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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, JOINED BY SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO AND  
COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH, SIGNS LEGISLATION CREATING DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS' SERVICES**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** All right, well, welcome, everyone. I just want to thank the members of the NYC Joint Service Color Guard. And I also want to thank Christina [inaudible] for an excellent rendition of the national anthem. Let's give them another round of applause.

[Applause]

It is a real pleasure, and it's always an honor to be at the Intrepid. The Intrepid means a lot to all of us. It means a lot to all of us as New Yorkers. It means a lot to all of us as Americans. For me, it always serves to just directly connect me to what my parents did in World War II, and particularly to my father's service in the Pacific. When I'm on the Intrepid, I feel that deep connection to history and to all those who served on this extraordinary vessel and all they did. So it is exactly the right place to celebrate a major step forward for the veterans of New York City – those who served us and served us well, and who it is now our turn to serve and to support.

This location is synonymous with bravery. The name Intrepid was well chosen for this ship given all that it went through and all that it survived.

Well, our veterans are intrepid as well. Our veterans fought for us and served us, and served through all the challenges; and so many continue to face challenges, and they should never have to face them alone – 225,000-plus veterans in this city, the most of any city in America, and it's our honor to have them here. And it's our honor to be there with them.

They deserve our support. They deserve every effort to be fully reintegrated into our society, and that doesn't mean just the thanks and the praise, but the economic opportunities, the healthcare opportunities, everything that will make their lives and their families lives whole.

Today, we take an important step forward in that effort, and I'll be proud in just a few moments to sign the legislation that creates the New York City Department of Veterans Services.

[Applause]

Now, I said this is always personal for me, and I know for so many people here today. So many of you here today served our nation, and we have to say thank you each and every chance we get. So many of you here today work on behalf our veterans with all you have, and we say thank you for that extraordinary commitment. Everybody here today has been helped by the work of our veterans, protected by the work of our veterans. I think the vast, vast majority here probably know a veteran very well in their own family or count a veteran among their friends. So, it's very personal for all of us.

For my family, my father's war term – excuse me, my father's war time service in the Pacific was foundational to everything that came thereafter. I certainly learned from him the most powerful values in terms of courage and bravery, and sacrifice, and service; but also, as I've talked about before, he came back with the physical wounds and the mental health wounds of that war. And those continued on with our family for decades thereafter.

And so many families can tell a similar story. It's not abstract. What happens in war does not end for anyone at the conclusion of that war. Unfortunately, it carries on.

The difference is back in my father's time a lot of these challenges weren't identified, weren't talked about, weren't addressed. No one knows that better than former general, now commissioner, Loree Sutton – who worked so hard when she was in the army on the mental health needs of our soldiers.

Today, we understand better how to address both the physical and mental challenges. We also understand how long-lasting they are, and how they affect the whole family.

So, it is quite fitting that we recognize in creating this department we're serving not only the 225,000 veterans, we're serving many family members beyond, many of whom are facing challenges and have been for years and years. And it's time for us to step forward to do something fundamental to address those challenges.

We started out in this administration believing that we could play a crucial role. We respect, of course, all that's done on the federal level, and that's the first effort on behalf of our veterans is made at the federal level. But we know we could help. We knew we could do a lot to help veterans connect with jobs, connect with healthcare services, and all the other things they needed – education, etcetera.

We also recognized, as we engaged that work, just how much there was to be done and just how much we had to knit together to really reach people. And this new department will give us an ability to reach more people, to get them more help, to connect the dots as never before.

A lot of people here today worked very hard for this day and – you know, for all of us who are elected officials, we often have to humbly acknowledge that there were advocates and providers and so many others who had this idea years and years ago and worked for it, and never stopped working for it. So, I want to take a moment to acknowledge all of you, who really get a lot of the praise today for this achievement. Let's give every – them a round of applause – who fought for this.

[Applause]

There are people here today, who have felt these challenges directly and have taken their pain and their sacrifice and have tried to help their fellow family members who have tried to be there for veterans – I'm referring to the Gold Star and Blue Star families. Let's thank all of them for all they have done.

[Applause]

There are folks who have made it their life's work and passion to support our veterans and two of them are also so key to what's happened here at the Intrepid. They've been such staunch backers of making the Intrepid all it is today. And I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart. They're good friends. They've done a lot for this city – Ken Fischer and Bruce Mosler, thank you for all you have done.

[Applause]

And to prove that, when it comes to helping veterans it doesn't matter what borough you come from or what part of the country you come from, what party you're in, what your beliefs are – everyone shares this goal. I want to welcome the Chair of the New York State Republican Party Ed Cox, and thank you for joining us, Ed.

[Applause]

So, we understood, as I said, there was a lot to do from the beginning. And even with the previous structure we had with the Mayor's Office for Veteran Affairs – with the help of the City Council and the strong support of City Council, we quadrupled the funding and the staff for that office, and that gives us a strong foundation as we build toward the day when this department is instituted.

We've been hard at work, as we've talked about, over the last two years, on the issue of homeless veterans. The President of the United States made this a national priority, and I commend President Obama for it. We are proud of the fact, over the last two years, we have helped more than 1,800 previously homeless veterans find permanent homes – 1,800, and that's a real achievement for this city.

[Applause]

We're proud of the fact that through our Small Business Services Department's Workforce1 centers, we've placed nearly 2,300 veterans and their spouses – and I always say – Lori's trained me well on this point – placing a veteran's spouse is equally important because it's the same family of benefits – so, 2,300 veterans and/or their spouses have been placed, and we're very, very proud of that.

[Applause]

But we know there's more to be done. You know, we're very proud – I mentioned the 1,800 veterans we've helped to permanent housing – I'm so proud of the fact that, following the federal standard and the federal call to action, we've really drilled down on the chronically homeless and this has been what President Obama, particularly, focused us all on – those who had been living on the streets, those who really couldn't break the cycle. And that effort has been very successful. We'll have more to say on that in the next few week. But we know that that is going to be an ongoing effort because we aren't going to rest so long as any veterans become homeless. Anytime a veteran becomes homeless, it'll be our job to lift them up and find a solution.

And we've put a lot of resources into it and we'll keep updating you on it but I keep saying one thing, and I'll say it again – every New Yorker can help a veteran – every New Yorker. If you have an apartment you want to rent to a veteran, we want to know about it. We want you to call 3-1-1, we want you tell us about it. We have the resources. We need the apartments that we can get to those who have served us. If you have job – if you have a job opening – let me do a quick advertisement on behalf of our veterans – if you want someone devoted, someone disciplined, someone skilled, someone who will be a leader in the work place, hire a veteran. You can do that right now.

[Applause]

So, everyone can be a part in being there for those who served us.

Now, before I introduce my colleagues – a couple words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I first want to turn to our commissioner and – I said the other day, whatever Lori Sutton eats for breakfast, I want to eat that too because her energy is absolutely extraordinary. In the time she's led this agency,

she's already beloved by veterans all over this city. So, I want you to know, General, you are on the right track, and we thank you. Let's welcome Commissioner Lori Sutton.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Two last things to do. One is to say to everyone who is a part of this, thank you and God bless you for what you have done. And the second is to do a brief exercise in democracy – everyone who believes I should go to that desk and sign the bill, now say “I.”

**Audience:** I.

**Mayor:** I think the majority has it – the “I’s” have it and then we’ll come back for questions on this topic and then off-topic after.

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intro. 314-A]

**Mayor:** This bill is now law.

[Cheers]

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Okay, we’re going to first do questions from the media on this topic, I then have another update I want to give. We’ll do questions on that, and then we’ll do some general off-topic for a few minutes. So, questions on today’s bill signing. Any questions on this?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** We’re going to be looking at that, obviously, in the budget process coming up in January. And I think Paul Vallone asked the right question. This is a new concept and we want to decide over the coming year what we think the shape of it could be. What we know is we are going to continue to deepen the work on ending veteran homelessness. We’re going to continue to deepen the work on connecting veterans and their families to jobs, but we have to figure out the shape of that, and what’s going to take. So that will come out in the budget process.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Yeah. I wanted to make sure, if we were elevating something to the level of department, that we had a serious outline of where we wanted to go with it, and the impact it would have. And as we went along – first of all, I give the Council a lot of credit. This is a democratic process, always, between the Council and the Mayor. And I listen very intently to the Council’s priority. And this became a very important priority of the Council, and that matters in and of itself. And it should in a democracy. But also we deepened the work. Obviously, in particular, the work we’ve done this year on veterans homelessness, deepened. And as I experienced it more and more I saw what the advantages would be of having a department. I wanted to make sure we had enough time to organize it properly, and that was something we negotiated through and we got to a good agreement on. So I think it was an organic process. In the end, I believe this will be very good for the city. And it will allow us to further focus on the needs of veterans. I would dare say the federal government has to do more, too. Again, that is the first line of support for our veterans. And this last year or two have been pretty challenging years on the federal level. I think it’s been very eye-opening in terms of what has still not been done on the federal level for

veterans. So I don't want for a moment us to mistake the fact that the city's stepping up as any kind of free pass to the federal government when it comes to fulfilling its obligations. But it became clear the city could do more, and it was right to do more.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, this is an area where I was quite clear – I think General Sutton's been doing a great job and I think the Office has been doing a great job. So, I always, lovingly, challenged my colleagues on the Council with that point – that I believed the existing apparatus was working well – but it is obvious that elevating the status has meaning unto itself in terms of showing our focus. And it does cause, I think, resources to move effectively. And it also, to Paul Vallone's point, is going to cause us to think, I think, a little more strategically about the ways we can help veterans over the long term and the kind of strategy we need. I think it elevates the whole concept of what we can do further that would be effective, but, again, never suggesting that the federal government doesn't need to do better at its part of the equation.

**City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito:** Eric wants to say something.

**Mayor:** Please.

**Council Member Eric Ulrich:** Thank you very much. This is a question that came up at the pre-stated Council press conference as well. Part of the problem – the systemic problem, the structural problem if you will, that has plagued MOVA over the past four administrations, quite frankly, both Democrats and Republicans, is that the funding mechanism is always at the mercy of the mayor. MOVA's funding was whatever the mayor wanted it to be in that particular year, and the Council had no ability, oversight, or formally in the budget process to do anything about that. Now, Mayor de Blasio to his credit, and he deserves a lot of credit, tripled MOVA's budget the first year.

**Mayor:** Quadrupled.

**Council Member Ulrich:** Quadrupled, I'm sorry – I stand corrected – quadrupled the funding for MOVA, but the problem, of course, becomes what happens eight years from now when none of us are in public office anymore or in the Mayor's Office, Council, and the next mayor says, you know what? I don't think veterans are a priority, I don't think they need \$1 million dollars or \$5 million dollars or \$10 million, whatever the budget happens to be. You know, the budget will always be at the mercy of the mayor. Now, having a city department, an agency, it's going to be accountable just like every other city agency – the Parks Department comes before the Council Finance hearings. The Department of Transportation, every single city agency, as part of the natural checks and balances that exist in the charter, will now be – and contracting, as well – will be, you know, part of the Council's oversight role. So I think that's an important part. The Council is now on the hook. You can't blame the mayor when you're not happy with veteran services in New York City because we now have a responsibility as well to make sure that things are being done efficiently and that they are funded properly as well. So, thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible] an example of, like, how this would be different or how veterans in New York City will notice the difference, you know, moving to an actual city department, rather than [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Every question is fair and logical, but I have to answer back with the facts. Again, I think MOVA has been doing a fantastic job. Now, Eric makes an important point – MOVA's doing a good job because we've put more resources in. Having a department will also continue to encourage a steady flow of resources. That is a

fair point. And I sometimes struggle in these questions between the executive and legislative branch because I served in both. So, I – it's impossible not acknowledge the truth. And in a checks and balances system there are advantages to making sure both sides are pushing for what they think is right – it often yields a better product. I will always defend the executive branch's prerogatives, but I think there's a democratic – [inaudible] democratic point there. On this one, following Eric's point – we made a resource commitment that's very serious. We're going to continue to. I think the name alone helps send a message of our level of commitment. I think, we have started to, over the last couple of years, do things previous administrations didn't do and – by the way, this is a problem all around the country – the veterans' homelessness dynamic was tolerated by administrations in cities all over the country, Democrat and Republican alike, for a long time. Under this President, to his credit, he said, this is no longer tolerable. We've tried to follow suit with the way we've funded and the way we've acted, but it is, I think, part of a larger recognition that, as a nation, we have not gone far enough in terms of helping our veterans. This is something we can contribute. But it is not going to be night and day, because what we were doing already was, I think, quite strong.

Any other questions on this topic? Yes, please.

**Question:** [inaudible] do you think that there are other offices where it should be [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Everyone deserves help and support. I don't think a "Mayor's Office" is a minor matter. I think it's a very important reality to have a Mayor's Office focused on a particular issue or on a particular set of needs. And, generally speaking, when we have that model, we believe that's the effective model and it should stay that way. So, I think our veterans, obviously, have played a particular role in our society. And again, I think there's been a recognition in the last few years of what wasn't done for our veterans that obviously should have been, and that includes nationally. So I think this one has some very particular characteristics. But the – I think the broad answer is – if something is a Mayor's Office, that comes with a lot of weight, a lot of impact and we believe that's the right way to do things.

Last call on this topic.

Let me now give you just an update on, I think, an issue for many, many New Yorkers – in fact, I say most New Yorkers – is probably is their number one issue of concern. Two years into the administration, I can tell you that what I used to say on the campaign trail remains true – the number one topic raised to me by New Yorkers, wherever I go in this city, is affordable housing. And it's usually said to me this way – I'm worried I won't be able to live in my neighborhood anymore. I'm worried I may be priced out. I'm worried I may be pushed out. I need affordable housing. Where can I find affordable housing? Will it actually be affordable to me and my family? That is what hear the most from my fellow New Yorkers. And that is why we said from day one we were going to do something that has never been done before in this city – we were going to create more affordable housing than any of my predecessors. Now, my predecessors – especially Mayor Koch, who did something truly foundational for this city with his affordable housing plan, Mayor Bloomberg had a very large affordable housing plan – but our plan for 200,000 apartments, enough for half-a-million people, is the largest affordable housing plan in the history of this city or any other city. And we have been working on a number of pieces that are necessary to achieve it, including mandatory inclusionary zoning. That will change the rules of engagement on development in this city once and for all, and require developers – when we do these major land-use actions – will require the creation of affordable housing. It is the only way we're going to preserve an economically diverse city and a city for everyone in the future. We've been working with the City Council for two years straight and hearing from them constantly about how concerned their constituents are on this issue. We've been working with community organizations, advocates, community boards, you name it, to figure out the best way forward. My job is to put what I regard as bold and forceful proposals on the table, and then, of course, we listen to and work with all stakeholders, and when we think there's an important adjustment to make, we make it. But the bottom line is we're not going to get anywhere if we don't have a clear strong plan that changes the rules of the game. We simply can't serve the people of this city if we keep doing things the way they were done before. So our plan is moving forward – it's moving forward aggressively.

Two of the biggest constituencies in need here, are working families – people who work hard all day, sometimes two jobs or even three jobs, and still can't make ends meet and still can't find housing they can afford – that is a big swath of this city – and our largest-growing demographic group – our seniors, who in so many cases are struggling – so many of them on fixed incomes are struggling to find affordable housing or hold on to the affordable housing they have. Those two constituencies – working families and seniors – two of the backbones of this city. Well, crucial organizations representing those two constituencies have, this week, come out strongly in favor of our mandatory inclusionary zoning plan and our larger vision for affordable housing – on the side of working families, the Hotel Trades Council and 32BJ SEIU, and the leading organization in this country representing our senior citizens, AARP, which has an extraordinary constituency and has been such a powerful voice for seniors. Collectively, these three organizations, that endorsed our plan this week, have a membership in this city of over 850,000 people – more than one-tenth the population of New York City are represented by these three organizations alone.

We will be working with them – and I want to say AARP, in particular, has engaged us on a number of things we can do to help seniors get affordable housing and other ways that we can help seniors, and we're going to be working with them as a crucial ally going forward on a host of needs of seniors.

And, of course, we're listening to all of the dialogue happening at the neighborhood level. It's a good and healthy dialogue, because it is about the thing that to many people is the most essential issue. And that democratic process will help us as we perfect this legislation going forward.

So, we're just clear – we're not going to allow the status quo to hold. We're not going to use the policies of the past that just weren't sufficient. We need a new approach. We are going to act. We're not going to stand by and watch idly. We're not going to allow – with all due respect to my friends in the private sector – the market alone is not going to determine the outcome here. The people's voice, through the government, must be decisive in addressing the changes in this city, in addressing gentrification – which has very good and very challenging dynamics to it. But we need a strong policy and the support from these three organizations makes clear how many people in this city recognize that we need real change if we're going to keep this a city for everyone, for every kind of New Yorker.

With that, I want to see if there are any questions on that topic, and then we'll take a few general Q-and-A questions – any questions on that topic?

Grace, you're getting an assist from Eric Ulrich because I couldn't see you. Go ahead –

**Question:** I guess a two part question. One is the – do you wish that you had those groups on-board with your plan before it started getting voted down by the borough boards and that you had maybe organized that support or [inaudible] announced that earlier in the process? And two, you made the point at the end, that the people's voice through government must be decisive [inaudible] but isn't the votes that have been taking place around the city – aren't those, you know, the people's voice, sort of –

**Mayor:** Fair question, let me address the second one first. I was saying there – I want to make sure I'm speaking clearly. Again, with absolute respect for the private sector, the private sector has its job to do and its imperatives. When I say the people's voice, I mean through their elected representatives. The final word in this process is, first, the City Planning Commission, which is appointed, obviously, by elected officials, and then the City Council and the mayoralty. So, as much as I absolutely value the input of Community Boards, and I worked with Community Boards for many, many years, the final word on land use is those who are elected to make decisions on behalf of the people – that's what I mean to say, that we are going to balance the market dynamics, because when the market dynamics, in my opinion, had too much sway in the process we ended up with a pattern of gentrification and other changes that led to too many people being priced out, and there was no counter-balance. There was no program to preserve enough affordability housing, to build enough new

affordable housing, to protect tenants in place in the housing they're in, to make sure that tenants were not illegally displaced or evicted. So that's the schema when I talk about the people's voice – the people's voice as expressed by our city government. On the first point, a lot of questions I hear from the media are about do I wish I'd done something one way or another. In this job you don't have a lot of time for regret. There's something that we have to do in the mayoralty, literally, every minute of every day. We try and do everything as quickly as we can. I'm very gratified these organizations have come on board, and I think their support will be decisive. It is never a surprise – I think my colleagues – they may nod or they may just nod themselves internally – it is never a surprise when a Community Board opposes what it sees as development. That is not a news flash in New York City, but Community Boards have a very important voice, and they often offer ideas and suggestions that help us make something better. But in the end, again, the decision-makers are the people right up here.

Anything else on this topic? Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Boy, this is – I'll try to keep it brief, but you've hit the heart of the matter, which I thank you for. Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito just said it's going to happen anyway. She took – she took my line and I thank her. It's – that's the first thing to know about this discussion. If you don't believe that, come with me to Bushwick, come with me to Bed-Stuy, come with me to the areas of Park Slope that were long past changed before there ever was rezoning. The market dynamics are having a huge impact. They have for a couple of decades now because the world turned. It's a globalized world. New York City solved its fundamental challenges around crime and some of the other things that were holding us back. We became an evermore attractive and strong place in a globalized economy. The market has been moving for most of two decades. So, it's happening. The question is is government in this game or not, trying to represent the people's interest and create some balance on behalf of the people? And the second thing that I find problematic in the discussion – and again, I'm very glad you raised it because I think this is what we should all be talking about – I think this is a big conversation we need to have in this city. You said people are concerned because there will be improvements to the neighborhood – the neighborhood becomes more attractive. I don't know anyone who doesn't want their neighborhood to be improved, safer, to have the parks, to have the schools, to have all the things that they want for their community, but some people in this discussion actually seem to imply, why don't we leave – let's say a neighborhood doesn't have all that it should have – why don't we just leave it that way? And somehow the housing will be somewhat, you know, still affordable, but we'll accept the fact that some people get to have great services and great amenities and a higher standard of living, better quality of life, and other people don't. That goes against everything we believe in. We're supposed to help every neighborhood become stronger. And in the development process there are great opportunities to improve neighborhoods. And the Council members will tell you, whenever we talk about an opportunity to rezone, they are the first to say here are historic needs of the community that have not yet been met that we must meet through this process. So they see it as that special opening to get things done that hasn't been there before. So, no, I don't accept the notion of a neighborhood that is struggling or suffering just let's leave it that way – that's wrong. And I certainly don't accept the notion that if we do nothing everyone's affordable housing will just stay the way it is. That defies everything we understand about market dynamics. The government must act if we're going to create balance in this equation.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, please let me give – thank you – I have plenty to say, but let me give the Speaker a chance here.

**Speaker Mark-Viverito:** You know, I – I want to just echo in terms of understanding the process that we're in right now because this is definitely a very controversial issue, and it's getting a lot of attention. The process ends at the City Council in terms of this issue. And the weighing in that the Community Boards have had at this point, and the Borough Boards, is just the beginning of the process. And as we negotiate with the



administration, a lot of the concerns that are being raised are going to be part of our negotiations. And we're going to expect – and you can clearly understand that the changes – that the inclusionary zone application that has been presented initially is not going to be what we end up voting on at the City Council because there's a lot of work yet to do. Understanding the question that you raised, you know, because I know we get that all the time as Council members. One of the things that this Council has done, and also this administration, is putting in millions of dollars more towards legal representation to allow tenants to avail themselves to legal services as a way of protecting themselves and being able to stay in their affordable apartments. And the most vulnerable are seniors – that's the number one concern I get in my district office. But the other issue is that as we build, and as we invest city resources in building affordability, the affordable units are put into rent regulation. So that's another way, when we talk about leveraging the power of the city, to try to stem or try to create opportunities for members of our communities to stay in their communities. One is to protect them where they're at, but it's also putting more units in because we are losing a lot of units – that's without a doubt. But until we get the rent laws changed at the state level, – unfortunately, the Republicans are holding that up – sorry, Eric – you know, we can't – we have to work with what we've got and the reality that is before us. And these are the challenges. The rent-regulation units – we're losing a lot of them a lot of times because landlords are being unscrupulous and that's where the resources for legal services is critical – and then also creating more opportunities by building these affordable units, which will go into rent regulation.

**Mayor:** One more follow-on on that. The – so, yeah, I think it's well known that the Speaker and I both think that Albany should have gone a lot farther on rent-regulation, and we'll keep fighting for that. And I will constantly believe that there is opportunity to go farther, because I think the people of this city are demanding it. The fact is that we, also, on top of, as the Speaker noted, the resources we put in – the \$36 million dollars for legal services to support tenants – we also put in \$1-billion plus into an infrastructure fund, which is in our capital budget, to address the infrastructure needs of communities at the time of rezoning. And one of the big controversies in the past, I think, bred a lot of cynicism was promises were made about affordable housing that didn't come to pass or promises were made about infrastructure being there to match new development and then the money was never there. One of the things the Council felt very strongly about – and it's reflected in our budget – is that they needed to know that pool of resources for all the infrastructure that goes with a rezoning, for example, would be available so that when it came time to work out the specific plan we knew that money was available and could be locked in. So, it's a very different reality, and I think our communities are going to look at that and see an opportunity to make real progress through this process, and see the money actually visibly there. And that's going to be important. But if you were to say, you know, couldn't we just get Albany to do a whole different version of rent regulation, I would say we'll work to improve it, but we know that's not happening overnight, and we know it's not happening on the level that New Yorkers would want. What we have is these tools. We have doubled capital spending on affordable housing, even compared to the Bloomberg administration that put a lot in. And we are working with the real estate community to maximize the amount of new affordable housing. If we didn't do it, that affordable housing wouldn't be built. If we didn't have mandatory inclusionary, a lot of that affordable housing wouldn't be built. If we didn't have 120,000 units that were going to be preserved under our plan in place and for the long term, those units in many cases would go to market and no longer be affordable. So this is, to me – this is how we make sense of a very challenging situation.

Any other questions on this topic? Michael?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Not at all. I've been to this rodeo, Michael. You know, I was a Council member for eight years in one of the areas that was developing most intensely in the city. I had many a long night at a community board or a town hall meeting or any number of discussions where I often was the one fighting for more affordable housing, and it will never – it should never surprise you to know some people are dubious about affordable housing because they don't believe it will happen, others for other reasons – some are not the best reasons. I supported – it's well known – I supported the Atlantic Yards project because I thought it would bring an unprecedented

level of affordable housing to a heavily-gentrified area of Brooklyn. A lot of people didn't like that. So, I'm a veteran of these fights. They're never easy. That being said, we're going to spend a lot more time going out into communities and talking about why this has to happen. And I think people are receptive.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Yes. I mean, you know, I was struck immediately – I was at Saint Rita's Church in East New York a few weeks back, and then I was with Council Member Gibson at a church in the South Bronx just, I think, two weeks ago. And I think it's very important that I go out to the people and explain this vision. And I find when I talk to people about it there's a lot of receptivity. When they understand how this is a departure from the past, and a past and a status quo they were not comfortable with, I think a lot of people feel that there's something there that could work. I have to do a lot more of that, there's no question.

Alright, we're going to conclude on this. I'm sorry, media questions only. Media?

No? Okay, on this topic? Go ahead? No?

Okay, we're going to off-topic. Go.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** We added the money because we weren't satisfied. And we believed we could do better if we added additional ambulances. It will be something we work on, literally, every week, every month trying to perfect – if with the tools we have now can we get that response time to a level we feel is consistently appropriate. And there's other changes as you know – technology and other changes underway as well. So I would argue that is something we will look at, literally, every budget cycle to determine if we have the resources we need. If we ever believe we need more it will be one of highest priorities. So – so far, we're still waiting to see the full impact of what we have invested, but if we think more is necessary we will not hesitate.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I think the history of agencies working together or in some cases being merged, as with Fire and EMS, is always more complicated than any of us laymen would think. And it wasn't so long ago that there very tangible tension between FDNY and NYPD. Those have been greatly improved and addressed. It wasn't long ago there were tremendous between the FBI and the NYPD. Those have been addressed very, very effectively – and I give Commissioner Bratton and the leadership of the FBI a lot of credit. Everyone knew when FDNY and EMS were merged that it would take a while to get those two cultures and approaches fully integrated, but Commissioner Nigro is the person who actually started the process with some other folks in the FDNY – absolutely believes it's something we have to keep improving. It is also what you're seeing happening in many places around the country. So I think that's why. These things don't happen easily, but I do think it's moving well, and I think we'll continue to improve it.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I'm not familiar with those restrictions, so I'd need to see that before I can give you a good response.

Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** The Port Authority is its own world. You know, I've made very clear, from a City of New York perspective, that we have a very, very high bar when it comes to economic development subsidies. The State and the Port Authority have a different approach, so, I don't want to speak about their work. I think, in our case, we are very, very choosy in those matters. Yes?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, I think, I'm not sure I would say there's an effort at a whole constituency here. I think, on the specific question on the charter schools, I think we were very clear in the first year that I needed to do a better job of explain our vision of how all the pieces of the education agenda worked together, and that was the speech I gave at Riverside Church, last spring – the spring of 2014. And, I think, since then, we've done a lot of work with a lot of elements of the charter community. Now, the charter school movement is very, very diverse. Some elements of it – some approaches, I've been very clear, I don't agree with – the ones I think don't include, as well as they should, special ed kids, or English-language learners, or are very test-prep and standardized test-focused, etcetera.

But a number of elements of the charter community have been great partners, have been very effective – have been very inclusive. In fact, we've deepened our collaboration and trying to learn best practices that charter schools can offer to traditional public schools and vice-versa. The chancellor's been doing a lot of that. I've had meetings with a number of folks who are supporters of the charter movement and want to foster that collaboration and coordination. Deputy Mayor Buery, who actually helped to start a charter school, has been working with a lot of folks in the charter movement. So, I would say that what's happening is there's a natural common ground that's emerging with a big swath of the charter movement and we intend to keep working together to find ways that we can, you know, achieve together.

**Unknown:** Two more questions.

**Mayor:** Okay, you had one – let's go here –

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I – I'm not an expert. Obviously, I'd want to discuss that with our commissioner of health, Dr. Bassett. I'd want to discuss that with two leaders who, as you can see the other day, feel very passionately – Borough President Oddo and Senator Lanza – who have been key partners in this work. So, I don't know enough about it but we'll have those conversations and then have something to say.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, I think – I don't have a perfect analysis for you. I think that's – what's obvious is, there's, in some areas where we had an approach that worked and was well-received and well-understood – I think everyone agreed pre-k is a good example of that. I would certainly say, on the affordable housing effort, I don't know anyone who opposes the notion of an unprecedented affordable housing effort. So, there's been a lot of support for that broad idea. I think the mechanics – and let's face it, mandatory inclusionary zoning is a, you know, it takes a certain amount of technical focus, if you will, for people who will fully hear all of that. But I think there have been some areas where we put forward a vision and were able to show it was working and were able to get a lot of support. And in other areas, where, clearly, if it's not getting the kind of response we expected, I start with the assumption we're not explaining it well enough. Now, you can say, well, what about the possibility that something needs to be done differently? That's something we will consider every day, of course. But when I look at some of these – and, I think mandatory inclusionary is a great example – when I go out and explain it, when we listen to people's concerns and answer them, and we show them how their concerns are actually being met, a lot of people's minds change. And, you know, it's like everything else in the world –

people desire information. They deserve information. They deserve to have their questions answered and that's what we're going to do.

Thanks, everyone.

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