impact of global warming and what it's doing to all of us. So we learned some painful lessons from Katrina; we learned some painful lessons from Sandy – we're trying do something about those lessons because we have not solved global warming, we know that. There's so much more to do. I'm very proud that New York City is leading the way, but there's so much to do. So, we have to protect each family in every way. Every family being prepared makes a huge difference.

Then it's our responsibility to do the big work of resiliency in protecting whole communities – that's why we're investing \$100 million dollars to build a system that will protect all of Lower Manhattan from flooding. It'll include, obviously, protection for the Smith Houses for so much of public housing in Lower Manhattan – residential communities all over lower Manhattan; businesses – so much of what is important to this city is in Lower Manhattan. It all has to be protected. This investment is going to be a key part of that. We'll have [inaudible] and deployable flood walls that will help us to control storm surges and prevent flooding, and this is a new investment on top of what we've already started – \$15 million we announced earlier to start the process of protecting Lower Manhattan. And we think together this is all going to help us to bring in a lot more federal dollars, so that we can build even further on these resiliency efforts. We think the investments we're making here have the potential to bring in hundreds of millions more in federal investment, and that can make a huge difference for our residents. It's all a crucial part of a much bigger plan for sustainability and resiliency – the ONENYC plan, which we're very proud – in which we're applying literally in every neighborhood of this city.

Just a couple of words in Spanish before we take questions – first on this preparedness event and on resiliency, and then we'll take other questions.

[Mayor speaks in Spanish]

With that, we want to first take your questions again on the climate and preparedness issues, and then we'll go from there.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** You're welcome.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** I'll start, and Joe Esposito might want to add – our OEM Commissioner. Look, I think we have – among cities in the country, we have one of the most developed cybersecurity efforts. Obviously, we have a very extensive technology apparatus. We have an extraordinary security apparatus through the NYPD – everyone working together to ensure security in all ways, including cybersecurity. So I feel we're very well prepared. In the event that something happened that was unforeseen, I think, with OEM, NYPD, etcetera, we

would be in a position to respond. But I think the best – the best defense is a good offense – having the security apparatus in place. And I think ours is very strong. Do you want to add?

**Commissioner Joe Esposito, Office of Emergency Management:** We've been working with the Mayor's Office recently about just that issue – about how we can protect ourselves. And we've had drills, and we're talking about a fusion center [inaudible] embedded with some other cyber fusion centers around the country – FBI, things of that nature. We're exploring those things. And we have some safeties in place that I'm not going to go into right now, that would help us to prevent just what you spoke about.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Dan [inaudible] speak to both. I just want to say, I saw with my own eyes what this community went through after Sandy. I was public advocate at the time, and there was tremendous fear, first of all, because, remember, some areas were flooded directly and some, obviously, even though they weren't flooded, didn't have electricity. You'll remember there wasn't enough food, there wasn't enough water. So I think, for people in this community, it's very vivid what it means that there is still a threat out there. And we don't take any of it lightly. And I'll tell you, I said back at the time as public advocate, we have to make sure, in the event there is ever a challenge like this, we have to get to every building, go door to door, repeatedly – reaching people if they need food, if they need medication, do they need water. It's our obligation as a city to get it to them and to work with community organizations and faith organizations to make sure that happens. Dan, why don't you describe – two questions.

**Director Daniel Zarrilli, Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency:** Sure, I mean, the impact we saw here in Lower Manhattan and in Two Bridges really spanned from lives lost; damage to our infrastructure; our NYCHA complexes being out of power and flooded, and the damages that come from that; people being stranded in their top floor apartments – a whole range of impacts that we don't want to see again. And so the system that we are developing, the commitments we're making to flood protection and resiliency today, is really about making sure that those impacts don't happen again, and installing flood protections to, you know, keep the East River and the ocean at bay for a range of [inaudible] and coastal storm conditions that we could see in the future.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** The berms and the –

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Director Zarrilli:** Right, so, in advance of a storm, the deployable systems are about putting something in place in advance of the storm, and the berms are being a more permeant feature that's just part of the everyday fabric of the waterfront.

**Mayor:** Just describe what a berm looks like.

**Director Zarrilli:** So it just –

**Mayor:** [Inaudible] a visual. Help me out here [inaudible].

**Director Zarrilli:** Right, just elevating the land in order to keep the river from getting into the neighborhoods is really what this is about.

**Mayor:** A berm is just making the physical [inaudible] higher, naturally?

**Director Zarrilli:** A hill.

**Mayor:** It's a hill, right.

**Director Zarrilli:** That's right.

**Mayor:** And now, talk about what it looks like to put in that deployable – that deployable apparatus and how it works.

**Director Zarrilli:** That's – sure. So, the deployable systems – there's a number of types that we're exploring – some that are preinstalled in the ground and can come up, and some that you just have to put in place. And just – it's a wall. It's a flood wall that's temporary in nature.

**Mayor:** So, literally – I'm going to add on that – so, some that would be embedded in the ground and that could be activated to come up, others that literally, in the advent of a storm, can be put in position. Literally, you bring them in from a storage location and set them up, and they provide sufficient barriers. Yes?

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay, do that one first.

**Director Zarrilli:** It's just a – it's a function of the neighborhood, and how the systems can be installed. We're trying not to wall ourselves off from the waterfront, and want to make sure that we can do – continue to access the waterfront, but be able to provide that flood protection when needed. And so, we're – we haven't decided on exact locations. We're going to go through a design process with the community to do that, and we'll decide on exact locations as we go.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Let me just give my broad view, and then I want Dan to talk about the specifics. I mean, obviously, the insurance issue is a great concern. And it does go to the heart of the question of affordability. I do believe there's solutions – some that we can help with, some that I'd like to see more federal efforts to address. But it's a – it's a real concern for us. Why don't you talk about some of the state of play – what we're doing to try and [inaudible].

**Director Zarrilli:** Right. So, two major things – investing in the flood protection reduces that risk, and that's a critical part of this. But then on the actual affordability of flood insurance, we're doing a lot of work with our partners at FEMA to make sure that the type of buildings that we see here in Manhattan and in the city, that aren't naturally part of the national flood insurance program's prime housing type – they have single family homes on one acre lots. That's not really what we have here. That we are also promoting the types of mitigation measures that can reduce premiums. And we're also right now in the midst, and we're having conversations with FEMA about, an appeal of the preliminary firms that have been put out. We think, while we believe the floodplains are growing, they're not growing as much as – as the preliminary firms, the flood insurance rate maps, say they are. And so, we are working with FEMA to get to the right, accurate answer for those maps.

**Mayor:** So just one more – follow on that. So, again, we want to take a number of measures to protect whole communities. But also, to Dan's point, there are things you can do about specific buildings, and some of that has an impact – clearly in the insurance rate, and trying to get FEMA to make adjustments for what an urban environment requires. So I think the broad answer, or add-on to the answer to your question is, there's still a lot playing out here that we think will help us to address those affordability issues.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Director Zarrilli:** So, we're going to be going into a design process. There's design costs, there's environmental costs, and then there's construction costs. We're going to be working through a process with the community on exactly the types of things we're installing. And what's important about the – the \$100 million

dollars is how we're going to leverage it to achieve more federal dollars for the larger project that's necessary here in Lower Manhattan. And so –

**Mayor:** Can you give the basic boundaries of what you're trying to cover?

**Director Zarrilli:** Sure. So, the footprint that we're talking about – we were awarded last year \$335 million dollars between East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Montgomery Street. This is about taking it further south, from Montgomery Street around the tip of the Battery, and up to the north end of Battery Park City – and really using our commitment and leveraging that for the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition to achieve more funds to develop a larger project, all of which we'll be designing in cooperation with the community.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Unknown:** No, that's a little premature at this point.

**Mayor:** Is there anything on this side then I'll go to that side. Yes.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Let's talk about the things that are happening right now in terms of Lower Manhattan and then, obviously, some of it will depend on how much federal match we get. But talk about some of the immediate things that are happening.

**Director Zarrilli:** Right, so there's a lot of investments happening here in Lower Manhattan. There is \$3 billion dollars of investment in NYCHA – some of that's happening down here as well. We're also investing in our multi-family complexes. We're doing a lot to make sure – a large infrastructure project like this can take several years to accomplish. It will depend on how the funds that we see in this competition with HUD, and I think we'll be back with some details on that.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** In terms of the temporary barriers and all? Yeah – obviously, OEM tracks storm activity and we get many days warning in the vast majority of cases. So, there's time to implement a lot of measures. Why don't you talk about how you go from the likelihood that you're going to have a substantial event to deploying once you have the resources in place.

**Director Zarrilli:** So the exact protocols will be worked out in this process, but, you know, one or two days in advance you need to make that call to say we're going to deploy this system knowing what we're learning from the weather forecast that we're seeing. And so, it takes something [inaudible] one or two or so days.

**Mayor:** And in the event of that kind of situation – remember the Office of Emergency Management is talking to National Weather Service multiple times a day in that kind of situation. And our assumption is to be cautious meaning we assume things might happen even earlier than the forecast and we think – we assume that they maybe even more intense than that which is forecasted. So, we're going to make that judgement call on the early side, and we're going to be aggressive if we think it's a situation where there's a good chance that those barriers should be deployed, we're going to pull the trigger.

Anything else over here on-topic? On-topic? On-topic?

Okay, let's go to off-topic. Dave.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** We've been working on that area – 125<sup>th</sup> at Lex, 125<sup>th</sup> at Park for several months very intensively. We've been working with the Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and her staff with an interagency taskforce to address a host of problems – quality of life issues, homelessness challenges. Obviously, when we look at a situation like that even the sanitation department becomes important. They've been actively involved. So, if you look at what's really happening on that block – there's a substantial police presence; there's a substantial sanitation presence; there's a substantial presence from the Department of Homeless Services, and it's had a very big effect. Now, it's a true statement, there are a number of facilities there and that's something that's happened over years. Some are state facilities, some are city – it does put some particular challenges on that area, but our answer to that has been to really beef up the resources being applied to that community and I think it's having an effect already.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Right, look it was deeply disturbing, and obviously the work of someone who is profoundly troubled and, you know, should have had mental health treatment a long time ago – there's no question about that. We have not gotten an alert as to a specific copycat problem. We have the NYPD protection up for media outlets as a precaution, and we'll monitor that daily, but there's no indication of any effort of copycat activity. I think we have to worry in general. I mean look what happened to representative Gabrielle Giffords; look at happened on college campuses. There's a reality in this country right now where people who are not mentally stable either with a specific grievance in their mind or no grievance whatsoever are simply using guns that they shouldn't have to begin with, and shooting people randomly. That's something we should all be concerned about. I believe there are some systemic answers to that problem – real gun control legislation that addresses the availability of guns to people with mental health problems, and criminal histories etcetera. And, obviously, a pervasive approach to mental health services – something we're starting to act on in this city, and we're going to go a lot farther. But we can't kid ourselves, if we're not addressing gun regulation and we're not addressing mental health – is it a shock that these horrible things happen? And sadly, we're going to have to brace ourselves for more.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Look, that's why we have a taskforce to access it. I think there's a variety of viewpoints and a lot of evidence that suggest both some of the strengths of the plaza and some of the challenges. And the whole idea of the taskforce, which involves a range of agencies including NYPD and DOT and City Planning, is to make sense of that issue; to decide does it work the way it is exactly; should it be substantially changed? Should it be partially changed, in addition to questions like enforcement; the kind of legislation we need to give us more opportunity to regulate businesses. Some of the ideas that have been out, which I think are very promising about creating specialized zones where some activity can happen, and other areas where it can't. All of that is going to be looked at in just the next few weeks and we're going to be rolling out a series of solutions, but I think – I don't offer a snap judgement. I want this taskforce to analyze that very question and come back with an answer.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** On the first one, as we talked about – I think it was last week – we are holding agencies accountable. That's why we created a city-wide standard. On the second one, I'll have to get an answer for you. I'm not sure what the latest is on that.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Look, we're looking at the bail issue in many ways. I don't have a narrow answer for you, because I don't know what the status is of, you know, our thoughts about the technology and how broadly we can use it. We are trying to find appropriate ways to reform the bail structure, so I'm sure that's one of the things that will be looked at. But I don't have a specific answer for you.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** I believe in Vision Zero, and I believe in the standards we've set, and I believe there should be a city wide standard. So I'm very comfortable with the standard that we have now, with the default speed limit being 25 miles per hour in every borough and every neighborhood. On the question of this particular proposal, I – we do listen, of course, to community leaders and elected officials. I think the original proposal had merit, and I think it will be a subject of ongoing conversation. But if people at the community level say, hey, we have a set of concerns, we're happy to pull back and listen to those concerns and see if there's something specific to that area that might merit a different approach. But I think the slow zones make a lot of sense. They are better for our children. They're better for our seniors. And it's something we are going to continue to pursue city wide, but we'll always listen to local concerns.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Given – given the Cardinal's warm words for you the other day, I would assume you already have all the inside scoop. The – I think it does have merit. I mean, obviously, everything in terms of the Pope's security comes first. And that's being worked through by the Secret Service, the NYPD – and, obviously, that's the paramount concern, and the ultimate security professionals are dealing with it. At the same time, the people of this city want to see the Pope. There's no question about that. And this is a Pope who wants to be close to the people – he's made that abundantly clear. So I think the effort to go through Central Park is a smart way to achieve both goals effectively and safely. One more? You had one before – go ahead.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** It's certainly a matter of concern. I mean, this is – the first calling in government is to protect life and protect safety and health. So, I think one of the things we're trying to do more and more with DOB is aggressively attack – excuse me – attack any situation where we think there's a health or safety problem. I don't know the nuances – I don't know the details of the report. But, yeah – if we think that anything is not being handled right, health and safety wise, it's our job to intervene quickly.

Thanks, everyone.

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