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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 29, 2017

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES MAJOR INVESTMENTS TO
PROTECT THE ROCKAWAYS FROM FUTURE STORMS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, brother. Well done.

[Applause]

Thank you so much, Jose. That was very powerful and I am – as Jose was speaking, I felt myself transported back to those days immediately after the storm. I looked at Donovan – he and I were together, and James Sanders Jr. – we were all together. I remember a very cold, dark night putting up light towers in communities that had no light.

And it's just astounding. I remember the fires. That whole section of what had once been a thriving commercial district, burning down before our very eyes. And I certainly remember the boardwalk itself. I talk to people about the new boardwalk and I remind them, the old boardwalk turned into a projectile.

No one would have ever imagined that it would be thrown by the water into the neighborhood and ending up knocking things down in its path. And seeing it was one of the most jolting images of a world out of whack to see the boardwalk right in the middle of the houses.

And of course the devastation in Breezy Point. I remember walking through after the fires and just the sheer devastation was hard to imagine that anything like this could happen in our city.

So, we're talking about the worst natural disaster we've ever faced in the history of this city. And we look with such pain and memory as our brothers and sisters in Houston and in Florida and in Puerto Rico have gone through their trials and tribulations, it all takes us back to what we experienced here.

And as you said, we think about those who are lost. We lost so many New Yorkers whose memories we keep alive. We think about thousands and thousands of families who were torn away from their home and the sheer devastation. And it was in all five boroughs.

I went, in the days after, to communities in Queens, in Staten Island, in Brooklyn, in Manhattan, and even the Bronx that were really hit and harmed by Sandy, each in different ways, some in terrifying ways.

So, five years later it's impossible to forget what happened, and it's impossible to let down our guard because we learned this is a fight we'll be fighting for a long time to make our city safe, to make it resilient. And we've seen these other storms hit other places and it reminds us we can never rest.

But I think you're right, too, that there are some really striking signs of resurgence in this community and a lot of other communities. New Yorkers are incredibly resilient people and New Yorkers did not let themselves stay down.

They fought back and some of it's amazing to see the changes that have happened. We're all particularly proud of the new boardwalk in the Rockaways because it is sort of an example of the phoenix rising, of everything's that great about the Rockaways and the people of the Rockaways coming back – and literally in this case coming back stronger.

That boardwalk happened on time, it happened under budget. It was not only a beautiful boardwalk, it was a new resiliency measure, and when you think about something that was part of the problem last time now being part of the solution, that's very encouraging. It gives me some hope for the future – five-and-a-half miles protected by that boardwalk and the dunes leading up to it.

So, it's a somber anniversary for sure but it's one that we take as a time to recommit ourselves because we've seen some of the answers, we've seen some of the solutions. Now we just have to keep applying them more and more in every community.

I want to thank everyone who is gathered here. You're going to hear from a number of them but I really want to thank all of the community leaders, all of the civic leaders who fought so hard, who did so much for the community after Sandy.

I remind people, you know, FEMA did their best but it took FEMA a while to get its operations up and running. The city did some very good things and struggled with some other elements of the immediate response but the people did outstanding work – community organizations, churches, synagogues, faith-based organizations did amazing work.

I saw it in those very first days, you know. The people came to each other's rescue long before the government in many cases. Our first responders did outstanding work under very adverse circumstances.

[Applause]

And let me remind you, our first responders are so well trained but no one ever anticipated a Sandy. In the years since, we have changed the way we trained our first responders. They are

ready for this kind of event in a way that wasn't true in the past. They have the equipment, they have the vessels, the things they didn't use to have to address this.

But really, so much honor to the people who stood up for each other in every neighborhood. And since then we've been trying to do a lot of things to come back, and we're going to talk today about some new investments in resiliency but we obviously had a long and complicated effort that was Build it Back, one that achieved some good, and one that also was plagued with some missteps. And we're finally coming to the end of Build it Back, and it was not easy for anyone involved especially for the community members.

But I do want to say Build it Back got stronger when Amy Peterson took over as the director. And I want to thank her for her leadership and her work with communities.

[Applause]

So, the work of resiliency, I want everyone to know, it's going to be my administration and many administrations to come that are going to have to do this work. Global warming set the stage for everything we're facing now. Global warming will take decades to reverse.

We will be in the resiliency business for a long, long time – not years, decades – and it's going to take a huge amount of effort and a huge amount of money to increasingly make us safe, and it takes time, piece by piece, to make us safer and safe each year.

We're going to need a lot of cooperation from the federal government. I want to say, the Army Corps is not perfect but they've done some great work to keep this community safe, and I want to applaud them as well. And we need a lot more from them but one thing we should note, there is no federal resiliency plan. There is no federal plan to combat climate change. There's no federal plan to protect coastal cities. Literally, in the biggest – we're not the biggest nation but we're the strongest nation in the world and we do not have a plan for this or any other city to protect us therefore we have to do a lot it ourselves.

We have to push for more and more federal help and we'll be at that for a long time to come but also have to do everything that we know how to do and everything we can find resources to do going forward.

And some of that is going to the root cause. You know, we can't solve climate change ourselves but we're a big city of 8.5 million people. We can do something to change the trajectory and a lot of other cities around the country have come to the same conclusion and a lot of states have come to the same conclusion.

We have to do it ourselves. So, we are devoted to reducing our emissions in New York City 80 percent by 2050. We have put forward very aggressive plans to retrofit our public buildings and our private buildings, which are the number one polluters. We have even reached higher than our original vision because when the United States of America left the Paris Agreement, New York City said not only are we going to stay in the Paris Agreement, we're going to go for the more rigorous goal of keeping global temperatures from going even higher.

[Applause]

And I want to remind you again it's a somber day but a day we should also recognize the path forward. Over 300 American cities have now said the same thing. They're going to stick with the Paris Agreement even though the federal government doesn't, and that's good for all of us.

So, that's the way forward. Now, in the meantime while we fight climate change for the long haul, while we build out the resiliency vision that will take, in many cases, years and decades, we got to do everything we can right now.

And because of that extraordinary achievement with the boardwalk, because money was saved the way the boardwalk was created, \$145 million remained. And this administration, led by our Resiliency Office and our Parks Department, said that we would go to the community, we would figure out what needs had not been met, we would find a way forward.

And now this \$145 million will be spent right here in the Rockaways on seven major resiliency projects to make the Rockaways safer. \$145 million for this community.

[Applause]

You'll hear, in a moment, some of the details focused on the bayside that was so vulnerable, and so many people said don't forget the bayside, don't leave it in danger. So many parks that people want because they're parks for the community but also play a crucial role in resiliency the way they're going to be built.

So, a lot is about to happen and the first element will be Bayswater Park. There will be major renovations. It is the single biggest of the investments and it will be a major resiliency tool but also a lot of amenities added for the community – ball fields and tennis courts and a nature trail and all sorts of things to make the community better.

[Applause]

The amazing thing – just like I said, the boardwalk was both an amenity and a form of protection for the larger neighborhoods – here too with Bayswater Park, it will protect the communities behind it including two NYCHA developments that need resiliency, Beach 41 Houses and Ocean Bay Houses. They will benefit directly from this park.

[Applause]

So, here's my conclusion. I don't have to tell anyone here today that for many decades the Rockaways didn't get a fair deal. The Rockaways were ignored. There wasn't investment. And we have a chance to start to right the wrongs. Let the boardwalk be an example of the things to come, that something can change and change for the better.

Let NYC Ferry be an example of the investment the Rockaways deserved a long time ago.

[Applause]

Let it be evidence that we can right some of the wrongs of the past, that we can become stronger. Again, the human resiliency is already there in the Rockaways – always has been. Let's make the investments the people deserve. Today is another step in that direction.

So, my friends, I just want to say a few words in Spanish before turning to my colleagues.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to turn to a man who's done immense work for this city for years now to make us stronger and safer in the face of climate change. New York City's Chief Resilience Officer Dan Zarrilli.

[Applause]

Chief Resilience Officer Daniel Zarrilli: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning to everyone here and thank you to everyone up here at the podium. Sorry – thank you, Mr. Mayor.

On this fifth anniversary it's just so important that we take stock of where – how far we've come in the last five years because we are safer city than we were when Hurricane Sandy hit and make no mistake we have a lot more to do. That's why today is so important out here in the Rockaways and across the city.

These new projects that we're announcing, not only addressing flood risk on the bayside, a critical part of the Rockaways that are vulnerable to tidal inundation and flooding, but we're also doing it in a way that improves Rockaway parks both on the bayside as well as on the shorefront which is an important point.

All of this continues to add to our \$20 billion resilience program that we have across the city and reflect the values of that program. We are providing protection from the threats that we face at the same time, we're improving our neighborhoods and providing those day-to-day benefits just the same way that the Rockaway Boardwalk does that.

So, I guess as we pause to reflect on the lives that were lost, the families that were disrupted, we take this moment to reaffirm our commitments to the Sandy neighborhoods, to our climate leadership against rising seas, bigger storms, and hotter summers, and we certainly won't stop until we're done. We have a lot more to do.

The leadership that you have up here is committed to seeing this through and we're certainly not going to stop until we're done. So, thank you, Mr. Mayor.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you very much. I want to turn to some of the leaders in this community and this borough who have fought really hard to make sure the resources came to communities that needed it and to help us right some of those wrongs of the past and I will say that Melinda Katz told me probably 100 times that we needed permanent ferry service in the Rockaways –

[Laughter]

I kept saying, Melinda, I agree with you and we're going to do it. But I don't blame her to keep telling me it until she saw it with her own eyes. So, with thanks for her persistence and her leadership, Borough President Melinda Katz.

[Applause]

[...]

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Before turning to my colleagues, to the Borough President's point – what if a future mayor attempted to take away the ferry service. I say God help him or her.

[Laughter]

I think it's here to say, my friends. I think it's here to stay.

I mentioned earlier that I was with Senator James Sanders Jr. just a few days after the storm hit. And I want to commend him. We were not only out there trying to restore some light by bringing light towers into the community but we were also – I was so struck by what James did in putting together a community food distribution site and a place people could come for help in a very chaotic time. Those days immediately after things felt really worrisome to everyone and really confusing, and James did something about it.

So, it's my honor to introduce Senator James Sanders Jr.

[Applause]

[...]

Thank you, brother. Thank you so much.

[Applause]

And I now want to turn to the Council member who shared the title with Melinda Katz for mentioning the words, Rockaway ferry, the most times in history, and also reminding a good

ferry needs a good shuttle bus. So, he had a lot of things he thought were necessary and we tried our darndest to keep up with the vision of Councilmember Donovan Richards.

[Applause]

[...]

Thank you, Donovan. Finally, to go over the details of today's announcement, we've been joined by our Parks Commissioner Mitch Silver and his Queens Borough commissioner's, here, Dorothy Lewandowski. So, they're going to go over – Mitch, you start and if you need any support in this from Dorothy, she's here. And we'll go over the details of what we're announcing today.

Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver: Sure, thank you, Mayor. And again, thank you everyone for being here – Borough President, Councilmember Donovan Richards, and I also want to thank the Jamaica Bay Rockaway Parks Conservancy for their support for the Rockaway shorefront.

As this community has learned, during the tragedy of Hurricane Sandy, our public shoreline is our first line of defense against climate change. That is why the seven projects we're announcing today will enhance this area's resilience while at the same time creating new and revitalized existing parks and public spaces.

This is an exciting day for the Rockaways and one you've waited a long time for. And I'm not going to make you wait any longer.

With the remaining FEMA-428 funds, the City will undertake the following projects – the reconstruction of Bayswater Parks, as noted by the Mayor.

[Applause]

Rebuilding recreational amenities along Shore Front Parkway.

[Applause]

Rockaway Community Park resiliency improvements.

[Applause]

A new waterfront park at Beach 88th Street.

[Applause]

A new waterfront park at Thursby Basin.

[Applause]

And the reconstruction of New York City Parks Operation Headquarters for the Rockaways and Broad Channel.

[Applause]

Edgemere Shoreline drainage improvements.

[Applause]

And that concludes the exciting new projects we expect to work with you to make sure the Rockaways are more resilient in the future. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Mayor: Okay, so just to everyone here, I know everyone is here to both note this important anniversary and also to celebrate the investments. I want to say we're now going to take media questions specifically from the media. We're going to start with questions about this announcement and anything related to Sandy in the five years we have been through. And then we will take media question on any other topics for a few minutes.

First on this announcement – Sandy-related, etcetera. Go ahead, behind Grace.

Question: It's been five years and so much of PlaNYC hasn't come to fruition. How do you feel about that?

Mayor: I feel – look, thankful for the things we've got done, very frustrated that some things took so long, unquestionably. I want to see us do better in the future. I try to accent the positive because the positive is very meaningful for the folks who did get back in their homes, for the homes that were elevated, for the boardwalk, and the other resiliency measures place. That all matters to real human beings.

But it's frustrating how long some things have taken. It's frustrating that some things are still not done. There's no question about that.

And we learned the hard way some really valuable lessons that we will take to the future. I mean, God forbid, we ever have anything like this again. So, you know, I think that's what it comes down to. We just – we got to keep pressing forward. We got to keep doing the things that work and learning from the things that didn't.

Yeah, Grace?

Question: I remember the very delayed resiliency projects, not in this community but in Red Hook and the East Side of Manhattan. I'm wondering why you're not there today to maybe put

more pressure on speeding things up, and what plans are going forward to address other waterfront communities [inaudible]?

Mayor: I'll bring Dan Zarrilli in, in a second on that but let me say we made a decision today to have one event that would speak to the whole picture of this anniversary and we wanted to do it here both because this was one of the hardest hit parts of all of New York City when Sandy hit but also because this is an example of the things we can do going forward – the achievements like the boardwalk but also the new investments we're making today.

So, we wanted to show people the things that can work and will work going forward. But in terms of putting pressure on the whole equation, I do that regularly, as Dan can attest. I want to see everything move as fast as possible.

I want to caution, Grace, I think there are some instances where there's been delays and there's other instances where things were understood to take a substantial amount of time to put together. Everything that required FEMA money and FEMA approval – we had to get specific approvals to get things done the way they needed to be done, and we couldn't act before we had that.

The plan for Manhattan is a vast plan. It's going to make huge difference but it's a really vast plan. It will necessarily take some years to put together. And Red Hook – I think there was some misinformation out there at one point. We are resolute about putting the resiliency measures into Red Hook. There's no expense being spared there. They will come in.

So, I guess I'd say I want to see everything move as fast as possible. I understand some things really do take real time. But I'm going to keep pushing that we moving everything as fast as possible. The boardwalk inspires me because it proved that something could be done on time and under budget. That inspires me to keep going.

But Dan, why don't you talk about the status of, you know, the big picture but obviously specifically as Grace talked about – the Manhattan project and Red Hook.

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Great, thanks. And I can attest to the fact that the Mayor continues to push us to move as urgently as possible on everything that we're doing. The plans across the city continue to move forward. We're committed to the projects that we've laid out. In some cases, we've run into complications that make them take longer than any of us would like but we're committed and we're moving them forward.

On the Lower East Side, where we're first starting the protections in Manhattan, we've received a \$335 million grant from HUD. We ended up having to more than double that of City commitment to make sure we had a project that could be built. We worked with the community to design it and we expect to be under construction in early 2019 but we're doing everything we can to pull that date forward because we know that we need to move these projects as quickly as possible.

In Red Hook, we have some interim flood measures in place along Beard Street and we currently have an application in with FEMA for approval on a \$100 million investment that we're moving forward – again, the result of an extensive community process that helped shape and guide the work that we're doing. And I think that's a model for everything we're doing here in the Rockaways, but there's a larger point here on the fact that we have shown the ability to deliver. The Rockaway Boardwalk is a great example of that. Our partnership with the Army Corp, finishing the Sea Gate T-groynes is another example of that. The extensive amount of sand, the ten miles of dunes – all the things we've done to build up our coastal defenses from what essentially was a point of zero when Sandy hit to now, the fact that we can point to coastal defenses. We have a lot more to do, of course, and we're not taking the urgency off of that.

And we should also recognize all of the other infrastructure improvements that are making us safer – the upgrades to the power grid that we worked with Con Ed to achieve, the upgrades to our own water supply system to make sure that reliable water after a disaster is not in question, all of the things we're doing to upgrade public housing, hospitals, all of our civic infrastructure continues to move forward as well as the important coastal projects that we are working to urgently deliver.

Question: Mayor de Blasio [inaudible] project's projections have been previously announced in March. Do you have an updated timeline on when they will be –

Mayor: I want to challenge you on that – challenge flag. They will talk about whether they've been previously announced or not in the view of this administration but go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: They have been talked about with the community but not finalized. This is the final decision and the final announcements. But other of my colleagues can speak to details on that but go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible] updated timeline particularly for the Shore Front Parkway parks which they had been destroyed during Hurricane Sandy, they have not been rebuilt at all.

Mayor: So, I can start with saying by saying the first and biggest, Bayswater, our goal is to get that done in three years total. The range of the other projects that have been described here, the upper range we're shooting for is five years to six years to get them all done. On that one specifically, I don't know if there's anyone that can fill in the blank on that one a little more specifically.

Commissioner Silver: For that one, as the Mayor said, it would be between – roughly about, I would say about four to five years to get the shorefront. We know how important that is to the community, and so the Bayswater will be first and then we will start working on the others. But I would say between the four to five year timeframe.

Question: [Inaudible] concerned that they've been without parks for what will be ten years.

Mayor: I think Sandy was unfair to everyone. I think, as you heard from Dan a moment ago, we were – as a city our defenses were not prepared for it. And I don't like what happened in the immediate aftermath. I've been very clear about that. I think we had a chance to start responding better. A series of things, I think, were done that were not necessarily the right direction. And I've been self-critical, for example, in the case of Build it Back. I think in retrospect, we should have questioned whether to continue the model as it was all together.

But in terms of fairness – no, of course, it's not fair for anyone to need something and not have it. The question is – are we applying the resources we have, are we attempting it as quickly as we know how to get things fixed for people?

Now, I think because of a number of changes that have been made over the last few years, the answer is yes.

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Do you want me to address the point of [inaudible]?

Mayor: Sure.

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Just – and of course the community process that led to the story from March, it was us working with the community to identify our priorities. What's new today is that we have FEMA approval to move these projects forward.

Mayor: Media questions, yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, if you could talk about the [inaudible] \$145 million and the role FEMA plays in that.

Mayor: Well, it's FEMA and it's some other resources. Dan, do you want to lay that out?

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Yes, so, the underruns from the boardwalk itself is approximately \$120 million of FEMA funds. In some cases there were some additional dollars that the Parks Department and some of our partners were able to put on the table to make sure that the full projects could be delivered.

Question: [Inaudible]

Chief Operating Officer: Mitch has the –

Mayor: The other money beyond the original \$120 million from the boardwalk.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: The other \$25 million. So, \$120 million from the savings from the boardwalk construction, the other \$25 million, do we have a breakdown between our colleagues or do we need to get that to them?

Commissioner Silver: We have to get that to them.

Mayor: We have to get that to them. We will get you that. Go ahead, Melinda.

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz: So, part of it, if I'm not mistaken, it's \$120 million from the original money, \$16 million was put in extra by the administration to cover some of the projects that had not been covered. And my office and I think some of the other elected officials also were able to complete the project so that they could actually move forward. And we can get you that list.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Wait, I'm going to have to tell you to speak up.

Question: Sorry to ask about a subject that likely would put some people to sleep. I think you or Dan Zarrilli could answer this about flood insurance. Resiliency measures won't mean much if you can't afford to live [inaudible].

Mayor: Correct.

Question: So, what's the City doing about flood insurance?

Mayor: I'll turn to Dan. I want to really say upfront – this has been a major focus of Dan's work and to his credit and working with our Washington office for the City of New York, we found some real willingness in the Congress to recognize a problem on both sides of the aisle and it's going to be an issue for years to come.

So, it's not going to be that we fight this once and it's over. This is going to be an ongoing on. But so far, I think we've gotten some sense and some sanity into the equation in terms of that very point. If people can't afford the flood insurance, it's no longer their neighborhood. We can't allow that to happen.

Dan, why don't you give the update.

Chief Operating Officer: Right, and just in the last several years, just two major things that we have been able to participate in and help lead was the Homeowner's Flood Insurance Affordability Act that helped slow down the rates that were coming from the Biggert Waters Congressional Act of 2012. So, we played a leading role in helping make sure that the lessons from Sandy here in New York City played out in that slowdown of rates.

The second major point is the work we've done to appeal to flood maps that were put forward that were scientifically flawed. FEMA ultimately agreed they were scientifically flawed and we protected the flood insurance maps and came to agreement to develop new forward-looking maps that include rising seas for planning and building purposes.

So, we've been making sure we're protecting against future threats but also dealing with the current flood risks and current rates.

Now, Congress kicked the ball down the road for another few months in September when they reauthorized the National Flood Insurance Program for a few more months. They are looking to take that up again before December and we've been loud about our points about protecting affordability of flood insurance as well as incentivizing mitigation to actually reduce the flood risk.

And that comes through in a couple different forms but we need to make sure that the unique building stock we have here in New York City is accounted for in the National Flood Insurance Program. So, it's not just the solution that works on the single-family home on the one-acre lot like most of the rest of coastal America may be but it has to work for New York City as well.

Mayor: One other point on this – I'm just going to editorialize but I think I'm on firm ground – we, we feel horrible about the tragedies that have afflicted Florida and Texas and everywhere. What we're seeing, I think there's a little more sense among members of the Congress – again both parties – that this could happen to anyone, anywhere and we need to be a little more considerate on these issues than perhaps was the case after Sandy.

As you heard earlier, we – it's appalling to me that New York and New Jersey had to fight for aid after Sandy the way they did and thank God our senators stepped up the way they did. It should have been a no-brainer.

I think now that the reality has been so painfully felt, including in two of the biggest states in the nation, it's causing greater recognition that we're all in this one together including the flood insurance issue, and that their constituents are going to be deeply affected. And I think it's helped open up people's minds about the solutions a bit.

Media questions, anyone in media who hasn't gone. Yes?

Question: Do you feel that New York or the coastal areas of New York – that they're prepared for a storm like Sandy [inaudible]?

Mayor: Absolutely. And I want to be very clear – we've got a lot more work to do for years and in fact decades to come but we're clearly stronger than we were five years ago. There's no question.

The Rockaways alone, the sand that's been added to the beaches, the 5.5-mile boardwalk as a resiliency measure itself rather than something that became part of the problem last time, a huge change right there, what you heard earlier, a lot of our hospitals have been protected and would not suffer the same way as they did back then, schools, power stations. We all remember how much just the lack of electricity was one of the most basic problems. Our power infrastructure is much better protected now. Our emergency services, our first responders are trained for this type of situation better.

We still have a lot of challenges but we're absolutely stronger in terms of addressing a major storm. We're absolutely stronger than we were five years ago.

Question: At a rally yesterday that the borough president attended, there were hundreds of residents who when asked that question said they don't feel any safer than they did five years ago. These are people who don't live near the boardwalk. They're demanding, you know [inaudible]. What is the administration doing to really push the Army Corp to move faster their Rockaway Formulation Plan, which is at this point –

Mayor: We're –

Question: [Inaudible]

[Applause]

Mayor: We're pushing all the time – we're pushing all the time. But I want to say to be fair I understand people's feelings because they went through a tragedy and I understand why people are so upset but I also want to stick to some real facts that what has been done amounts to something important in terms of keeping people safe.

What happened on those beaches actually happened and is better than what was there before. As Dan said, starting from essentially zero coastal defenses to having some actual defense now is a big deal. That doesn't mean we ever stop. So, in terms of how we continue to push the Army Corp, Dan, why don't you summarize what we're doing?

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Yes, we're talking to the Army Corp a lot and this has been a major point for us as they could be ready right now to invest on the beachfront with the groins and the plan that's been put forward. They're stuck in their own process. This is the fault of Congress in a lot of ways, and we need to urge them to move as quickly as possible because that's a really meaningful investment on the beach that is ultimately tied to larger investments that can come on the bayside as well in and around the communities of Jamaica Bay and Southern Brooklyn.

It's a really important project and they need to get moving.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: [Inaudible]

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, no [inaudible] stuck in their own process but he blames Congress for some of that reality. Why don't you explain that.

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Yes, I mean, this isn't a matter of the folks at the Army Corp aren't, you know, doing their jobs well. They have a process that's been congressionally mandated that they're working through. We wish that were a lot smoother and moving a lot faster. We're urging them to do that.

Mayor: Yes, we're urging – again, I think the recent tragedies in Texas and in Florida give us a stronger message to the Army Corp – this can happen anywhere and everywhere, we've got to move resiliency projects more quickly, we've got to simplify them.

Look, I remind you, there is, again, no federal resiliency plan overall. It literally doesn't exist. Thank God the Army Corp does some important things. We need them to do more and faster. They have the resources compared to any place else, compared to the City, compared to the State. They have the resources, they have the capacity.

Our job is to push them to do it as quickly as possible. Let's see if there's anything else Sandy-related, media questions, anything else Sandy related. Let's see –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Wait, wait, in the back first. Oh, wait I – is this a media question. Is this is a new member of the media?

Question: [Inaudible]

Unknown: You're going to have to yell.

Question: My name is Tyler and I [inaudible] –

Mayor: You – why don't you come up. I want to know what media outlet you're with.

[Laughter]

Unknown: I think it's WKID.

Mayor: What's your name?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Speak into that. Wait, I think we can make a deviation from our media rule for a moment. Go ahead.

Question: Will Rockaway be ready for the next storm?

Mayor: Yes, that's a great question. Our job is to every day make the Rockaways safer and some of the things we've put into place absolutely are making it safer. We're going to keep at it every single day. Tell me your first name again.

Question: Tyler.

Mayor: Tyler? Tyler, thank you for being a good citizen. Let's give him a round of applause.

[Applause]

Alright, last call, media questions related to Sandy before we do some others. Okay, wait, you haven't gotten one. Media. Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: You're from what?

Question: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: You're media?

Question: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: Alright, why not then.

[Laughter]

Question: [Inaudible] do you have any estimate of how much money you're going to spend on this in the future?

Mayor: On all resiliency?

Question: Yeah [inaudible] –

Mayor: The current plan is \$20 billion. The one we're in the middle of now is \$20 billion which is a lot of money by New York City standards, and we're going to have to do more after that. This is a beginning but this is the \$20 billion we have right now to work on.

Question: [Inaudible] insurance companies now [inaudible] –

Mayor: I don't know if agree with that formulation. Dan can jump in. I think our simple model right now is to fight to make sure that people have insurance they can afford and the insurance the need, and to aggressively spend the \$20 billion we're in the middle of spending. And then we're going to have to figure out thereafter, how to keep building out resiliency. The idea would be to work to get a federal program in place which I don't see happening in the next couple of years but I think in the future it could happen.

And then when we have to, to use City resources but those are inherently limited. Dan, you want to add?

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Yes, the other major point to add to this is that we continue to upgrade our building codes and our zoning codes and our design guidelines to incorporate climate science into how we build everything. So, we're doing resiliency projects and we're seeing seven of those here today but everything we spend on going forward is to a higher standard based on the best available science.

So, we're building resiliency into everything we're going.

Question: You said earlier that you had some issue and you thought that the Bloomberg administration in the months right after the storm and I guess by extension the Parks Department, you didn't agree with some of what they did. Do you want say what you don't agree with and what –

Mayor: Sure. I've said it before. I'll say it again. I think Build it Back was not designed properly. I think we lost a year-plus. I mean we – we came in. So, basically 15 months after the storm, and of course any new administration has to get going on a whole host of fronts. And I think a year-plus was lost that didn't need to be lost. And I'm not saying people didn't try hard. They were dealt a really tough hand to be fair to them. No one anticipated a Sandy.

But I look back and think part of what happened here, it took too long – we walked in the door, none of the Build it Back homes had been completed obviously, and the design of the program was wrong and I wish they had done differently and I wish in retrospect we had questioned it, rather than trying to fix it and tinker with it, we had said wait a minute maybe this is not the right model to begin with.

But that being said, once we recognized we were too far down the road to turn back we tried to at least improve it in the ways we could and speed it up in the ways we could. That's my central critique.

Question: [Inaudible] why it'll take ten years to build the parks?

Mayor: Because I think the point there is, when I talk about everything with Sandy, I think time was lost in the beginning and that's the most obvious one with Build it Back. We came in and said how do we most aggressively move all of these pieces – Parks, boardwalk, our work with the Army Corp, etcetera.

Again, I would have liked to have seen a faster uptake right after the storm. But I also would say as I said to you earlier, I think the formulation of your question isn't entirely accurate. I get that people feel frustrated. I think you have to ask, can everything happen simultaneously we want? No, and I think it's unrealistic, honestly, for you or any other reporter to tell people that something like that can happen perfectly. I think we have to be honest with people and I try to be very blunt with people about what can happen when, what's real with the resources we have, and what amount of time things really take.

I think it would be better for all of us if people heard the honest truth about the complexities of getting things done rather than everyone thinking everything can happen simultaneously. So, now, we're trying to say to people, here's what we think we can really do in the time we have with the money we have. We think it's going to add up to a lot. Our job is to always make it go faster. But I just don't think we came out of the gate the way I would have liked coming off the storm.

Media questions? Yes, sir.

Question: The frustration we have with [inaudible]. The question is why. [Inaudible] longer than a park that exists. It doesn't exist. It's not there. There's something that's wrong [inaudible] –

Mayor: Let's – I appreciate the question. Dan, Mitch, Dotty – what do you say to that?

Chief Resilience Officer Zarrilli: Well, I think the first major point is that the reconstruction of Bayswater Park is providing flood protection in a part of the Rockaway peninsula that has received zero flood protection. That's really important that we –

[Applause]

So, I think it's really important for us to recognize the steps we've taken on the beach and more to come with the Army Corp and others that we also address the bayside where we have a lot of flood risk. And at the same time that we are rebuilding the park for a flood, that they are enhancing the park at the same time. And Mitch can definitely weigh in on those pieces. But I think the flood protection pieces on the bay drove a lot of the thinking because of the need of additional resilience in a place that had gotten not nearly enough of it

Mayor: Mitch and then –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Okay, let's break it into pieces, fair question. First, I'd like to ascertain, or get out to everyone so they can understand it, why the sequencing according to resiliency, which is what we're here first and foremost to talk to. Now, your point is very fair. Can we walk and chew gum? I appreciate the question –

Commissioner Silver: The answer is yes.

Mayor: Now, let's explain, first, why things are sequenced according to resiliency which is what we're most concerned about right now. Second – what we can do to expedite the other pieces as well.

Commissioner Silver: Yes, we wanted to make sure, as Dan said so accurately, that we're very concerned about the resiliency impacts on Bayswater. We do plan to move on all this projects close to the same time. At the onset, we said Bayswater would be first. The commitment is to have that completed with three years. But then there will be a whole tranche of other projects,

Shorefront Parkway being one of them, that we expect to get done, as I stated, somewhere within the four-, five-, and some cases, six-year timeframe.

Shorefront Parkway will probably be sooner. We had a conceptual plan and it will help us with the community outreach. So, it's likely that Shorefront Park will be in the first group of the next round.

Mayor: What are just – for everyone's clarification before the elected officials speak, it's a fair question – just give us a little flavor, you or Dotty or both, what the next steps are to get that moving.

Commissioner Silver: The next step is that we'll have a community scoping meeting. We've already had a conceptual plan. We'll just confirm that and then we move forward toward a design process, make sure the community votes on it. So, design would be the next step and that's something we'd like to start relatively soon.

Mayor: Give us – just, I'm going to be the questioner for one second – give us what relatively soon means.

Commissioner Silver: Now that the funding is in place I would probably say within the next few months we could begin starting design process –

Mayor: By the end of the year?

Commissioner Silver: I will commit to the end of the year.

[Applause]

Mayor: Okay. Go ahead.

Councilmember Donovan Richards Jr.: I just wanted to add that there are many residents in the room who went through this exercise for two years nearly, planning on the Edgemere resiliency plan. Bayswater Park is not necessarily just about the – as they said, it's not just necessarily about an amenity. This is about protection along the bay especially in the 40's where a lot of residents in the back were really affected by Sandy.

[Applause]

So, I don't want us to get the signals mixed up. This is not about an amenity. It's about raising the shoreline and the park enables us to be to do that.

Senator James Sanders Jr.: If I may remind my fellow residents in the Rockaways that it wasn't just the beach that rose. It was the bay that rose. And we were less protected at the bay. And when the waters met – even if you did everything to the beach, if you leave that bay, you're going to have the same problem.

[Applause]

If I can also encourage us that now is the time that we need to turn to each other and not on each other, that this is one Rockaways.

[Applause]

And as Rockaways move forward, we appreciate these efforts, we appreciate that it can be done simultaneously. We, on the bay, don't have a problem if the shoreline gets done first. And I'm sure that the people on the shoreline don't have a problem if the bay is done either.

[Applause]

Thank you kindly, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Okay, yes, sure, sure.

Question: [Inaudible] why can they not be done simultaneously, it's why [inaudible] –

Mayor: Amen.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yes, no, I affirm that point. One, we should be moving every project simultaneously if we can unless there's a legitimate reason why something takes longer. But so, again, in the interest of clarity, Mitch, so you have that community process by the end of this year. Just give us a little flavor of what happens next and what it's going to take to get this done. You have the money, that's good. So, what do you need to get it done?

Commissioner Silver: Well, we first have to make sure we have the staff assigned, which we can do very quickly. We'll have the community meeting right after that. We start the design process and then we come back to the community, and then we have to actually do the actual drawings and specifications. That takes quite a bit of time.

So, that is really what the next step is. We'll start to sit down with staff to find out how we can start scheduling over those meetings. We'll tell the community board. They may be inundated very quickly with a number of projects at the same time but I'm sure the community will be up for it.

But after that it's the community meeting, the design, public design commission, and then we go start specking out and designing the drawings before we put it out to bid. So, that's –

Mayor: So, then you put it out to bid. You get a contractor and then they start to work?

Commissioner Silver: That is correct. There's the design, procurement, and construction are the three phases. The one we're willing to start very quickly is the design process which includes the

community meeting. The procurement process is somewhat – other parties have to make sure everything's done properly and legally and then the construction, of course, takes some time depending on the complexity of the project. And then the permitting process as well.

Mayor: Can we agree – and I think to the question again, it's a fair question – that one, our goal is to move –

Commissioner Silver: Correct.

Mayor: – everything simultaneously. Again, I will affirm if it is about resiliency that is our first concern because that's about people's safety. But we should be moving everything simultaneously. And a reminder to the community that even though people very much want to get their input in and we need it, the community board and the community process – the faster that goes, the faster everything else goes. So, as people are concerned to try and perfect these ideas, you can help us go faster if you can do that work as fast as humanly possible.

Commissioner Silver: That is absolutely correct. We have a head start with the conceptual plan because there's already been a lot of public dialogue and agreement on what should happen. So, that part should move a lot quicker.

Mayor: Okay. Alright, we're going to turn to other topics.

Question: Did you personally ask Jona Rechnitz to contribute to the push to take over the State Senate?

Mayor: I don't recall if I talked to him directly about that.

Question: [Inaudible] recall the email that you –

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: [Inaudible] recall the email that –

Mayor: No. Nothing's changed between yesterday and today.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No. I just – if it was sent it was three years ago amongst the hundreds I get each day. And despite everyone's efforts to act like this guy is such an important person, despite being a liar and a felon, he was not that important to me. So, if he sent me an email, I don't know if I even saw it. I don't recall seeing it.

Question: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: Media?

Question: Yes [inaudible] New York Daily News. You call him a liar but what specifically is he lying about?

Mayor: If he is saying he spoke to me every week, that's just preposterous.

Question: [Inaudible] what else –

Mayor: Obviously, he's a felon – a convicted felon because he lied about a lot of things. He's a criminal, guys. I don't understand what your problem is. The federal government looked at this in excruciating detail but you somehow want to elevate a criminal to the front pages as having equal validity to federal prosecutors. If you want to do that, feel free. If that's what's selling newspapers, God bless you. He's a known liar. He's a convicted criminal.

Question: [Inaudible] lies?

Mayor: I don't know all his comments. I know he's a criminal and a liar, and I know the federal government looked into this. I don't know what else you want.

Question: Just going back to Michael's question – it seems to imagine not recalling a conversation in which you might have asked somebody for \$100,000 and they wrote the check. How frequently does that happen that –

Mayor: I, for years, was raising money for different causes – the Mayor's Fund, when we were trying to get the DNC to come to New York City the convention, the effort to win back the State Senate, all sorts of different things. I don't remember when I ask someone specifically what I asked them. It's just way too much has happened and plus there was the vast majority of my work which is what I do every day as mayor.

So, it's very normal that I wouldn't remember a specific conversation. But again, you can ask it all you want, if this had not been covered exhaustively by trained professionals in law enforcement, this would be an interesting conversation but it's been covered. The only thing that's different here is the liar and the felon is speaking out and somehow you guys are giving him validity.

Question: [Inaudible] sound like something that could have plausibly happened –

Mayor: I don't know who specifically I asked for which donation. That's the only answer.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: God bless you, brother.

[Applause]

God bless you.

Question: When your office [inaudible] FOIL request for correspondence between the Mayor's Office and Rechnitz and Reichberg, did you have to pull any correspondence yourself from your own personal email account? How is that handled –

Mayor: To the best of my memory, it was all done by staff who work on IT, you know, and lawyers. I don't remember any – doing any of it personally.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: We're going to – thank you to everyone who's raising – everyone for raising the common sense point that there are much more important issues than what these guys are raising. I agree with you but I am offering them a chance to ask a few more questions, so let's just bear with them a few more times and then the rest of New York City will go back to caring about real things.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yes. Amen.

Question: Are you worried that Jeff Sessions will appoint a special prosecutor to re-examine –

Mayor: After the U.S. Attorney went through an exhaustive investigation and the District Attorney of Manhattan? No. Last call.

Question: [Inaudible] emails but why not, you know, revisit those emails and release them to –

Mayor: Again, the federal government – you may be amazed to know the federal government gets to look at anything and everything and they did look at anything and everything. And they know which phone call you made to which person and all sorts of amazing things.

They looked at it exhaustively. His testimony adds nothing. You think they don't know the things he's talking about? Do you think they didn't know in advance? Of course they knew. That's their job and they came to the determination there were no further actions to take. So, I believe this case has long since closed.

Yes, sir.

Question: Back to resiliency –

Mayor: Yes, media question? Is that a media question?

Question: I have an Instagram account.

Mayor: I'll get you after. I'll get you after. We just have to stick to the rules. Last call on media and this will be the final one.

Question: How do you feel that the Schools Chancellor reassigned the principal at the Urban Assembly –

Mayor: That was the right thing to do. Look, the Chancellor, to her credit, went into that school on the first day after the – you know, the day of the tragedy and started spending a lot of time with the leadership and the staff. She spent a lot of time with the teachers. I mean it was a horrible, horrible situation and you know I went to the wake and I stood before the body of the young man lost, Matthew McCree and it's a horrible tragedy.

But to the Chancellor's credit as a former teacher, former principal, she went in a really sort of laid on hands, if you will to use the religious analogy, and spent time with the teachers and just reviewed that school top to bottom over many sessions, and worked with the local superintendent. And given everything that we have learned, it was right to say they needed a leadership change and the superintendent's office will now be running that school in the interim while we figure out the long term reality.

But there's much more we need to learn about the school and about the incident. But we came to the firm conclusion it was time for a leadership change.

Thanks everyone.

[Applause]

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