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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Well, holidays are upon us and there's good news because of that. And people are getting ready to support each other and show their love for each other and give each other gifts. Well, the people of the council district in the Bronx, the 12th Council District have a gift this morning, they have a new Council Member. I want to congratulate Kevin Riley, who was just elected in the special election yesterday in the 12th District in the Bronx. So, congratulations to the people of the Bronx. And congratulations, Kevin. I look forward to working with you as we bring this city back in 2021. So, that's some good news. And definitely the good news is, no matter how tough this year has been, this year is almost over and we are focused more and more on our recovery, our renewal as a city. And a big part of that is going to be our small businesses that we love so much that are part of the heart and soul of this city. And yesterday, I went Christmas shopping, and I went to some great small businesses in Downtown Brooklyn at City Point, the McNally Jackson Bookstore, what an amazing place. McNally Jackson Bookstore is a great, independent community bookstore, a place that I love, I've got to tell you, because it just represents neighborhood and community, but also the incredible books they have from all over the world. There is something special when you support a community bookstore. You are doing a lot more than just helping out a small business and helping the people who own it and the people who work there. You are keeping an important New York City tradition alive. Community bookstores represent our communities, make sure that literature it represents all of us, is there for everyone to partake of. This is a crucial part of the personality of New York City. So, everyone, if you're still out there Christmas shopping, or even in the new year, let's make it a point when you're going to go out and buy a book, please go to a community bookstore. Great campaign that the folks at McNalley Jackson started and go to #boxedout and their message is, don't box out community bookstores, don't just have the big power players dominate the market for literature, focus on the little guys and the folks who have always kept independent viewpoints alive. So, please, everyone, want to just passionately urge you, if you've got some more shopping to do, go to a community bookstore.

Now, I saw some other great, great, great entrepreneurs, great community members yesterday at City Point in Brooklyn. I went to an offshoot of the Flatbush Caton Market. This is an amazing market that for years and years has been in Flatbush in Brooklyn. Folks from the Caribbean communities of Brooklyn made sure that there was a marketplace that really celebrated the Caribbean culture that's so strong in that part of Brooklyn. That market is being redeveloped. And so, the good folks from Flatbush Caton Market have a section of City Point where they're selling their Caribbean goods, beautiful things. I was honored to get some wonderful gifts there from my family, celebrating the Caribbean heritage of Chirlane's family. So, thank you to

everyone at Flatbush Caton Market. You've been a big part of what's great about Brooklyn and New York City, and I'm glad you're continuing and a great future ahead next year when the market comes back full time.

Also, had a wonderful conversation with a great New York success story. Her name is Tracey Boyce Mahia and the company she owns is Perry Boyce, named after family. And she just does some wonderful, wonderful work. She comes from an immigrant family from Guyana, created this business – fragrances, candles, just wonderful homemade organic products, beautiful stuff she's put together. But here's the kicker, she was really worried about this year, of course, and she was worried about whether her business would survive. And I talked to Tracey about what ended up happening and because she got this opportunity to be a part of the marketplace at City Point. She saw more and more people, new customers that wouldn't have known about her business before. She started a really thriving online business. She said at the beginning of this pandemic, she thought her business might not survive. Now, her sales have doubled this year compared to last year. Now, look, that's not every small business. We've lost precious small businesses that we love. We've lost small businesses that are part of our community, but there's also a lot of stories of people seeing an opportunity to reach new customers and customers coming out really with heart and passion to support small businesses. So, again, this is an opportunity, whether you live near City Point in Downtown Brooklyn, or any other place where there's small businesses selling things for the holidays, you have a chance, every one of you to contribute to them staying strong, them sticking around for next year. Buy local, shop local.

One more story, and it's a great one. I met a man who really inspired me, his name is Maliksha [inaudible] and he was an arts professor at Kingsborough College in Brooklyn, but he lost his job because of COVID. But he had something else he was doing, I guess you could call it an art side hustle, because he was an artist himself and he was creating his own artwork. And now, he is out selling it at this local market in Brooklyn. And he – was just beautiful images of New York. He's an immigrant from Turkey, but he loves this city deeply and he wanted to portray his love for New York City. He's created really colorful, beautiful, heartfelt visions of New York City. So many good stories, but we have to keep these stories alive. So, again, there's still a lot of us shopping. I cannot tell a lie, I was still doing shopping as a yesterday. Most years, I go right up to the last point on the 24th of December. I think there's a lot of you out there probably in the same boat. Shop local. Go to the local stores if you feel comfortable that. And if you would rather shop online, then shop online, but directly from our local New York City stores. Let's keep that money in the community. Let's give them that boost.

All right, now, let's go back to the main event – every day we talk about COVID. We talk about the fight against COVID. And, obviously, you know, we talked about what our small businesses have been through, what all of us have been through, but now we have a different reality, because of the vaccine. And the news about the vaccine gets better every single day, literally does. We get more and more vaccine arriving every day. And we're seeing the positive impact of the vaccine being distributed every day. It's giving confidence to folks who received the vaccine. It's really moving us forward. There are so many people who need this vaccine and we're going to move very, very quickly to get that vaccine that everyone needs it. One of the examples – the best examples of who needs and deserves a vaccine, our health care heroes and our heroes at EMS – at Emergency Medical Service. Our EMTs, our paramedics, they did amazing work, really, really tough work, difficult work during the height of pandemic, and, of course, ever since. So, our EMS workers have been on the frontline since day one. We want to make sure

they get vaccinated right away. We know that every time we get someone vaccinated, we're helping them in their family to be safe and we know that, that is peace of mind, that all those who serve us deserve. I spoke to a lot of EMS workers, paramedics, EMTs, and their officers when we were going through the worst of the pandemic. I went and saw the work they were doing, and I felt for them, because we were depending on them so deeply, they were giving it their all. So, I really want to thank each and every one of them – you did amazing work. This vaccine is now going to give you what I think is so important, both that health protection, but also that peace of mind. Because the vaccine is safe and effective, you're going to know that you're going to be okay.

So, the work of vaccination, we're going to go over it in a moment with our Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro. This is going to protect members of EMS, but, at the same time, as we are celebrating that we're going to be able to provide this protection, starting right away, it's a sad moment too, because, just last night, one of the good people at EMS, one of the people who serves us and protect us passed away. Her name, Evelyn Ford, an emergency medical technician – 27-year member of EMS. She went in in 1994, and she was working in the emergency medical dispatch unit. Very, very sad that, just now, as we finally get to turn the corner, the vaccine has finally arrived, we lose a good woman who served us so well for so long. She is the 12th member of FDNY, EMS to pass away from COVID and our hearts go out to her, her family, her children, a very, very tough moment for this family. A moment where we all remember those who serve us – our condolences to the family and we will be with you every step of the way going forward.

With that, to talk about the extraordinary work of EMS and the measures starting today to protect all the members of EMS, I turn to our Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro.

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro: Well, thank you, Mayor. As you said, what was going to be one of the few uplifting days that we've had this year as the vaccine rolls out to our EMS personnel today was saddened by the knowledge that Ms. Ford passed last night of COVID. And it really points to how important the vaccinations are to our members. We have had, in a department of 17,000 folks, close to 6,000 of them have had COVID over the past nine months. It's an incredible number. We have over 600 people right now on medical leave with COVID. So, there's no doubt that this comes at a very important time for us and we hope that we can vaccinate 450 people a day at three locations and start to bring this protection, this miracle that came to us and start to put COVID behind us. It's only a beginning. It's going to take quite a while, but we are very pleased that, today, members of EMS will begin getting vaccinated. This will continue throughout the next few weeks. And as more vaccine arrives and more becomes available to us, we hope to have our entire department vaccinated and protected at some point. So, that's where we are right now.

Mayor: Thank you. And, Commissioner, I want to thank you. This has been the toughest of years and I think a lot of New Yorkers know this, but I want to emphasize Dan Nigro has served this city his whole adult life, like his father before him at FDNY. He was one of the folks who had to sustain the FDNY after 9/11. He was there on the scene and one of the people trying to do their damndest to rebuild the FDNY after the horrible, painful losses of 9/11. And Dan has been, throughout this entire administration, leading the Fire Department with just tremendous heart and distinction. And I know this has been a really tough year. I know you feel it personally, Dan, but thank you to you and all the people who serve under you for keeping us safe this year.

And yes, today's a day where we turn the tide and we really make sure that this miracle – as you said, this is a miracle – this vaccine is a miracle – is put together a record time. It's going to save lives, starting right now. So, thank God, your members will start to get the vaccinations right away. And what we've heard from all of the good folks, our health care heroes at Health + Hospitals who have been getting the vaccine now over these last days, there's just tremendous satisfaction – that they have had a good experience with the vaccine and that it gives them both that knowledge that they are safe, but also that peace of mind. So, we want to get that done for so many good people who serve us and then more and more New Yorkers every single day, going forward.

Now, look, as we get ready for the holidays – joyous, joyous time, even emits the pain we've been through. Joyous time because it signifies the end of this godforsaken year 2020, which we will not miss. But they're also warning signs that we have to acknowledge, because we are going through the second wave, because of this very troubling news we've gotten out of the United Kingdom about a new strain of the virus. We're getting warning signs all over the place that, even though, thank God, we have the vaccine, thank God, our hospitals are doing well, we are not out of the woods. So, let's talk about the holidays and what you have to do. First of all, I'm going to say it again. I know our Health Commissioner will say it a thousand times as well, if you don't have to travel, do not travel. Just cancel your travel plans. Stay local, stay safe. If you're doing any kind of gathering, keep it very small, keep it very safe. Practice distancing. Wear masks. One more time – we are in the final battle here, so all you have to do is get through these holidays. I believe, through January, it's still going to be tough. I'm very hopeful that February, we're going to start to see real, real improvement, especially because the vaccine will be distributed more every day. So, this is one last push, one last sacrifice, and then, next year, we get to bring back our traditions and gather again as we take each step to make safe. But to make sure that people understand, we have to have tough rules, especially if you do choose to travel. The State has very clear rules. If you travel, yes, there is a way to test while you're away and test when you come back and come out of the quarantine. But, otherwise, you are quarantining – that is the State law – and we will make sure that that quarantine is upheld. This is going to be the busiest travel time of the year. When you think about all these days up through New Years, intensive travel time. We need people not to travel. But, if they do, we're going to be very, very stringent about the rules.

So, first of all, for folks coming in from the United Kingdom, we will have a new approach, given this new strain we're seeing there. Effective immediately, all travelers, literally every single traveler coming in from the United Kingdom will receive a Department of Health Commissioner's order, directing them to quarantine. This will be a personal and direct order to every single one of them telling them they must quarantine. And that will be given to all travelers beyond just those – I want to be clear – beyond anyone coming in just from the UK. Every traveler who comes into the city that we identify as someone coming into city or coming back to the city will also receive that Department of Health Commissioner's Order. Now, that will go out through certified mail. So, it will be going right to where people live, right to where they're staying. It's going to be confirmed they got it and then people are going to be held responsible for following the quarantine. But, specifically, for folks coming in from the UK, given that particular concern, we're going to have Sheriff's deputies go to the home or the hotel of every single traveler coming in from the UK. So, when they arrive at the airport, they're going to have to fill out the form, notifying us that they are coming into New York City. We're going to provide them with that Commissioner's Order, but then there's going to be a follow-up direct

home visit or hotel visit from the Sheriff's deputy to confirm that they are following the quarantine. Or, if they are not, they will be penalized. We cannot take chances with anyone who travels, particularly folks traveling in from the UK. So, to everyone, look, if you don't comply with the quarantine, that's \$1,000 fine to begin, day-one. If you continue not to comply with the quarantine, it is \$1,000 for each additional day. I want to really make sure I'm getting this point across. We don't want to penalize people. Everyone has been through hell this year. We don't want to, but, if you don't follow a quarantine, you're endangering everyone else in the city right as we're fighting the second wave. So, let's do it again. If you come in, you fill out the form, you follow the quarantine, God bless. If you violate quarantine, \$1,000 for the first day. If you violate any day thereafter, \$1,000 for each additional day. And we will collect those penalties. We are really serious about the fact that if you violate quarantine, you're creating a danger for everyone else. We're also going to have the Sheriff's deputies out in force. They've done amazing jobs. They will be at airports with our Test and Trace teams, making sure everyone fills out the appropriate form, everyone gets the information, everyone understands they're under a Commissioner's Order – airports, train stations, bus depots, you name it. Also, Sheriff's Office, the deputies have been pulling over folks at highways coming into the city, that will continue. There's been over 10,000 car stops already. We are going to doing that intensively during this holiday season up through the weekend after January 1st. We need people to understand, if you're coming into the city from outside or you're returning, follow that quarantine. And the Sheriff's deputies are doing an amazing job. They have been a heroes of the fight against COVID. They will be out there in force. You will feel their presence. Listen to them, follow what they tell you to do, and that's how we're going to be safe. The best gift you can give the people you love is to keep them safe. The best gift you can give is to make sure that the people you love will be able to gather together next year in 2021. That only works if we all pay attention to what the doctors are telling us and follow these simple rules and stay safe.

Okay, let's do today's indicators. One, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 224 patients. We want to be under 200, we are not. So, that's a bad sign. Also, hospitalization rate per 100,000 people – 3.19 people per 100,000 – 3.19 patients per 100,000. That is not good. We want to be under two. That is too high. Obviously, the next one, daily new cases of COVID-19 – seven-day average, way too high, 2,789 – way too high. We want to get back under 550 over time. And the current testing indicator, percentage in New York City residents testing positive – seven-day rolling average, 6.19 percent. We want to get back under five. We have a lot of work to do and these next weeks are going to be amongst the most challenging and we've got to really work hard to make sure that number does not keep growing.

Okay. Few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and the outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi, all we'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Small Business Commissioner Jonnel Doris, FDNY Commissioner Dan Nigro, Sheriff Joe Fucito, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Gloria from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Gloria. How are you doing?

Question: Happy holidays to you and your family.

Mayor: Happy holidays. How are you doing today?

Question: Good. Thank you. I wanted to just follow up on this travel announcement that you are making. If you could just give us a little more detail. How is this – the State, what role are they playing here? And how is this going to work? This is, obviously for New Yorkers who are traveling internationally and coming back, and as well as the UK travelers, just wondering if you could go into it a little bit more.

Mayor: Sure. I'll turn to Sheriff Joe Fucito in a moment just to say, look, we're working closely with the State of New York, with the Port Authority – a lot of cooperation throughout to make sure that when people come off a plane, it is abundantly clear they have to fill out the forms. That's been working real well. We're making real clear to people, these are orders from the Health Commissioner that they have to follow. And this UK piece, there's real urgency. You heard it from Dr. Varma yesterday, there's real urgency about what might happen if this strain gets introduced on a wide level here. So, we're going to be very, very aggressive about that. Under the Commissioner's health order, we have the power to be very aggressive about ensuring that people follow a quarantine. So, I'll turn to Sheriff Fucito to talk about those home visits that the Sheriff's deputies will be making for anyone coming in from the UK. And, again, really appreciate the work the Sheriff's office has done. And our Sheriff Joe Fucito, I think, has been a really amazing leader in this crisis, agile and quick, moving his folks around where they're needed most, and it's made a big difference in keeping the people in the city safe. Sheriff, tell us about this effort focused on the UK travelers.

Can you hear us?

Sheriff Joseph Fucito: Good morning.

Mayor: There you go.

Sheriff Fucito: Yeah. So, first of all, to answer the specific question of the reporter, the interaction with the State is the travel forms go to the State, and it's a partnership. The State relays the information to local government to handle the enforcement aspect of it. And, in these particular cases, travelers, particularly from the UK, are being identified at the airport by the Mayor's Office Travel Unit, they're the ones that are responsible for overseeing all of the type of traveler quarantine enforcement aspects. They are served – the individuals are served with a Commissioner health order that's regarding a mandatory quarantine, explaining what needs to be done. The travel unit follows up with the individuals, particularly if they need any assistance – you know, if they need housing, food, or anything that will help them through their quarantine. And then, of course, the enforcement portion of it is that they disobey the quarantine, Sheriff's deputies would be serving them notices of violation. Those notices of violation carry a \$1,000 penalty. And for every day that you violate, it's an additional \$1,000. But the key steps are the

sheriffs – deputy sheriffs will be serving you with a mandatory quarantine order, telling you that you have to obey the terms and conditions of the quarantine, and also telling you what services are available to you. That's just equally as important – what services the City of New York are providing for people in a quarantine. And then, obviously, if there's a disobedience of the quarantine, the enforcement aspects of it.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Joe. Go ahead, Gloria.

Question: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Mayor, we've been getting some questions about the vaccine. We know that, right now, the effort is focused on health care workers and nursing home residents, but we've been getting questions from older New Yorkers who may not necessarily live in a nursing home, but are in that sort of same age bracket, same category of people who are at high risk. I know the State is helping to coordinate this, but is there anything you can tell our viewers at this point, what should people expect to do? Is this the kind of thing that they have to go through their primary care provider for? What's that part of the vaccine process going to look like?

Mayor: We can give you an initial sense. I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi in a moment, but listen, I think, Gloria, what we're trying to really communicate intensely is the way the prioritization is being done. So, remember, the CDC is issuing national guidelines. The State is deciding the specific rules for New York State. We're working with the State constantly. The focus from the beginning, this has been true national, state, local level, everyone's been in agreement, the folks that have the most crucial role in protecting everyone else need to be protected first. It's like the famous thing on the airline, put on your own mask so you can protect your child and put their mask on. You know, this is to protect the people who saved this city in the spring, but who we're going to need again as we're fighting back this second wave. A lot of people who are vulnerable are in those nursing homes, as you said, they're a particular priority because that's been the single worst focal point of the crisis, it has been the nursing home. So, of course, that's a priority. And you're going to see more and more people reaching those high priority groups.

But first it's important to get everyone who serves us and is vulnerable because they come in contact so frequently with folks who have COVID or may have COVID, and then keep building from there. So, December is almost over. I think it's fair to say, January will be primarily about reaching all these people who serve us and nursing homes. As you move into February, we're going to start to get out more and more into the general population, February, obviously, into March. More and more into the general population, the folks who are most vulnerable, over 75, folks with pre-existing conditions or both. That's a very broad sketch. As I turn to Dr. Chokshi, Gloria, I want to say everything is in evolution. It will change because we're constantly working through the details with the State and because the supply could be greater or lesser at any given point, the supply of the vaccine, that's the thing we don't know entirely yet. So, there'll be adjustments, but I think that's a sort of good thumbnail sketch of where we're going. Dr. Chokshi, why don't you flesh that out a little.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Sure. Mr. Mayor. Well, actually you covered just about everything with respect to how we're seeing these initial phases of the rollout. I'll just reiterate one point, you know, to the question specifically about older New Yorkers and, and we'll acknowledge that I certainly understand, you know, as we think about our own grandparents, and I think about my patients who I've taken care of who are

older, we want to do everything that we can to get the vaccine as quickly as possible to them to ensure that that they get protected as well. The CDC, over the course of this most recent weekend, did elaborate their recommendations for what's called Phase 1b. Remember we're in Phase 1a right now, which covers health care workers and nursing home staff and residents. The next phase, Phase 1b would include people who are older than the age of 75.

As the Mayor has said New York State will have to formalize a prioritization guidance related to that. And if they do, then those older New Yorkers would be part of that next phase known as 1b. So much of this does depend on the supply of vaccine that's available to us, both in terms of how quickly we're able to move as well as how broadly we're able to get it out to people. But one part of your question was where will New Yorkers, including older New Yorkers actually get vaccinated? And our goal is to have that happen in the places that New Yorkers already trust, whether it's their primary care doctor, a local community clinic, or a local pharmacy so that there's really no wrong door for accessing the vaccine when someone's turn does come up in the line.

Mayor: I want to hold you there one second, Dave, for a little further elaboration, but first I want to say, I really appreciate with Dr. Chokshi and the Health Department and the whole team at the Vaccine Command Center led by Deputy Mayor Melanie Hartzog and folks from all agencies that she has gathered together to make sure that the vaccine distribution goes well. The transparency has been great, and more and more information is going to be put out over time. I want to thank the Daily News Editorial Board for noting that that transparency was really helpful and important. And, Dave, thank you and your whole team because I know the Department of Health has really been very focused on getting information out about how quickly we're getting the vaccine out there. And we are moving about twice the national average right now distributing this vaccine. And that's fantastic, but to pick up one last piece of Gloria's question, Dave, you started to answer it for sure, but I want to just nail this point for people wondering. If someone's over 75 and they want to find out from their doctor when they might be up for the vaccine or how it works, would you urge people who have those questions to call their primary care physician or call their local clinic and just check in? Give that kind of very personal guidance.

Commissioner Chokshi: Sir, thank you for mentioning that. I think it's a very important point because even as we're rolling out a vaccination, people do have a lot of questions, you know, we're fielding so many of them ourselves at the Health Department, but again, the most important thing is to have those questions answered by the clinicians, whether it's a doctor or a nurse or a pharmacist whom someone already trusts and has a relationship with. And so, I do encourage older New Yorkers and anyone else, you know, to educate yourselves with the resources that we're providing. But then if you do have additional questions now is a good time to start those conversations so that you're ready to get vaccinated when it is available to you.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, everyone. I have [inaudible] following up on [inaudible] question, and it's about the neighborhoods that are being prioritized by the city. I know there has been a lot of questions from people about how these neighborhoods were selected, some people feeling left out. So, could you explain – you know, I read the Health Department's executive

summary on how this is being rolled out. It seems like a lot of factors go into it, but could you and the Health Commissioner explain for the public a little bit about how these neighborhoods were selected? Maybe it'll give a little clarity.

Mayor: Sure, and I appreciate the question, Katie. And that's going to be particularly pertinent as we go into those later phases the Commissioner just described. Obviously right now with a focus on health care workers, EMS, as we talked about today, nursing homes, and that's going to be across the board everywhere. When we start to get out into the general population, we want to make sure there's fairness here. We want to make sure there is more justice compared to the injustices we've seen in the past, and the disparities we saw that came out in COVID, particularly in the spring. So, 27 neighborhoods, these were determined with the Health Department and also our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity representing all of our departments and leaders of color in all of our departments of the City. They are African-American, Latino, and Asian communities that bore the brunt of the COVID crisis. And we're going to make sure when we go to that broader public distribution that we prioritize the places hit hardest and where we have to do, I'm sure, a lot of work to gain people's trust and make sure people feel comfortable with the vaccine. We're going to have to double down on that work with community leaders and institutions as well. Dave, do you want to speak to that?

Commissioner Chokshi: Sir, I'll just add briefly that the focus on these 27 priority neighborhoods really reflects an intersection between what has happened over the past year and what has happened over decades with respect to systemic injustice and particularly systemic racism that unfortunately has affected certain places and some and certain communities more than others. So, it's a combination of looking at the data around who has borne the brunt of COVID-19 the worst over the last few months, along with a time back to understanding that more historical arc. And, of course, these two things are very much related. And that's how we got to those 27 priority neighborhoods. So, the other thing that I'll add is that even though that is a real focus of the broader efforts, as the Mayor mentioned, we will be doing this as a citywide effort. And so, the focus on the 27 priority neighborhoods will be, you know, a leading edge of what we hope to bring to every single neighborhood, every single borough across the entire city.

Mayor: Thank you, Dave. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: [Inaudible] I have to follow up, and [inaudible] a little bit here, because I'm still a little bit confused. I'll use Queens as an example, looking at this list, just because it's the borough I know the best. You include, for example, the 11694 ZIP code, which is a predominantly white neighborhood. You don't include neighborhoods like Elmhurst and East Elmhurst, which actually had, when you look at the death number a lot more. So, and when you read the executive summary that says other prioritizations including where central workers live and other issues and other criteria, it kind of doesn't square with what you're saying right here. So, is there a formula you can specify? Is there anything with the specifics because this doesn't really – people are really wondering why was my ZIP code left off when you were saying it's about racial equity, when that actually doesn't square away with the neighbors that you've listed.

Mayor: I'm going to start by saying we'll certainly – we'll give you the overview answer now. I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi, but I do want to say, Katie, we'll have folks go over with you today in detail, how the neighborhoods were determined because a lot of work and a lot of data

went into that. I think it's fair to say even though there are clearly going to be communities that were hard hit that are multiple ethnicities, the basic reality in these 27 neighborhoods is these are the places that were hit the hardest and they are primarily neighborhoods of people of color. And a lot of them are immigrant neighborhoods or neighborhoods with folks who have lower incomes and less health care. That's the broad characterization. The fine tuning, we'll certainly go over with you. And if we find there's any place else that needs to be prioritized, we certainly are able to do that. But remember priority means priority. As Dave said, we're going to reach everyone, but we're trying to make sure the folks who are most vulnerable get the help first. And this is a way of identifying where there's particular vulnerability. Dave, do you want to add?

Commissioner Chokshi: Sir, I don't have anything to add to that. We're happy to follow up on some of the details.

Mayor: Okay, great. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Good morning. Hope everyone is doing well. My first question has to do with the Fire Department and the COVID cases that the Commissioner referenced. Commissioner, and I don't know if the Mayor or the Health Department wants to weigh in on this as well, has the Fire Department done its own internal contact tracing? The 6,000 cases out of 17,000, somewhere in the 33 percent range and with 600 people out today on COVID, is the thought that those are from visits to people's homes, emergency response, or is the thought there that a lot of the cases spread in Fire Department break rooms and EMS squad houses because guys are basically sort of potted up with one another.

Mayor: Why don't we have Commissioner Nigro start and then if either Dr. Chokshi or Dr. Varma want to add anything on top of it, that's great. Commissioner.

Commissioner Nigro: I think the doctors will back me up on this, that just like all over society the spread has common in from many ways. I think the fact that it's such high numbers relates to our members constantly, over the past nine months, servicing sick individuals around our city and putting themselves at risk. They're also catching it from their coworkers, none of whom have the luxury of working from home, and they're getting it into their daily contact like others, you know, they they've to go to the store. They live with other folks in their homes. So, that combination of factors increased by the fact that day-in and day-out we're hands hands-on just like the hospital staffs with people with COVID as we've reached this number. Thankfully the vast majority of those people, with very few exceptions, have recovered fully and are back to work.

Mayor: Amen. Dr. Chokshi, Dr. Varma do you want to add about the tracing of folks who work in public service?

Commissioner Chokshi: Sir, the only thing that I'll add is that we know from contact tracing efforts more broadly that what Commissioner Nigro has mentioned with respect to the risk of exposure is very important, you know, in terms of people who we see unfortunately being more likely to get sick with COVID-19 and for all the reasons that the Commissioner mentioned that

has been borne out in the data, people who have that greater risk of exposure do end up contracting COVID-19 at higher rates.

Mayor: Dr. Varma, do you want to add?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah, just to reemphasize that this is one of the many reasons that the prioritization that's been proposed from CDC, you know, puts a strong emphasis on frontline workers, frontline essential workers. Even though they may be at a lower risk of a severe illness compared to somebody who's elderly they are at a very high risk for infection and we depend on them for our safety and security every day. So, vaccinating them is both the just thing to do as well as the thing that's necessary for keeping our society running safely and smoothly during this challenging time.

Mayor: Thank you. Doctor. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Second question as we try to figure out exactly when the vulnerable population, 75 and up, get vaccinated, I thought I heard Dr. Chokshi say even at people's personal doctors, that that suggests, kind of, a vast distribution network, that certainly doesn't exist today. Is that really the goal that virtually everyone's doctor would have the vaccine in their office at some point?

Mayor: Let's emphasize, as – I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi, but Andrew, I want to really emphasize the difference between today and where we may be in a month, two months, three months. This is brand new, a brand new vaccine, different than what's ever been seen before. And everything's being worked through on the run here, rightfully. The priority right now is the kind of vaccinations that will happen in big, organized ways through health care institutions, etcetera, through EMS. Over time, it will decentralize more and more out into communities, including community clinics and other health care providers. But that is really important to emphasize. Even though we're moving rapidly, it will take time to get there. And the more decentralized the better, so long as it's obviously tightly coordinated and prioritized. But I want to emphasize, I think that's something that's several months down the line in practicality. Go ahead, Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thanks Mr. Mayor, you said the most important point, which is what we're doing right now, we'll have to ramp up over the coming weeks and months, and again is dependent on the supply of the vaccine that we're allocated from the federal government. Once we do get into those later phases, which as we've mentioned will be months down the road. We do want New Yorkers to be able to access the COVID-19 vaccine any place that they are already accessing routine vaccinations, whether it's the flu vaccine or the meningitis vaccine or the hepatitis vaccine. And so, we do want to use all of those existing channels because that's important, not just for the supply chain, you know, actually getting the vaccine into those points of access but again, because it matters so much for the notion of trust and leveraging the relationships that people already have with the clinicians in their communities.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Christina from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi, Mayor. Thanks for taking my question. We continue to hear of delays and issues with the situation room when it comes to COVID cases in New York City schools. Councilman Mark Treyger tweeted that at one Brooklyn school, it's taken a week to get results back. Why is this still happening?

Mayor: Yeah. With all due respect to the council member, I'd like to see the facts of that case before I assume that's the whole story. But clearly – look, the situation room's been a great success, there's no question. Even folks who were dubious about the situation room have become huge fans of it. And I want to thank everyone, Commissioner Melanie La Rocca and everyone at the situation room, they've done an outstanding job. Now, as schools came back recently, we certainly saw the challenges of the second wave and more cases. We're going to make sure that any additional personnel the situation room needs or any additional training, whatever they need for folks, we're going to make sure we keep up with the challenge. And I am very hopeful that this situation will be greatly mitigated by the growing distribution of the vaccine. But I think the overall reality of the situation room has been – it has been very consistent, very effective. If there are individual cases that weren't handled well enough, we're going to address that individually. And we're also going to make sure if they need additional staffing, they get it. Go ahead, Christina.

Question: So, is it your position that they do need additional staffing? How are you going to make that determination? And when will those staff be brought on?

Mayor: [Inaudible] very clear, and when we staffed up originally, we learned by the first few weeks of operation, what level of staffing was needed. Given right now that we're seeing, of course, more cases out there – we're in the middle of the second wave – my message to the folks in the situation room is if you need additional resources from agencies and we need to send more people over, you'll get them right away. Obviously, school will finish today and then not come back until January 4th. So, we have time in the intervening days. If they need any additions, we'll get them to them and be ready ahead of January 4th.

Moderator: Next is Steve from [inaudible] –

Question: Mr. Mayor, I hope you're doing all right, and everyone on the call. I wanted to follow up with a release we just got from [inaudible] about an allergic reaction that a health care worker had in receiving the vaccine. I know you're probably limited in what personal details you can provide, but just wanted to get a little more context if at all possible, on some of the characteristics of this [inaudible] anything unique about the situation, and also obviously [inaudible] want to provide context and say that, you know, one out of 30,000 isn't necessarily with something that people should be freaking out about.

Mayor: Steve, thank you. Really important question. Thank you. I want to just, you know, I always like to give credit where credit is due. When a journalist says up front that they understand and appreciate why there are confidentiality rules, even though I know your job is to get as much information as possible and get it out to the world. I thank you for that sensitivity to the individual involved. So, I appreciate that a lot. Dr. Chokshi, with that important qualifier, what can you tell us? The more that you can tell us the better. But within the rules, what can you tell us about this case and what people should – whatever conclusions they should or should not draw from it?

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and I echo your gratitude with respect to respecting the confidentiality of our fellow New Yorkers. So, for those who may not be as aware, let me just start with the big picture, which is that we have administered over 30,000 COVID-19 vaccinations in New York City. In recent days we did receive a single report of a serious adverse event in a health care worker. That was a significant allergic reaction that that person sustained. They were treated for it. They're now in stable condition and recovering. And what I would say about this with respect to the context is that vaccines, including the COVID 19 vaccine, are very safe in general. They do have side effects and occasionally those side effects include some uncommon allergic reactions.

We also know based on the clinical trials and, you know, reports of adverse effects in other jurisdictions that have happened, that these reactions are rare. But they've been reported with the Pfizer vaccine in recent days. So, there's a system in place to track these types of side effects. We do it in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control, the CDC. This is the first such event that was recorded in New York City. We'll continue to follow up on those events and make sure that we're taking it seriously, but also putting it in the context that you described, which is that this is uncommon, that the vaccines are very safe overall, and to make sure that we're updating all of our public health guidance accordingly.

So, here's what I would say with respect to New Yorkers who are wondering, what does this mean for me if I have allergies. For the vast, vast majority of people who have allergies, whether it's a food allergy or a seasonal allergy, the COVID 19 vaccine will be safe and effective for you. If you have a history of an allergic reaction to a previous vaccine or to any medicine that you've taken by injection, then it's important for you to have a conversation with your doctor before you get vaccinated. But again, for the vast, vast majority of people who have allergies that situation doesn't apply, and the COVID-19 vaccine will be safe and effective for those people and everyone else.

Mayor: And Steve, I want to note having been present at really celebratory moments where our health care heroes got the vaccine, and were excited to get the vaccine, I know the questionnaire that people are asked before they get the vaccine, and it includes the question, have you ever had an allergic reaction to medication or to a vaccination? So there really is a careful effort to see if there's any of that history there, but as someone who, myself, I have allergies, for sure, I can tell you I know the kind of allergies I have are not the kind we're talking about here, and I'm going to get this vaccine for sure. And why am I going to get it? Because I think it is so important that we protect ourselves and protect each other. And there's not a lot of things in life we necessarily feel are certain, but on this one, I'm feeling, this is certain. We have a vaccine that has been really intensively scrutinized. I don't think there's any vaccine in history. That's gotten as much attention and scrutiny all over the world, global health care experts, scientists looking at this constantly. It has been confirmed and confirmed and confirmed and confirmed. It is safe and effective. I want all New Yorkers to understand this, this vaccine is safe and effective. It will be available widely over the coming months. It will be given for free. Our health care leadership has looked at this with a fine-tooth comb. They're confident in it. I'm confident in it. This is going to be the difference maker. So we're going to keep giving people information all the time to help people get all the answers they have to really important and valid questions. But what we do know is it's safe and effective. Go ahead, Steve.

Question: Thanks. And I wanted to also follow up with something of philosophical question in the style of my colleague, Rich Lamb. I wanted to see, you know, what you've learned about yourself this year? Obviously it's a very reflective time and in an unprecedented year, I'm sure from your perspective and from all of our perspectives, what have you learned about yourself, your leadership style, the best qualities, your worst qualities, how would you reflect on this year?

Mayor: You can ask my wife about my worst qualities. She keeps a running list. No, it's been a very reflective time. One thing I'll tell you that I've learned, this is something Chirlane used to lecture me on all the time, that sleep really matters. And I've not been someone who's traditionally gotten enough sleep. And in the beginning of this crisis, it was crazy for all of us. I mean, we were working every single day, very long hours, no one was getting enough sleep. And I really saw that that had an impact. I mean, it makes it harder to fully think through things. And obviously we all get more emotional when we're tired. So, I learned the value of sleep for sure. But look, it's a big, big question, Steve. I'd only give you a very quick sort of synopsis. I look back on this year with just tremendous appreciation for the people who did the work this year to keep everyone else safe. I really do. That's what keeps coming through. And that's what keeps inspiring me. The good, the good in people that came out in 2020. And New Yorkers were just heroic. That's the only word for it. So, I feel a lot of gratitude. In terms of my own work this year. Look, I'm self-critical all the time. My colleagues will tell you that. I think in the beginning we were trying, I was trying to figure out how to communicate all the things that we needed to do, all the things we needed to address in this crisis. I now realize, I wish I had been able to communicate some things better. I wish we all had known some things more. But you look back and you say, wow, if we had just understood that better, if we had had that information and how much that could have helped, that's frustrating. And you know, again through that tiredness and that sense of like, you know, problem after problem after problem, trying to make sense of it. I think I've really reflected on that that leaders need to somehow step out of that fray. This job, as the one of the folks who's running is going to end up in it. And they're in for a very intense education. This job requires so much detail work. So much hands-on work across so many subject areas, that it sometimes makes it hard to think. And you got to stop and slow down and breathe and think. And so I've really learned that lesson. And so I'd say the things I need to do better that I've learned this year are sort of that ability to rise above the fray, get up to 30,000 feet. The ability to really think about are we communicating everything we need to communicate? But what I felt great about this year is the incredible heroic work of so many New Yorkers out there protecting each and every one of us, the people just day-to-day everyday New Yorkers looking out for each other. People in City Hall, I want to give a shout out to folks in City Hall and the folks in so many of our agencies leading the way. I mean, these folks, I just wish New Yorkers could see how hard my colleagues here work. And I drive them hard. But I also want to tell you, they're just amazing individuals. They've given their all this year. And I'm talking about people who have not stopped working for a day since March 1st. And I think it's hard for the public to understand Steve this. When you do this work, it is every hour, every day. It's never out of your mind. You don't take a break from it really. These folks have just kept going. They've been absolutely amazingly strong and focused. And that gives me a lot of heart too. So a lot more I could say. But I'm just proud of the people I work with. I'm proud that, you know, I've been able in some way to contribute to the city holding firm. And I am really optimistic about next year. And that's something I hope I'm communicating to people. I truly believe we're going to do amazing things in New York City in 2021. I feel that in my heart and that's something that makes me proud of the people of this city. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Abu from BanglaPatrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Abu. How are you?

Question: Good. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mayor. Mayor, my question is, since Biden elected as president, did you ever talk to him for the future plan, how he can help New York city?

Mayor: I am looking forward to that conversation for sure, Abu. The obvious truth is the president-elect has been very, very busy. I joined with some of my fellow mayors as part of a group discussion with the president-elect about what we needed in terms of stimulus, what strategies we needed to recover. That was a very good conversation with him and the vice president-elect. I thought they were focused on the right things and I thought they felt deeply for all of our cities. Look, the president-elect is from Wilmington, Delaware, vice president-elect is from San Francisco. They understand the life of cities. They're devoted to New York City and other cities. So that makes me feel good. Talked to a number of senior folks in the incoming administration to let them know what we need and how we want to work together. And I really am satisfied with those conversations. That everyone is on the same page. Go ahead Abu.

Question: The second question is, as you mentioned yesterday, about the New York City Vision Zero and all this stuff, which is a very good initiative. But as well, there is a lot of people since the COVID came, city was, you know, shut down, locked down, they've got a lot of tickets. I know few people, they call me yesterday since you had a press conference, that they have even \$1,000 ticket. And that they are not able to pay this \$1,000. They don't know what to do. What is the way – is there any, anything City's thinking that, you know, the people who are in that kind of situation, if City can help them? Or any other you know, where they can get out from the situation?

Mayor: Look, Abu it obviously depends on the situation. We understand that people are in a horrible way financially, economically right now. And whenever people are experiencing a hardship, they should communicate. Communicate with the Department of Finance that handles the collection of those penalties. People can call 3-1-1 and get connected to Department of Finance and have the conversation. You know, for those who are going to pay something and are having a problem, there often are payment plans and ways to address things. But let's be clear when we talk about Vision Zero, if you're getting one of those higher level tickets, that's because you did something that endangered other people's lives. I'm very firm about this point. If you are speeding, you are putting other people's lives in danger. That's why I always believe – I think about the child who might be crossing a street or the grandma or grandpa might be crossing the street and whose life might be in danger. I think about the people we've lost, who should be with us right now at the holidays. And I have no sympathy for people who speed. So if the ticket is because of speeding or a moving violation that endangered other people, folks need to understand there are consequences. Too often, motorists have felt like there weren't consequences, even when someone got killed. That's not acceptable. We've got to change the whole paradigm going forward, intensive consequences if you kill or injure someone. So that it pervades our culture and changes behavior, and people understand they have to be very responsible behind the wheel. So those kinds of offenses we're going to follow up on intensely.

But if you're talking about other things, parking tickets, other things and someone's having a problem, of course contact the Department of Finance and they'll do anything they can to work with you. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more. First, we will go to Gersh for Streetsblog.

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

Mayor: I'm doing good Gersh. Very happy holidays. I hope there's sourdough cookies and sourdough cakes for everyone.

Question: Yes. I would be very remiss if I did not wish you and your family a merry Christmas. Felice Navidad, próspero año

Mayor: Very good. Gersh, you've got range Gersh.

Question: Yes, I'll do it in Russian in a second. Anyway, no one wants to circle back on the storm because all the snow melted, but we have some lingering questions about the response. Now, the City under your leadership has taken great pains to build scores of miles of protected bike lanes. But advocates say that cyclists, whether they're working cyclists or people who choose to get around on two wheels for environmental or financial reasons were endangered by a City policy. And it is City policy, according to the Sanitation Department's snow emergency plans that mandate that all car lanes are plowed before bike lanes and pedestrian crossings are swept. So why are car lanes cleared first? Which only encourages driving during the most dangerous times in a Vision Zero city?

Mayor: Okay. Gersh, you know, you and I have spirited conversations. But I always appreciate your questions. They're very thoughtful questions. I know they come from the heart. But this one I'm going to put in perspective. We are a Vision Zero city, and we need to be more of a Vision Zero city. And I'll again reference the election next year. I hope Vision Zero is front and center into the discussion about the future of the city. And I think every New Yorker should demand of every candidate for mayor that they support Vision Zero and will add to Vision Zero going forward. So, we are a Vision Zero city, but we also recognize when you clear the roads, you are clearing the way for emergency vehicles, you are clearing the way for food deliveries. There's so many things, people have to get to the hospital. There's so many things that we do when we clear the roads. I want to see a city that is less and less dependent on the automobile going forward and more and more about mass transit. But remember our buses go on those roads too. So I think that rationale is clear, but I take to heart your bigger point that we need to keep the bike lanes clear. And in fact, one of the things Department of Sanitation has done, which is different from the past is they have I think it's about 100 pieces of specialized equipment to specifically work to clear bike lanes. It is now a priority to clear bike lanes. We had a decent amount of snow here, so it takes a few days. And they're supposed to be picking up the trash in between. So there's a lot they have to juggle, but there's no question, the policy in New York City is clear those bike lanes as quickly as possible. Use the new equipment we've got. If we need to do that better. And we need to learn from this experience, how to go faster with that? I embrace that 100 percent, but absolutely there's a commitment to clearing bike lanes so bicyclists can get back on the road. Go ahead.

Question: Yeah, you kind of walked right into the follow up in the sense that you mentioned these narrow machines and snow removal equipment that the Department of Sanitation has. The agency in fact told me that they have 100 machines, as you said, but not a single one of those was bought since the 2014 winter season. Which means since that time you've built scores of miles of protected bike lanes, but actually not given that agency, a new generation of narrow equipment to actually do the work you're talking about. So that's a resource question Mayor and that falls on your desk.

Mayor: Gersh, I'm very comfortable with the question. So, first of all, they have the equipment. It's not a matter of when it was bought. The question is, do they have it and are they able to get the job done? Again, what they do have, I would be the first to say is, there is a certain number of personnel. There is a certain amount of equipment and job one is to get the city moving for all the reasons I stated before. So, some of this may just be that they have to prioritize the first piece before they can get to the second piece. If there's anything about that equipment that doesn't allow them to clear the bike lanes, I absolutely want to know about that. And we will address that in the upcoming budget. But if it's simply equipment that was bought in the past and they're able to use it effectively now? Great, let's get out there and use it and use it as quickly as possible. So, I will happily follow up because I want the bike lanes cleared. Go ahead.

Moderator: For our last question we will go to Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. In the context of the DOI report, I wanted to ask you about the incident on May 30th, where the two NYPD SUVs drove into a crowd of protestors. The day after that you said specifically that both DOI and Internal Affairs would investigate that incident fully. I'm wondering what the result was of the Internal Affairs investigation? And on Friday, DOI said they did not investigate that because Internal Affairs and others were investigating it. So why didn't DOI investigate it?

Mayor: Yoav, I'm always going to tell you when you raise something that I want to know more about. And I want to know more about that myself. I did expect DOI 100 percent, to look into that matter. And I'm confused by the answer you're relaying to me. I am, again, I think DI did a fantastic job on a very difficult complex subject. But we do need to know more about that. So I'm going to go back to the DOI Commissioner and say, please go into that. We need a clear answer on what happened there. I don't know enough about the Internal Affairs piece. We'll get you an answer on that right away. But look, the bottom line is there were things that happened in those protests that cannot happen again. And it is abundantly clear we can not officers driving into a crowd in that situation. It was as I said at the time, there was a lot of very painful and unusual things happening. There had been attacks on officers. People need to understand if a police vehicle is coming through, you need to get out of the way and let the vehicle move to where they're going. But that said what happened there should not have happened, and it cannot happen again in the future. But we will get you an update on where the review stands on those specifics. Go ahead, Yoav.

Question: Okay. Thanks for that on another topic. You said earlier today that in kind of touting the safety of the vaccine, that it was one of the most scrutinized vaccines, I don't know if you said ever, but among the most scrutinized vaccines in the world. I just wanted to check on that. I don't know if by scrutinize you mean studied. My understanding was because of the rush

timeline that the typical studies were not conducted for these? I'm just wondering if perhaps one of the doctors can discuss this issue as well?

Mayor: I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. I don't think in history, I'm not a medical historian, but I think I'm on firm ground here. I don't think in the history of this planet, there has been such focused attention, entire world, the entire scientific community, the entire medical community, the entire journalistic community on the development of a vaccine from the very beginning. The trials, the checks and balances, the different levels of review. I think the consistency of the response, and I'm saying as a layman, but I think it's pretty clear. To see the consistency of the response we've gotten to this vaccine across multiple levels of government, multiple governments around the world gives me tremendous confidence here. It's been intensely scrutinized and the checks and balances have been very strong and they keep coming back with the same answer. And I think you would say as a journalist too, when you check lots and lots of different sources and you get the same exact answer every time it gives you some confidence. So that's why I have confidence. Dr. Varma then Dr. Chokshi.

Senior Advisor Varma: Great. Thank you for the question. I want to really build upon what the Mayor has just said, which is that the level of scientific effort that has gone into creating these vaccines that are currently authorized as well as the ones that are in development right now is really an extraordinary accomplishment in the history of medicine. I can't really think of any example of where a disease was diagnosed and an intervention was developed this quickly. Now that obviously creates concerns for people about if it was done quickly, does that mean it was rushed? Does that mean it was unsafe? And what we know now, both from the data from the trials that has been done as well as now the real world data of tens of thousands of New Yorkers and even larger numbers nationally, is that this is a vaccine that is safe and based on the trials is likely to be effective. Now we also have to be humble. We also know that this disease has not been around very long. People have just gotten the vaccines, you know, small risks could turn up at some point in the future. But they have to be balanced against the very known risks of this infection. This is an infection that causes anywhere from, you know, five to 10 in 1,000 people to die. It causes hundreds of people out of a thousand to potentially get long term side effects. So when you balance these very, very small potential risks of say a severe allergic reaction against the known complications of this infection, I know which side I personally fall on. And I know the side that my wife and my kids will all fall on, which is to get the vaccine.

Mayor: Excellent. Dr. Chokshi?

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you. And I very much appreciate the opportunity to provide some more insight on this. I agree with everything that Dr. Varma said. Will just add four additional facts briefly. First as the Mayor said there has been a lot of scrutiny on the studies that were performed not just here in the United States where the FDA itself, an independent review committee and many, many other external experts actually looked at the science and determined the safety and efficacy of these two vaccines, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. So, number one is that scrutiny both in the United States, as well as in Canada, United Kingdom, Europe, many other places around the world now. The second is the size of the trials was quite significant. For the Pfizer vaccine it was over 44,000 participants. For the Moderna vaccine, over 30,000 participants. That size really matters for us to be able to discern the safety and efficacy profile of those two vaccines. The third fact is the duration of follow up for those studies. Each person who was enrolled in the trial and got the vaccination was followed up for a minimum of two months.

And that was picked very deliberately because the vast majority of side effects that can occur would be caught in that two month window. And so both of them followed that rigorous protocol that we require of all good studies. And the fourth and final point is just to echo one thing that Dr. Varma said, which is the technology underlying these vaccines, which is known as mRNA technology. Although it is a remarkable feat of science that that technology was applied to develop this vaccine during the course of 2020, that technology has actually been in development for many years prior to that. Being refined, being tested. And that's why it was able to be applied so quickly during this year.

Mayor: Excellent. Thank you so much, Dr. Choksi, Dr. Varma. You can hear the passion in their voices, and these are two folks who have done an outstanding job protecting the people of this city this year. They know this vaccine is safe and effective. I know it. And this is something that's going to just help us all turn the page. And let's talk about turning the page. 2020 is almost over, thank God. We get to look forward to something better, and the vaccine is going to help us to make the transition to our renewal, to our recovery, to something much better in 2021. Look at this point, it's a time for reflection. We get up to this point of the year – I cherish this time of year because actually we slow down a little bit. We think a little bit more. We get a little more appreciative of all our blessings and the people in our life. I am thankful to everyone who's done such good and important work this year to protect each other. I'm thankful to everyone I work with here at City Hall and across our City government.

I want to thank everyone. I want to just have a special moment to thank two people who have been just heroes throughout in my life and my work, our First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan and Deputy Mayor and Chief of staff, Emma Wolfe. These two folks have been the glue keeping things going for so much of what City Hall and City government does. So, I want to thank them both for their amazing work this year. I'm always thankful for my partner and the love of my life, our First Lady Chirlane McCray, who I think things through all the time with. And, you know, we go through all the challenges, all the troubles and all the good times. And I couldn't be more thankful. But I'm thankful for all of you, everyone who has been a part of just helping us through. And there's something better ahead.

We got a lot to talk about in the months ahead, but we're going to take a break for a few days with these press conferences. Everyone out there, get a chance to relax and spend time in small gatherings and zooms and, you know, being smart, being careful. But be with your loved ones in whatever way works. But stay local, stay safe, get ready for something better ahead. And this is, you know, a time of joy. A season of joy made more joyful by the fact that there is going to come that moment, if you have one of those calendars on the wall, you're going to be able to rip 2020 off the wall. It's going to feel so good. I am really looking forward to that moment. Everyone, a very, very merry Christmas, *feliz Navidad*, a happy Kwanzaa. I'm looking up ahead, happy Three Kings Day as well. All the wonderful communities of this city, whatever you celebrate, celebrate in a joyful way that 2020 is over and new and better things ahead. A happy New Year to all and a better year ahead. Thank you, everyone. And God bless you all.

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