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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT OF SCHOOLS
CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Alright, hello, everybody. Well it's an important day for the city and an important day for the administration. I want to announce some important personal actions that will have an impact for years to come and want you to know how proud I am at the outset of the team that we assembled from the beginning and the incredible work that they have done.

I've told you throughout we will be providing you with personal updates as they occur and let me go over several things with you right now. First, very good news for the City of New York and the people of New York City – three tremendous public servants will continue their service to this city going into the second term.

[Inaudible] You good? Alright.

Three tremendous public servants will continue their work on behalf of the city going into the second term – our police commissioner Jimmy O'Neill, our fire commissioner Dan Nigro, and our corporation counselor Zach Carter. And I want to thank them all for their continued commitment to this city and for the great work they are doing. I want to say something about each because I really want to honor what they have achieved.

First of all, Commissioner O'Neill, I have to say Jimmy, you have done an outstanding job it's been now, I guess we are pushing on towards a year and a half now – hey guess what let's start with the most important point. We have the safest big city in America and it continues to get safer. That is testament to the leadership of Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill and the great work of the men and women of the NYPD. You will remember that Jimmy started on a very difficult day – the day of the bombing in Chelsea. He proved literally on day one that he was ready for the job and he has continued to prove it every day since.

His most foundational contribution was the work he did in building the neighborhood policing model under Commissioner Bratton. That model has flourished. It has proven to be extraordinary to our crime fighting efforts and to improving the relationship between police and community and he's also led the way in a number of key reforms including bringing body cameras to all of our officers on patrol in the coming years. Extraordinary achievement and I'm looking forward to a lot more from Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill.

I also want to quote from the Associated Press today. Looking at the crime statistics for this year and we always remind everyone the statistics represent human beings and human lives and the fact that we are on the pace to have a level of crime that we have not seen in this city in over half a century.

But the quote that jumped out to me was amazing and I, because it is the Associated Press it's being seen all over the country – it says these numbers mean a person's odds of getting killed by homicide in tightly packed, diverse New York City were about the same as they were last year in Wyoming, Montana and South Dakota. Extraordinary impact that your leadership has had Jimmy, and extraordinary credit to the men and women under your command.

Commissioner Dan Nigro has been a revelation from my point of view – a leader who has managed to continually make the FDNY stronger. He is universally respected, has governed over consistent progress in his agency. In 2016 the fewest fire death in New York City in over a century. An extraordinary achievement.

We have, this year, one of the safest years on record and we have a Fire Department that after a lot of years of challenges has made a huge step forward and increasingly has a personnel that look like all of New York City. Diversity in the Fire Department has increased consistently and the recent firefighter exam was taken by more than 46,000 people, 60 percent of whom were women and people of color. That's the most ever. So, Commissioner Nigro, just so appreciative of all you've achieved and the constant progress you've made in your agency. And so happy you'll be continuing in the role.

And Zach Carter, the list of achievements is long. I'm only going to give you some of the highlights. He resolved favorably the stop-and-frisk litigation. He put together the Central Park Five settlement, closing a wound that had been part of the life of this city for decades. He resolved the Vulcan lawsuit which helped to pave the way for the improvements in the FDNY situation. He helped to foster a settlement in the Nunez case which included a number of reforms at Department of Correction. I can say safety that whatever we're doing in this administration Zach Carter is a part of it and plays a central role. He's one of my most trusted advisors and has played a crucial role particularly in some of our most important initiatives. So, thrilled that Zach will be continuing.

So we're going to first talk about these three announcements, and I want you to hear from each of them, but I want to first turn to Chirlane because as I said to you last time we got together for a similar purpose, Chirlane and I have been in the process of teambuilding now for about 16 years. It is a meticulous process. It's something we care deeply about. It's something we do together. And this is a day we're very proud of this team. Chirlane.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Thank you Bill. I am so delighted to be here today to be able to sing the praises of these three men sitting at this table. I remember when Bill and I first met with them and talked with them about the posts that they hold. Which by the way are some of the toughest jobs in our city. And I was struck with how bold their visions were for our city. I was clear from the start they were ready to do big things, no challenge was insurmountable, and

really, wow, have they delivered. You've heard what Bill just detailed in terms of their achievements. It is pretty amazing. Over the past term they have surpassed our hopes for what anyone could possibly accomplish in their positions and we could not be happier that they will continue in their positions.

I'm proud to say that Commissioner O'Neill has been a close partner of mine over the past year and we've worked together as co-chairs of the Domestic Violence Taskforce. We've stepped up the city's work to combat human trafficking, and we've helped equip officers with the training and tools they need to deescalate situations with people who are living with mental illness. I think what we've done together says a lot about Jimmy's leadership. He doesn't shy away from the toughest, most persistent, and insidious problems, he has deep compassion for the most vulnerable among us, and he is community focused in all that he does. Because he believes so deeply in building positive relationships between police officers and people.

Commissioner Nigro has taken the Fire Department so far. He set out to make changes that were long overdue and has built a department that is even more diverse than ever. He has recruited women and people of color to join the department and he has elevated women and people of color to leadership positions. And he has truly prioritized the well-being of his firefighters, making sure they have the tools to cope with the trauma and the stress that come with being New York's Bravest.

Dan is also the best kind of team player, and I'll never forget the role that he played in helping us to find enough space to launch Pre-K For All. That is a testament to the fact that you can't make big change unless you have everyone at the table.

And Corporation Counsel Carter is another guy that you always want at the table. Of course he has a brilliant legal mind, but government lawyers have this reputation for being the people who say no to everything, and that is not Zach. He believes so strongly in our vision of a city for all and he tackles every challenge with incredible passion. Let me tell you, he's quiet but when he's fired up, he is fired up. And while he's thoughtful and measured in the way he does business, that fire really runs through everything that he does.

So we are so fortunate to have these accomplished leaders continue to serve into Bill's next term. And I'm happy to have this opportunity to publically thank them for their service and leadership.

Mayor: Thank you Chirlane. And now that we've showered them with praise let's hear from them. First, Police Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill.

Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill: I don't have anything left to say.

[Laughter]

Yes I do. Thank you Mr. Mayor, thank you Chirlane. Thank you for those words. I'm honored to continue serving as the Police Commissioner of truly the finest Police Department in the nation, if not the world. And I've had the good fortune of doing this job now for 15 months, not a year and a half yet, but I've been a cop for almost 35 years and I think I said this the day that they

announced – Mr. Mayor, that you announced that I was going to be the Police Commissioner never in my wildest imagination did I think that I would have this job. But, I think the beauty of it is what I get to see every day, the hard work of the men and women in this police department, what they manage to accomplish, what we've managed to accomplish over the last year and a half, the last – actually the last four years working for Commissioner Bratton. We've made some great strides.

If you look at neighborhood policing, a lot of people were skeptical about that, they just thought it was a reincarnation of community policing but it certainly isn't. We have built real relationships and continue to improve on them. Our police officers feel like they have ownership of their sectors now. These sector level meetings are a great success. And if you look at crime, homicides, shootings, overall crime continue to go down. 2016 was a very good year for us but here we are in the last days of 2017 and once again homicide, shootings, and overall crime are down. I'm not going to give you numbers, I think most of you know the numbers. We are in a good place and as the Mayor said we haven't seen the levels of crime this low since the 1950s.

So, it's an honor – it's truly an honor to be retained as the Police Commissioner. I love this job. I love what I do. I look forward to spending the next four years leading this great police department. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much. And now, Commissioner Dan Nigro.

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro: Well, thank you. First I would say 2014 I was extremely grateful that the Mayor gave me the opportunity to lead the FDNY, to lead an agency that I've loved for more than 48 years now.

I joined the department in 1969. I remain grateful today that I have the opportunity to lead the Bravest. When I say that, they're not just called the Bravest, they truly are – the men and women of the department are the Bravest and it's a privilege to be the Fire Commissioner of the City of New York.

You've heard about some of things that I think our team has accomplished. We've brought fire deaths to historic lows. Last year was the lowest in 100 years – historic lows, we're at.

We've brought EMS response time down. We've made the city safer, better, and fairer. And I say that we are more diverse than ever before but we're not where we should be. And the opportunity to stay on to get us where we should be is very important to me that we continue down this road.

And I'm very proud to be the leader of this department.

You've heard a little about teamwork. I think that the Mayor and Chirlane have a great team here and I'm proud to be a part of it. I think in all my years in the department, the Fire Department and Police Department have never worked better together. And it's a tribute to Commissioner O'Neill and his team and my team working together to keep the city safe.

I think the people of this city can be confident that we are doing everything possible together to make this city safe. So, thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. And now the wise and measured Corporation Counsel Zach Carter.

Corporation Counsel Zachary Carter: I don't know where the quiet part came from. I've never been quiet –

Mayor: Quiet storm.

Corporation Counsel Carter: Quiet Storm, right. It has really been privilege to serve as Corporation Counsel over these past four years. I have the good fortune to lead a group of really extraordinary lawyers who with passion and intelligence and most importantly imagination, help to solve the City's legal problems both defending the City in litigation and doing it brilliantly, trying more cases over the past few years than ever before and maintaining a very strong record of success. But also when cases are brought against some of our agencies that actually signal problems that are in need of correction, they know when to take off their litigation hats and put on their problem-solving hats and help the City solve these problems.

And I have also had the good fortune of working with commissioners like Dan and Jimmy who really embrace the fairness and equity agenda of this administration so that when we were solving the problem of stop-and-frisk, we had a partner – a willing partner in the police department because first Jimmy's predecessor but now Jimmy himself is someone who at his core believes that respectful policing is effective policing.

And so that has resulted in a very different approach to policing than engaging with communities in a very different way than it has been before. And in Dan, a partner who when we resolved the Vulcan litigation embraced the notion that diversity was something that had to be at hand so we couldn't wait for it to evolve. It had to be something that had to be done proactively.

So he assembled a first-rate team of people that are assisting in that effort. It's been a pleasure to be involved in that also.

And I hesitate to say too many good things about the Mayor. I don't want to sound like Mike Pence –

[Laughter]

Never. I have never let that happen. I have too much personal pride.

Mayor: Oh my God.

Corporation Counsel Carter: But I will say though, all kidding aside, that it is a really unique opportunity to assist the Mayor in implementing a fairness and equity agenda that cuts through

all the things that he's sought to accomplish. It presents, frankly, a special challenge for the Law Department because some of the things that we're attempting to do are unprecedented.

Sometimes the Law Department has to be the Ministry of Magic in coming up with some fairly exotic legal theories that support what we're trying to accomplish whether it's increasing affordable housing in the most expensive housing in the most expensive housing market in the city or providing education for a whole new generation of pre-kindergarten children.

So, that's been – it's been a pleasure to do that. And also, as I've thought about the signature achievements of the administration, they both have the twin attributes of being both audacious [inaudible] heroic effort, achievable. And when everything you do is audacious and achievable you're always testing the limits of the possible and that's exciting.

So, glad to be a part of that.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Zach. And I want to give a special congratulations to you and your team for the great victory in the court of appeals that now will allow the Water Board to move forward and provide rebates to 664,000 homeowners in this city that they are very happy to receive. And it's a matter of fairness and the Law Department won that case with their typical professionalism. So, thank you to you and your team.

The last announcement, obviously is a bittersweet one. It's not news you've seen in the last 24 hours but I want to just speak from heart here about Carmen Fariña.

I have so many stories I could tell and so many warm moments and so many special moments along the way going back now 16, 17 years to when we first met and the work we did locally in District 15 in Brooklyn. And from the very beginning, Carmen was someone that I realized was an extraordinary talent but also extraordinarily wise.

And I learned a lot from her from the very beginning. I sought her counsel in all the years in between. And then the day came when the people chose me as their mayor and we had to decide on a Schools Chancellor, incredibly important difficult role. And I reached out to Carmen Fariña.

And her first impulse was to offer me advice and I tried to steer the conversation to the topic of Carmen Fariña with no success initially. But the more we talked the more I tried that subterfuge of describing the ideal candidate and then saying, "Oh, by the way, that describes you."

Slowly but surely she warmed to the idea of coming out of retirement and getting back on the playing field. One thing I did not know about Carmen at the time was that she would take on the role with the kind of energy you can only call superhuman.

When someone's coming out of retirement to take on one of the toughest jobs in the country, you wouldn't blame them if they just worked like anyone else. She proceeded to do something miraculous. I constantly called her or emailed her while she was in the middle of a school visit.

I have no idea how she possibly managed to visit so many schools so often while answering emails from parents all over the city, while attending strategy meetings here and at the Tweed building – just unbelievable energy and focus which harkens back to one of my favorite quotes of the entire administration. The day – it was a very special day for Carmen and me both because we did the announcement at M. S. 51, in the school district that both of served those years earlier at the middle school that both Chiara and Dante went to, on the gym floor where Chiara and Dante used to play basketball.

And it was a very personal moment for me. And I was caught up in that but the single most memorable moment that day was when Carmen flashed a big, bright smile and said that part of why she was going to take on this job even though she had reached the age of 70, that she was coming back – she had said, “Today, 70 is the new 40.” And she just beamed this big smile.

And I said you know I’ve heard a lot of those kinds of slogans but I never heard 70 is the new 40 before. I think we’re about to start something. Well, she proved it.

I think your version of 70-is-the-new-40 actually sometimes looked like the new 30 or the new 20 because there was so much energy. But more than just the extraordinary wisdom and energy and leadership is what she achieved.

And I can tell you something – I heard this from teachers all over the school system, I heard it from parents – people felt they were in good hands. They felt that there was an educator at the helm who really knew her stuff and really felt their lives, and it made all the difference.

She will go down in history not only as one of the longest serving chancellors in the history of New York City but as one of the most effective chancellors we’ve ever had.

And the list of achievements is extraordinary.

Highest graduation rate in the history of New York City, highest college enrollment rate for our young people, highest college readiness rate, four years of improved test scores, obviously a crucial role in the launching of pre-k which has been profoundly important to the future of this city, and then the launching of 3-K. I remember being in that classroom with Carmen in the first hours of 3-K starting in this city and seeing the shape of the future.

And one of the reasons why it was possible was her confidence in her team in the ability to do great things. She never shirked. She never shirked when we talked about creating the Equity and Excellence agenda.

She never shirked when I said, “Carmen we have to figure out a pathway to getting all our kids reading on grade level by third grade.” I remember that conversation like it was yesterday. I think some of it was right in this room.

She soberly told me how unprecedented it would be in this city to achieve that level. And then she proceeded to tell me exactly what it would take and said, “We’re going to take on the mission.”

That is the epitome of who Carmen Fariña is. So many children benefitted. So many educators benefitted from her leadership.

And I also want to say at a time when this nation was roiled by division, our Chancellor stood up as a great example of what's best New York City.

She, with her powerful voice, her presence reassured parents and kids all over the city including our immigrant children who really feared what was coming next in their lives but because of Carmen's leadership, they knew there was a place where they were safe and respected and protected, and that was in our schools. And that made a big, big difference at a very sensitive moment for this city.

I could go on and on but suffice to say, I asked a lot of Carmen Fariña and she gave me even more. And it's been a fantastic four years I couldn't be happier with what we've achieved together.

And I am now formally announcing the second retirement of Carmen Fariña. And she can – and I can say this from the bottom of my heart – leave public service with her head held very, very high.

My pleasure now to turn to, one more time, Chirlane because I know she has some strong feelings she wants to share about this great experience we've had together.

First Lady McCray: Yes, absolutely. There's no way to feel but strongly about someone like Carmen Fariña. What a joy it's been to work beside this powerhouse of a woman. She's a tremendous inspiration to me and I mean that both in terms of her incomparable record of service and on a personal level too. Carmen is a storyteller with a purpose bringing in energy and a certain gravitas to everything she does. To me, Carmen is the embodiment of the joy of learning.

Throughout everything she has done – and she has done a lot over a long career – she delights in learning along the way. A few months ago – and I remember this so clearly. I did not know she was going to join us that day. She helped us launch the NYC Unity Project, our unprecedented commitment to making sure LGBTQ youth are safe, supported, and healthy.

And when it was her turn to speak, she talked about how much grandchildren had talked to her about LGBTQ concerns. And that was quite a moment. The audience warmed to her immediately and felt like she was there with them in supporting them.

And Carmen took what she learned and has helped make New York City schools some of the most welcoming and affirming places for our LGBTQ young people.

There are stories like that throughout her career and she's made the health and wellbeing of all our children and families a priority. And all of us in the administration have benefitted from learning from her and along with her.

We are certainly sad to see her retire but I am so proud of what she's done for all New Yorkers. You know the work countless tends to be overused in language but I really believe that Carmen has touched countless lives.

She knows that education is more than numbers and letters and that it's about love. She has led with love during her entire career. So, thank you, Chancellor Carmen Fariña. Gracias. We really love you.

Mayor: Beautiful. Thank you.

And with that the woman of the hour, Chancellor Carmen Farina.

Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña: Well, it's really my pleasure to be here today. And thank you not only to both of you but the Commissioners with whom I've enjoyed a special relationship. Zack you and I had a particularly good run on issues that really matter to both of us.

But I want to be clear that to me – probably if I have a regret it's that I said no so many times to the Mayor, when I should've started with yes right from the very beginning. Because there is nothing that is more satisfying than being to be a public servant and really mean it that you're a servant of the people. And all the statistics and we can have a lot more than we heard here today. We have managed to break ground on so many things. The thing I am proudest of is the fact that we have bought back dignity to teaching, joy to learning, and trust to the system. When I come up with an idea I have at least 150 people who can say to me but Carmen we will do this – as strange as it may sound, because we trust you to support us. And I want to be clear that to me trust is a word that we don't use often enough when it comes to public service and we need to use it more and we need to use in a very meaningful way so that people understand if you're going to do the audacious moves that there is a support for it. And no one has been luckier than I to have a support team beyond believableness. And to me it is how you chose the people and if you go back to the very beginning people did not believe that we would come and start shifting structures as quickly as we did. So if I have to think about what I am really proud of we put in a system that worked on collaboration not competition from day one. Bringing on board 50 percent or more – it's actually closer to 60 percent, new superintendents had a mandate to support principles, support teachers, but also build more collaboration in their communities. There were school districts in this City of New York. There were schools right across the street from each other and they did not even know each other's names. Where people had access to materials that they could share, but there was no way to do it.

So to me having the most wonderful superintendents in this country, many of which are being visited by everyone to see how you create that sense of community in your districts. I am particularly proud of. And I think that that's what allowed us to make a lot more of the changes going forth. I think also that it's really important not to be in public service – and that what I admire about everyone at this table – for a personal ego or a personal ambition. You're really in this job to make life better for whatever constituents you serve. And in order to do that you have to do it in a very meaningful strategic way. And when people say, oh with all due respect, they love you. I never joined in this job to be loved or to win a popularity contest. I came in to this job

to be respected and to be understood so that people will then be motivated to do what I think is important for the children of the City of New York.

One of the things I am proudest of is our outreach to community in general. Our family engagement has never been higher. We are now at a point I attend, I don't know at least 10 meetings a month just for community members. I have probably visited with every one on one City Council member – go to Albany. You can't get people to believe in your vision, if you're not talking to them one-on-one. In the amount of time you spend on individual conversations, builds that community and builds that trust and builds the fact that it's not about you, but it's about them. And I think that's very important.

As the Mayor righteously said I did retire, unretired once. I don't see retirement is going into the sunset and living in Florida or any other fancy things. I fully intend to stay involved. I have my little projects already picked out. There are things I started that I want to see completed. And where I am very fortunate, is like once again I have the most unbelievable team that you could imagine that has been carefully selected with different areas of expertise. I said goodbye, I said something to my leadership team this morning and I was able to purposely, very purposefully to say something very special about each of them that I expect them to even ramp up three times up because we'll need them more than ever. When I took this job the Mayor asked me, would I mind taking as a partner someone that he very much respected. And not only did I mind, I already had already kind of coopt her already and said to her Selena Ramirez will you be at the time my Chief of Staff. Unfortunately she can't be here today.

But I want to say publically that the she went from Chief of Staff to friend of everything to head of operations in a way that very few people can accomplish. And for me as long as Selena is part of my transition team, things will be wonderful. And things will continue to grow. And I want to say an eternal thank you for the effort she and her team had put on and going forth. So to the children I sent a letter out to the staff today you know. I sent it out with a poem called "To be of use" and to me there is no greater legacy to leave a job where you thought you could be of use. Actually and strategically plan how you were going to be of use and me being able to evaluate that were of use. So for me it's all been great, and I am grateful for this opportunity.

Mayor: Well done, well said. Alright we are going first take questions about today's announcements and then we'll reset and do off topic after. Go ahead.

Question: I have a question for the Chancellor and for the Mayor. So first you have served at every level of this big sort of crazy system. You maybe know it better than most people alive. What surprised you as Chancellor, even as opposed to Deputy Chancellor about what was hard to change about such a massive system? Was it turning around struggling schools? Which is obviously such a massive challenge, I mean where was it hardest – where were you surprised by it where it was hard to actually move the needle in a system of a million kids?

Chancellor Fariña: I wasn't surprised at what was hard, but why people hadn't figured it out before. To me if you're going to run a system, any system with mandates which has generally been what's happened. People even if they want to do what you want them to do are going to resist you just because you told them to do it. I found that the amount of time that had to be spent

on getting people on board before you made decisions was crucial. And I had people who said why you are spending time on that. Just do it. And the reality is that's not the way to get it done. I think also what surprised me is how many people say no before they say maybe. One of the things I have instructed my staff is even if you think you're going to say no ultimately say maybe so it gives you time to reflect on it. And then a lot of the good ideas don't have to come from 52 Chambers Street. They can come from the community. So, and the other challenge which to me was a shock was how people would say to me, how many schools you – and many of you in this room have said this to me. Why do you visit so many schools per week? The best information about what work and doesn't work is when you visit a school. Teachers tell you something that you're not going to read in the newspaper, that you're not going to see in a survey. Principles when you go into their office and you take notes and you listen intently. I visited I don't know, probably 400 schools in the last – and people say to me you know Carmen this rule that you guys made up doesn't work or this. And to me, this being an attentive listener and following up. I got an email today from a teacher that I visited three years ago. She had just started a band, he actually, in Ridgewood in Queens. And I was there on a Saturday morning to see this first Saturday academy program and with all due respect the kids were horrible. It was the first day of the band, it was horrible. These were all newly arrived immigrants. None of them had been in this program. But he was trying to figure out a way to unite the kids who are coming from different countries. And he felt starting a band on a Saturday when they were coming for academics would be a good thing. And he emailed me today, and he said your encouragement made me want to prove that this was going to be the best band in New – and invited me now to his holiday concert. When [inaudible] it is much better. So this is why you do this job. And I am grateful that Chirlane got it, that I am a story teller. Because this is about stories, it is not all about all the statistics.

But I think the challenge to me was why aren't people – why don't they listen more to the communities and get the information from them rather than just look at piles and piles of research which may not be as informative. So that's one of them, and I think the other one and this is something that I still want to stay focused on in my little pet project. Why not look at collaboration as better than competition across the board. One of the things I am proud of that doesn't really come up a lot in statistics is our work on co-located high schools. We are now working with 25 co-located high schools that serve about 145 schools. This notion that if you are the best at something, in the same building with someone else who is struggling with something else, to me is a foolish endeavor. If you have five high schools on a campus and they can share AP courses, after school programs, teachers in shortage areas – by the way all of these schools doing this now and convincing the principals and this is not a small thing to go on a single bell schedule. I go to the meetings, and I say clearly the first thing, listen guys no conversation if you can't commit to a single bell schedule. And then we work on from there. This to be to me once we started doing this work and how easy it was once we got it going, and the benefits that we're getting for triple the number of AP courses in our co-located campuses. Business leaders coming on board, so these are the things that I am really proud of, but these are not you know the fancy stories, but in terms of producing results for kids and their families, unbelievable. And to me collaboration is key to everything we do.

Question: [Inaudible] going to be the next Chancellor –

Mayor: Good.

Chancellor Fariña: Good.

Question – don't know yet but obviously fit a profile pretty precisely that you wanted. So, describe who the person to – what kind of person might take on that work next? Whether you're going to keep the commitment that person does not have a [inaudible] State and they should be an educator –

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Who is that person?

Mayor: Sure, okay. I'm going to set the ground rule. Perfectly fair question but let me set the ground rule for everyone. It's the same ground rules as everything with personnel. We will announce things when we're ready to announce them.

There is already a nationwide search going on. It has been underway for a while now. We're just making it public at this point. And again this is something Carmen and I – this whole process from day one – we have a special bond. We've talked about timelines for quite a while. This is something we've understood together how we would do, when we would do it.

But I'll say for sure, the next chancellor will be an educator and I would say the four years of Carmen Fariña are the perfect object lesson of why a chancellor should be an educator. She has been able to achieve things that non-educator chancellors simply could not achieve.

Question: Just a follow up on that. Can you give us a sense, I guess, of what kind of values or policy approaches – or are looking for someone who sort of shares your progressive vision and can translate that into education policy? What does the next person have to bring to the table?

Mayor: The difference this time is that the vision for the school system is already on paper for everyone to see. It's the Equity and Excellence vision. It is absolutely a progressive and inclusive vision. It's also very rigorous. There's numerical goals all through it that have to be met.

And I expect the next chancellor to continue the progress on graduation rates, college readiness, test scores, etcetera.

So, you know, unlike last time we have a very clear blueprint and it's publically available and certainly as I talk to candidates, I'm going to want to see evidence of their alignment to it and of success in achieving similar things.

Question: You had told us previously to assume continuity unless told otherwise. Were people not assuming continuity for some of these other positions? Is that why you're coming out an saying that –

Mayor: It's literally – we will over time tell you what's going to happen with each and every position and we'll do it at time and place of our own choosing. But the broad rule should be to assume continuity because as you seen even where we've made changes, we brought people from other parts of the administration into new roles. I think you're going to see a lot of the same folks continue in their role, you're going to some people move into other roles.

Of course, like any other transition after four years, you will see some new faces – brand new faces but it will all happen in due time. So, my point is, unless you hear otherwise, assume continuity and we'll tell you each thing explicitly when the time is right.

Question: Question for Chancellor Fariña and Commissioner Nigro. Chancellor Fariña, you touched on what some of your projects are going to be – your pet projects going forward [inaudible] but can you tell us anything more and how you plan to sort of work on those pet projects going forward?

Chancellor Fariña: I think this is something that we will discuss – I will discuss with the Mayor but like I said, last time I retired, I worked part-time all the years after. So, I was never really truly, truly retired –

Mayor: Your idea of part-time –

Chancellor Fariña: Yeah –

[Laughter]

But to me if you have something to offer that you think is worth giving, why not? And to me it's the issues that when I retired the first time, for me it was middle schools. And I stayed in working with middle schools the year after I retired to really see what I could do to help them. It's one of the reasons I came back. The first initiative I took on was middle school. I saw that as a continuity.

So, like I said, right now the co-located high school campus work really entralls me in how fast we can move things by just really staying focused on the work. And as I've discussed with the First Lady, there's a section of the city that I feel maybe my work with them would really help.

But I think those are going to be negotiations. And I am very grateful to the Mayor to kind of say, you know, I can work on this with him, together. So, you know, we don't ever really truly retire. We just kind of gradually go into the sunset and that's okay by me too.

Mayor: Yeah, okay. I'm going to move this way across the room just so everyone knows. Go ahead.

Question: Commissioner Nigro, just a question to you about looking forward for the FDNY. We know that there was a large number, as there are often, EMTs and paramedics who were promoted to become firefighters. But I'm wondering if going forward if you're thinking about what the career path needs to be within the emergency medical side of the Fire Department and

whether are enough career options there for folks to increase pay, to increase opportunity so that the promotion doesn't move them out of doing the medical response and focusing on being a firefighter.

Commissioner Nigro: Well, certainly it doesn't move them out of it because firefighters respond to over 800 medical calls a day themselves. So the experience that they get as EMTs helps immeasurably in their role as firefighters. But also they have a career path to become paramedics and we're looking at it all the time to see what is the best for the future of the department. We've made changes and I'm sure over the next four years we will enhance these opportunities for everyone. There is a great challenge here in the city – the increasing workload on our medical resources, calls continue to go up, how to best meet the needs of the people of the city. So, we look at it each and every day.

Question: For the Police Commissioner, the Mayor mentioned you staying into the next term. How long do you plan on stay as Police Commissioner?

Commissioner O'Neill: See, when I gave my comments – I don't know – I have to recall what I said. I said four years. So, David, I tell you this all the time. This is a great job. I get to see what the cops do every day. Just yesterday cops from the 19th Precinct were up at the Ronald McDonald House. The cops from the 8-3 were out in P. S. 106 out in Bushwick giving out presents to the kids. We went out to the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce last night with Lloyd Williams and the precinct commanders who are up there.

So, just – I have the opportunity everyday to truly see what's helping move the city forward. So, my plans are to stay here.

Question: Can you give us a better sense of the timeline? When should we expect Chancellor Fariña to formally step down? When do you hope to have a new chancellor in place? Do you have any thoughts about what might happen in the interim?

Mayor: Sure. Chancellor will be staying on the job for the next few months. As I said, a nationwide search is already underway. Goal, of course, is to have the next chancellor in place by the time this chancellor leaves. So, you know, we've got more work to do but I feel good about the effort that's underway already.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you said the search had been going on for a while already. Can you explain when that started and how that process got kicked off? And also, who's doing it? Is there anything special about this search since it's such a big position?

Mayor: Again, our personnel process is something we hold close to the vest on purpose because it's personnel, it's not right to air publically the discussions we're having with people, obviously, many of whom have current jobs.

It's a trusted group of folks inside this team. We are – have been – I would say the simple summation is we've been working on this for several months already. The Chancellor has been

providing very helpful input and will continue to and obviously is going to play a key role in the transition.

And as she said, her – again, her version of helping with the transition I suspect will long continue after she hands in her official ID card. And we will welcome that.

But it's been underway for the last few months, and again, we'll have more to say as soon as it crystallizes.

Question: Mr. Mayor, maybe just a little bit more about who is helping find candidates?

Mayor: No. No, again, it's not appropriate. I mean it's a perfectly fair question. I'm just saying my vision of how we go about the personnel process is we don't – we don't point people to certain individuals. It's very important to do these things discreetly for a lot of reasons. But a core group of trusted people in this team are running that search process –

Question: [Inaudible] outside the city –

Mayor: No, all inside our team. Okay, coming around, yes?

Question: You spoke about how you're looking for someone to execute the Equity and Excellence vision and hit all of those metrics. Are you looking for any new ideas in the next four years?

Mayor: Look, I always welcome new ideas but I'm really – first of all I'm thrilled with what Carmen's achieved and I want to just deepen what she's already started. And second, Equity and Excellence is a very aggressive vision. I mean you are truly expert in the field. Getting all kids reading on grade level by third grade – a massive, massive undertaking. It's unprecedented.

It may be the single toughest goal of them all. So, I'm very satisfied that we have the right blueprint. I would welcome additional good ideas but am I looking for something we don't have? No. I think we have the right blueprint right now.

Question: The fate of the Renewal program – where does it go from here with you no longer [inaudible]?

Mayor: It's – again, there's this thing called mayoral control of education and it's very pertinent to this discussion. Every policy initiative has been subject to a lot of discussion beforehand often again right in this room with the Chancellor and her team and a core group of us here at City Hall.

I am very humbled by what I know and don't know about education but I always like to list my credentials that I went to public school, Chirlane went to public school, both our kids went to New York City public schools the whole way through. I was a school board member in Brooklyn when we had school board. I was on the Education Committee of the City Council for eight years. As public advocate it was one of my number one areas of interest as well.

That has at least given me some insight. And when we made these decisions, it was after a whole lot of deliberation here week by week. We typically met every week sometimes multiple times in a week. When we were building up things like the pre-k initiative or the Equity and Excellence vision, we met constantly to get it right.

I say all that to say the Renewal School effort was something that was very carefully planned, we were very clear about the three year timeline. We also sat in this room sometimes and said here's a school that we already know right now we're not waiting three years on and you saw some closures and you saw some mergers earlier.

But it's the right vision and I feel very good about the schools, the Rise Schools that are moving forward right away. I feel very good that of the 46 schools that are going to have an additional year that the vast majority of them are going to do very well.

So, I'm committed to the vision long term.

Chancellor Fariña: Can I just add something?

Mayor: Please.

Chancellor Fariña: I want to emphasize once again that one person is a leader but all the other people do the work. To be very honest with you, the role of chancellor, other than time commitment, was actually easier than some of the other jobs I've had like superintendent and principal because at this level you have built teams that are committed to your ideals and that actually execute the work.

And I will tell you that with the Renewal work we've done, I'm extremely proud of it. You can argue about, you know, is two points big enough or is five points better but the reality is that in those schools teachers are better prepared to teach, principals are better prepared to lead, and those kids have an advantage and an edge that they did not have a year or two ago.

So, that is not going to go away. It may take a little tweaking in here to do other things but the team that's working on this is top notch and will continue to do the work that needs to be done.

Mayor: Amen.

Question: Thank you. What do you see, Mr. Mayor, as some of the toughest challenges ahead for the next chancellor and would that include, in your mind, potential budget cuts considering there are long term possible ramifications [inaudible] tax bill?

Mayor: I think there's no question we're deeply concerned about the impact of the tax bill and we've been projecting that for a long time. It stands to reason if you have a huge reduction in federal revenue that that will come out of major, major initiatives that matter to New York City in education, mass transit, infrastructure, you name it.

But you know each one of those will be their own fight to be fair. There will be a fight over each federal budget and some of that is not decided by 51 votes. Some of that is a 60 vote requirement and there will be times when we can work with Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand and our House delegation to fight back some of the worst cuts.

So, although we are bracing ourselves, nothing has been decided yet and it's a fight that I think we have a good chance of having a big impact on.

I think the challenge for the next chancellor will be to continue progress at this clip and then try and build upon it. I think that's a tall order because I think Carmen's been extraordinarily successful.

But it can be done and we're going to find someone who can do it. And then if we do deal with budgetary challenges we're going to have to make tough decisions. I have already said that education is my number one priority so I'm going to do a lot to try and protect the progress.

But yes that certainly might be something a new chancellor has to deal with, making some tough choices.

Question: At the top of the Chancellor's comments, she mentioned saying no to you. I was wondering, can you give some examples of what you're talking about when you said that and –

Mayor: When I asked her to Chancellor.

Chancellor Fariña: That's the only time.

Question: Has it happened since that?

Mayor: We are very collaborative. I have to tell you I'm a firm, firm believer of mayoral control of education but what it meant in our case because we also had, as I said, 16 years of warm up working together. And everyone knows Carmen was a key advisor to me when I was running for mayor, the whole nine yards.

We reached consensus. I really can't remember a moment where we got to [inaudible]. We reached consensus. And sometimes I would say this really matters to me, how do we get it done and sometimes she would say, you need to realize there's a challenge here or a problem that we have to address and we'd work it through.

But the only time I remember a firm no was when I first ventured the idea of her being chancellor. I have a habit in those situations of not taking no for an answer the first time and coming back and I think my logic was overwhelming in the end that she was the best person for the job.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you made a comment about Chancellor Fariña, complimenting her on visiting community school district throughout the city, about 30 so far. She's almost up to you in town hall meetings –

Mayor: Yes, she's trying to beat me. I'm troubled.

Question: That being said, I'd like to ask the Chancellor and you if there's any plan to involve any of the community school councils in making recommendations for a selection of the next chancellor?

Mayor: We want them involved in a lot of things particularly the things that affect their communities and I think this chancellor's done a great job deepening the communication with community education councils. And I have a special affection for them as a former community school board member.

But the selection process is – personnel decisions are not made through crowd sourcing. We respect everyone's opinion but the way to choose good personnel is to do it very discreetly, quietly seek input, and hold the process close.

Look around you, I mean, Chirlane and I, again, we pride ourselves on our batting average. Look at the people around you. Look at the success they've achieved. Every single one of them went through the same process. When we announced Commissioner O'Neill, it was a very discreet process, as you'll remember, that got us to the right person. So, we're going to continue that.

Question: [*Reporter speaks in Spanish*]

Chancellor Fariña: [*Chancellor speaks in Spanish*]

The question he asked about the greatest joy, and to me I think one of the greatest joys in this job is to be able to talk directly to teachers. I still think of myself first and foremost as a teacher and convince them that the work in the classroom is the most important thing they do because public education is where we level the playing field. We have, in a city like New York, immigrants who come. And if this is not the place where they succeed, they will not succeed in life.

So, that is one of my greatest joys.

Farina: We have, in a city like New York, immigrants who come in, and if this is not the place where they succeed, they will not succeed in life. So that is one of my greatest joys.

Question: In retaining the services of Commissioner O'Neill, has anything changed in terms of his compensation, retirement benefits, other benefits or the other circumstances –

Mayor: You mean the \$1 million signing bonus?

[Laughter]

Sorry, Jimmy. Just joking.

Commissioner O'Neill: Sadly, I know.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Everything is the same.

Question: This is for Chancellor Farina – en Espanol.

[Asks question in Spanish]

[Chancellor Farina answers in Spanish]

Chancellor Farina: She asked what is the advice I would give to anyone coming onto this job. And it is to listen more, talk less, and get really good advice from the people you're going to work with – the teachers. You know, one of the things I'm also proud of is that, you know, we have worked with our unions. Not always agreeing, but understanding that they are major factors in decision making and certainly working with teachers. So listening to everybody and hearing from their point of view – I mean, I've been meeting with parents one-on-one – so when you make a decision it's an informed decision.

Mayor: Yes – wait, did you go before?

Question: I did.

Mayor: Okay, let's get someone that hasn't gone yet first.

Question: Commissioner O'Neill, since the Right to Know Act is already passed, and while the [inaudible] will you change part of the strategy of enforcement, and what's your plan?

Commissioner O'Neill: Enforcement as to what?

Question: The Right to Know Act passed to limit the stop and frisk enforcement [inaudible]?

Mayor: Let me just start before passing to the commissioner. I want to just affirm the Right to Know Act does not change the way we police. It stipulates very specific items in how we treat identification and search. It does not change our overall policing strategy one bit, but take it away commissioner.

Commissioner O'Neill: You just have to take a look at the history of stop-and-question. In 2011, I think there were about 600,000 stops. In '16, there are about 13,000. This year, I think we're slated for a little over 10,000. But it's an important tool that we use. It's a constitutionally tested tool that New York City police officers continue to use, but obviously in a very different way. You know, we're looking to keep people safe and get guns off the street, and that's how we use it.

Mayor: Way back?

Question: Question for the First Lady – earlier this fall, mental health advocates took the steps of City Hall and criticized the way the NYPD handled folks who have mental illness. First, what advice would you give to the police commissioner in his next four years for handling folks who are in distress? And second, how would rate the way the NYPD has changed if it has changed?

First Lady McCray: I think the NYPD is doing a fantastic job with working with folks who have mental illness. Most people don't realize how many calls a day they receive – more than 200 most days – regarding what they call emotionally disturbed persons. And we've trained more than 5,000 – I'm going to guess roughly 5,000 – officers in crisis intervention training and plan to do much more, which I think has helped tremendously in the way they are able to help people to get to the services that they need. Do you want to add to that?

Commissioner O'Neill: I never try to correct the First Lady, but we're up to 7,000.

First Lady McCray: Alright!

Mayor: That's a good correction.

First Lady McCray: Even better.

[Laughter]

Mayor: We'll take it.

Commissioner O'Neill: Thank you.

Question: Follow up, what's changed since Ms. Danner was killed?

Commissioner O'Neill: I think putting people through crisis intervention training, crisis outreach, and support unit, and then we have some radio protocols that have changed, too – that if there's a location where there has been a radio run for an emotionally disturbed person, the cops that are responding to that know that going in. Internally, we are looking at – we took a broad overview of our emotionally disturbed person response procedures, and we should be coming out with some changes too, and that's working in conjunction with the Mayor and the First Lady.

Mayor: Let me just add to it – I remember in the infancy of the Thrive initiative, we were in my office one day, and Chirlane and I talked to Bill Bratton about it. And you know that Bill Bratton is a very composed guy. He just lit up at the notion – he was so positive, so encouraging, at the notion of the city focusing coherently and consistently on mental health challenges. And he turned to Chirlane and said that is was very important to the NYPD that her initiative succeed because what we all know to be true – for too long our officers were asked to be mental health professionals without training and without the support from the rest of the healthcare system that would reduce the number of times that they would have to deal with such challenges. So I think the collaboration between Chirlane and the Thrive team and the NYPD has been fantastic. I think there's a tremendous sense of common cause.

If the advocates say we need to go farther, I agree with them. We are still in the ramp up phase of everything about Thrive, and certainly of the training of officers. And I think it will get better with every passing year, but one thing that's profoundly different – I want to give Commissioner O'Neill credit and Commissioner Bratton and certainly Chirlane credit – everyone is talking about it now. This is one of the most powerful things about the Thrive initiative. Because of Chirlane's work everyone is talking about it, and it's now central to the agenda to figure out how do we do things strategically to address folks with mental health challenges, and how do we stop just accepting the world that we received because the world we received was our officers were put in a horrible situation, our correction officers and correction facilities were asked to be mental health facilities, too. I mean, everything was backwards. Now, slowly but surely we're putting the horse before the cart.

Yes?

Question: For you Mr. Mayor, but first for the chancellor – Chancellor, do you have any regrets or frustrations about the ways in which you didn't aggressively take on the school desegregation issue? Is that something you would – looking back – you wish you'd taken on a little bit more aggressively?

Chancellor Farina: No, I think we've done some really good work. There's always more than can be done on any initiative, but I'm going back to what I said before – you could mandate some things, but having a lot more conversations with people, which is what we've been doing, I meet with the CEC presidents once a month on a Saturday purposefully, so we can have interesting conversations. And I think convincing people to come to the table to want to do the right thing for the right reasons is a lot more important, and I think that's what we've been doing. I certainly feel that our new diversity committee that we just put in place – they just met, I think, last week – has gotten some great suggestions because this is not just us coming with ideas, but what does the community think? I was at a townhall meeting this week when I said to the CEC, you guys tell me what are some of the things you want to do.

So I'm proud that we did it in a way, and are doing it in a way, that builds community input and that people tell us what they want more of, and again diversity covers a lot of things. One of the things I'm particularly proud of is the work we've done with special needs and English language learners in the city of New York. And having been one of those two myself, this is something that was ignored for too long, and diversity also means does every school take their fair share or provide services for these kids. So you can always do things better. I agree with the Mayor that in our Equity and Excellence the next chancellor should be thinking about going deeper and deeper, but I think we're on the right path.

Mayor: We'll do a few more – oh, you have a follow up? Go ahead?

Question: I was going to ask you to go back to this question about involving CECs in the process. In 2012, you said we need a more democratic – small d democratic – version of mayoral control. We need a chancellor who is presented to the public, not just forced down our throats. So how does your process of keeping it close to the vest sort of translate to that?

Mayor: That was a clear reference to several things that were going on at the time including non-educator chancellors. I mean the epitome of that was the very sad episode around Cathy Black and choosing her as chancellor. And what I was saying at the time was the attitude that we have to take toward mayoral control that it be grounded in the experience of communities, that we constantly be listening to communities. I did not say we were going to go and do auditions, but that the whole attitude toward community input across the board had to change, and that we have to listen to what communities were saying in general. Not – hears a candidate, do you like this specific candidate? But listen to their broad mandate to us. So for example I heard all over the city back then and since how much people believe there should be an educator as chancellor, how much they believe in someone who will support the teaching profession and not degrade it or disrespect it. There’s a bunch of things I have received consistently through public input that inform the chancellor I will choose, but again this is not a decision you do with a public ballot.

Go ahead?

Question: I was going to briefly ask what you thought of Eva Moskowitz’s list of the 15 chancellors she might like you to select.

[Laughter]

Mayor: I want to make a formal public pledge – I will not hold her endorsement against any of the candidates. I have not seen her list, and we will be generating our own list.

Question: I’m just curious for the chancellor, you mentioned being involved in a part time way and giving your expertise. Do you see that as joining a nonprofit or being a consultant to the DOE?

Chancellor Farina: No, no, no – Leslie, let me be very clear. The next stage of my life, I am not going to have a Blackberry to walk around with.

[Laughter]

Mayor: God bless you.

Chancellor Farina: I am going to go out to dinner and not have to respond to any emergencies. I’ve already started thinking about at least one vacation with each of my daughters and their children, so I do not see anything in my life that is going to put me in an area of big responsibility. I do see whatever I do to be of support to the work that’s already being done, and maybe just put a little final touch to some of the things I’ve started. But in no way do I want to become a leader in any other way than what I’m doing now.

Mayor: You gave it the office.

Okay, last call on this and then we’ll go to other topics? Go ahead.

Question: Commissioner, will you stay in office until your successor is –

Mayor: We just addressed that. Again, guys, please, please focus when we answer the question.

So, we said chancellor is going to be around for the next few months. The search is well under way. The goal is to have the new chancellor in place in that time frame.

Yes?

Question: Other topics?

Mayor: Let's just see – last call on this? In the back, go ahead.

Question: Chancellor, about the diversity in specialized high schools, you launched the afternoon courses for underserved students to help them better prepare for the entrance test, so do you think your successor should keep this approach, or they should dramatically change the admissions policy?

Chancellor Farina: Well, first of all I want to be very clear that in all my roles, every time I left them, I let the next person make their own independent decisions. I mean, if you leave a good foundation people should build on it, but I don't ever go back and try to double guess what anyone is doing. However, the dream program has proven to be very successful. We've expanded this year at Stuyvesant and plan to even expand it more for next year, and anything that's successful it behooves anyone to undo. So my total commitment is that the things particularly under the Equity and Excellence banner will just go deeper and deeper. So I fully expect that to stay.

Mayor: Yes, I think it's been a very successful program, and one we want to expand, but I also want to change the state law. I've said this everywhere, and I'm going to say it again. I want to change the state law because specialized school admissions should not be determined by a single test, and we need to ensure that everyone has opportunities to experience those schools who has the ability to learn at that level, and there's a lot of ways to assess that that go well beyond a single standardized test.

On this topic, last call? I want to see if there's anything else – go ahead.

Question: One of the stubborn problems in the school system has been the achievement gap faced by black and Hispanic students in the public schools, and the state math and reading exam test scores showed that that achievement gap has certainly persisted if not worsened over the past three of four years that the chancellor has been in office. I wonder if you guys can address that?

Mayor: It certainly has not worsened. I think what's clear is the good news is that we've seen increases in test scores across all districts and across all demographics, and we've seen growing participation in AP classes across demographics, but you're right in your first statement. There is a persistent achievement gap. How do we address it? By deepening the strategies. Pre-K is only

beginning to have the impact that we will see eventually as its effect plays out over years and years, 3K will deepen that a lot more. That 1-2 punch of kids getting high quality early childhood education for the first two learning years of their life universally is going to change things in a much more profound way than I think people realize right now and have a huge equalizing effect. But also, when you think about getting kids reading on grade level by the time they take that third grade test – I can't think of anything more elemental as a strategy to address the achievement gap than that, so we have just begun would be my argument.

Chancellor Farina: But there's one more thing, and actually I just met with Cardinal Dolan and all the religious leaders in the city. We have to start cracking chronic absenteeism. If you look at what is the most significant piece that goes across school failures it's too high absenteeism and chronic absenteeism. And I think this is the right time to get faith based organization on board. I keep saying I'd like to have a weekend where we say every parent sends their children to school every day, and if you look as an issue this is one that we really need to look at. And it's a national program – it's not a New York City problem – but when you look at what is one of the major characteristics that run across all struggling schools that is the one that's pretty consistent. So we need to figure out that.

Mayor: Last call on this? Go ahead.

Chancellor Farina: If I could just follow up on my colleagues questions about the specialized high schools. You don't need to change the state law.

Mayor: We've been over this 4,000 times. We – there's a man over there, there's a man sitting there who is the corporation counsel. We've had this conversation exhaustedly. The view –

Allow me to finish my answer because it's important because – I'm going to interrupt you respectfully because I've said it so many times, and then I'll listen to the rest of your question.

Per the Law Department, to do this properly, and to do it beyond reproach including legal challenge, we need to change state law. Go ahead.

Question: So am I incorrect in thinking that except for Stuy, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech you don't need to change the law?

Corporation Counsel Carter: You're incorrect.

Mayor: Well said, Zach.

[Laughter]

Same topic or new topic? Okay, we're going to go to new topics now. Hold on, I know a few people have to move.

[...]

Mayor: Where's our – someone had his hand up in the back, and now he's gone, so we're going to you while we figure that out. Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you tweeted out your congratulations to Councilmember Corey Johnson in the speaker's race. Can you talk about how you came to that final decision?

Mayor: Yes, I – first of all, I'm really looking forward to working with Corey Johnson. He's run an excellent race for speaker. I think a lot of times when you watch someone in a political campaign you learn a lot about who they are and how they're going to handle things. I think he really ran a great campaign. From the beginning of this process we thought about how to approach this year, which was really quite different than four years ago on a lot of levels, and we put a high premium on trying to get to as much unity in the end as possible in terms of the councilmembers, in terms of the labor community, in terms of the county democratic organizations trying to get to a place that we thought really maximized unity and the ability to move forward together. I came to the conclusion in the last few days that Corey Johnson was the right candidate to achieve that. I'm happy to support him, and I think it's been a good process.

It's been markedly different than four years ago. More candidates and a longer playout in many ways. And for me personally different because Melissa Mark Viverito was someone I knew very humanly, I had a deep relationship with before the speaker race. She was one of the only elected officials that supported me for mayor. We had served together. It was a really different reality than I experienced with this field, but this was eight good people and because there were eight candidate I think it elongated the race in some ways, but I'm confident that we're going to do very well with Corey Johnson as speaker.

Question: When you talk about unity being one of the priorities. Why was that and what do you think of the role that the county leaders played this time, the more prominent role?

Mayor: Look, we all have been talking for months, I mean just to summarize so you get the sense of it. I had numerous sit down meetings with Joe Crowley, and Marcus Crespo, with labor leaders, with all eight speaker candidates and obviously spoke to a number of members along the way. And my team was in daily communication with the speaker candidates and with most councilmembers. So this was a day-by-day conversation over months and months. And we, look we understand at the end of the last process there was you know, some discomfort and we didn't want to repeat that. The goal at the end of the process, I mean look overwhelmingly we are all democrats and overwhelmingly we agree on most issues. And the last process produced the right speaker. I don't have any doubt, and I think Melissa Mark-Vivirito did a fantastic job, and I am absolutely thrilled with everything that happened the last time in that process and where it led us.

But I wish that there was more unity at the end of the process four years ago. When we said it at the beginning of this time, we wanted to see that happen, and we thought it could happen. And it really revolved around constant dialogue. And I think the proof is in the pudding. We end this process in a better situation in terms of everyone feeling included and feeling like they can work together. We ended in a better place than we did in the last time and that's progress to me.

Question: Mayor if you could just – you know I know you said you hoped to play a role towards the end of the process. I am just sort of curious like what kind of role you played in the last few days as this was finalized. And you were speaking a lot about the process which of course is different this time than it was four years ago. But I am curious what you would say to people who still feel like the process is sort of hopelessly insidery but not just among the people who are in the council you know what I mean. So much of this comes down to county rather –

Mayor: No I appreciate.

Question: A vote of the 51 people who –

Mayor: I want to contest that. I was a councilmember I ran for speaker of the council. I voted for people in another election for speaker. Each group of members is different. Each election is different. I mean this is, this is what I've come to, I may have a you know a minor expertise in this having been through so many of them. Each group of members makes a decision and if members say hey I want to coalesce with my county organization that's a choice. And every year some do, and some don't or some are in a place where they have a different relationship with their county organization that's literally a year by year dynamic. And everything begins and ends with the members. And that played out here too. Because again we were in daily dialogues with the members between me and my team and we saw the development in the race and we saw a growing comfort with Corey very organically. To me everyone has to work together when the smoke clears. So obviously labor unions, Democratic Party organizations we're all going to be working with each other on a whole host of issues. So the ideal is to come to a decision that we feel good about. And I feel good about this. I weighed in at the point I thought made sense to help bring this together and get us to a positive conclusion. I came to that conclusion over the last few days and had the conversations with people. And I think this is going to be the best thing for the City. Yeah.

Question: Mr. Mayor, two questions. One, how do you feel your trip to Iowa went, personally? And two, many residents of that state feel that no one comes to the state this early unless they are running for president. Your response to that?

Mayor: You know I've written down in black and white my sense of mission at this moment in history. I think this is one of the most searing, fraught moments in history in terms of anything I've experienced in 56 years. I think people have to declare themselves in terms of what kind of changes they want to see in this country, I think, and work for them.

I was at a gathering, you know, after I spoke at Progress Iowa, another gathering was put together by the Polk County Democratic Committee – Polk County is where Des Moines is. And it was a really inspiring group – overwhelmingly of younger folks. And they wanted to talk about the ways to change the Democratic party and include more people and be more effective. And it was really a moving dialogue. One of the young folks said to me that he had not been overly involved before the 2016 election. And he said the most simple thing in the world. He said I watched what happened that night and I realized that staying on the sidelines was no longer an option. And it was like a definitional that he had to get involved more deeply.

I feel the same way. I need to be involved in any way I can that will be productive to help make the Democratic Party more progressive and more effective, to help move the progressive agenda around this country. And I am going to be doing that for a long long time.

But the way, and I said this to some of your colleagues – the only way it works is if people believe you can help and want you there. You don't go any place that you are not welcome. So, you know, I was invited by Progress Iowa, who I had a long standing relationship with and they wanted support for what they were doing. I think their model is a really powerful one of grassroots organizing around Iowa.

And I was thrilled to speak to them. I think it was a great experience. And I'm going to stay at it. And I, you know, to me bluntly? I don't care if the way I do things is different than other people do things, it's a different model. I've believed in an organizing model for a long long time. And I also think everything that I'm doing will ultimately benefit the people of New York City.

Because for an example, if we could have a Democratic House of Representatives again, it would block so many of the negative things that are now being planned by the Trump Administration that will hurt New York. If we had a Democratic House of Representatives, there would not have been this tax bill for an example. And we are this close to being able to achieve that. And two of those seats are right there in Iowa, including in Des Moines where I was.

And groups like Progress Iowa, I believe are going to be the difference makers. Those two seats in Iowa are going to affect people here in a very big way. Yes.

Question: Corey Johnson is white, you're white. Was race ever a concern in your pick for speaker? Are you concerned about the lack of, you know, ethnic representation at the highest levels of government in the city now?

Mayor: Look, this is going to be ongoing work to constantly increase diversity in government at all levels. I'm very proud of what we have done in the administration. What we did in the first four years, but the leadership team we announced recently points to the fact that that work always continues and deepens. I think it is going to deepen naturally in the next council elections in 2021 where the vast majority of the body is going to be up for, those seats are going to be up.

I think it is ongoing work. But at the same time in any given moment when you are looking a group of candidates there is a lot attributes, including who can work best with everyone, in a very diverse body and a very diverse city. And I came to the conclusion that Corey Johnson was the person who could that best. So I think, you know, it's one thing to think about how you make a choice when you have a group candidates and there are eight good candidates here representating a wide diversity of backgrounds and parts of the city.

But that work of insuring you know, a more perfect union if you will, a more representative government, that's going to continue. Way back, way way back.

Question: Thanks Mayor. Governor Cuomo had an event, I believe at the RFK Bridge the other day to talk about security in the current environment with a couple of terror attacks in the city in the last six, eight weeks. What is your take on his continued increase of the NYSP footprint in New York and are you concerned or are you satisfied that there is appropriate coordination between the state and the city law enforcement agencies?

Mayor: The notion that the state police have an important role to play here in the city and around the state is obvious. I want there to always be coordination. I think sometimes there's been more and sometimes there's been less. I think the right way to do this is always to begin with a call to our police commissioner to coordinate and make sense the right way to divide labor because we do need to divide labor, there's a lot to cover and different jurisdictions.

Question: Does it happen?

Mayor: I think it's happened sometimes very well and other times not as well as it should and I think it's something we need to continue to do. I've had this conversation with the Governor – we had a very collegial conversation about it. And, so something has to be done every day. But the notion that the state police has an important role to play in certain elements of life in New York City – sure that makes sense to me, let's coordinate, let's divide labor, let's make sure we are using our personal to the maximum. And I think we can get a lot done that way and that's always what we are trying to achieve, Yes, David.

Question: Just a few quick questions. You mentioned before if I heard you correctly, that you have something written in black marker that's sort of your mantra if you will. What is that exactly?

Mayor: I'm not sure what you are referring to specifically.

Question: [inaudible] at this time of searing importance that you had written down in black marker, something like that.

Unknown: [inaudible] mission statement [inaudible]

Mayor: Yes, the essay I put out? Yes, yes.

Question: Okay so moving right on –

Mayor: I was looking to Eric Phillips for interpretation, thank you Eric.

Question: [inaudible] hoping there was something written on your ceiling or something like that.

[Laughter]

Mayor: wait, wait, hold on. Make sure America gets more progressive – here it is. No, okay go ahead.

Question: Was Corey Johnson your first choice and were you bothered that the news came out while you were on the plane coming back from Iowa?

Mayor: I will say first of all there was a process with eight candidates. I met with all of them, got to know them all. Because honestly, I only knew all of them through a series of dealings in each case but never deeply, personally – hadn't served with any of them, you know, shoulder to shoulder. And I, over those many conversations came to feel that Corey was the person who could do the job best. And it was an evolving process but I think he proved through the way he handled his campaign and certainly in the conversations that he was the person who could do the job best.

On the question, no I think – I'll try and say this sort of clearly. I'm not sure what we have failed to explain to you guys, I'm going to try my best. So every day from the beginning of the day to the end of the day, seven days a week, whether I'm here, whether I am somewhere else in New York state, whether I'm somewhere else in the country, somewhere else in the world, It's all the same thing. There is a constant dialogue going on between me and my team on every strategic matter we are facing. It's impossible to run something of this size and complexity otherwise and every CEO, public and private, it's the same exact reality. You're constantly engaged in discussion. The speaker race discussions have been going on for months in a truly earnest fashion but even going back a year or two in some ways. We had that conversation over the weekend, we were having it throughout the week, it didn't matter where I was we were having it. And again I came to the conclusion the last few days about the right way to move forward.

So I think sometimes people don't recognize the amount of work that goes into literally every piece of everything we do and the amount of design. The things we are doing today have been thought about for months and prepared for months. So it has nothing to do with whether I'm in Iowa for a day. It's all being worked through and the dialogue around the speaker's race with all the other players was so constant that everything played out essentially as we thought it would, certainly in the last week or two.

Question: Really quick question, sorry, sir. Given all that planning did it bother you that this was made public while you were in the air?

Mayor: I don't see that difference. It's not this was made public. This thing is obviously still playing out to a final vote. It's that everyone was in dialogue well before anything became public from anyone. It's, this is – again I don't know what I am failing to say or you are failing to look into. This is a day to day, hour to hour thing that's played out over months. So it's not like there are any surprises in the process.

Question: Mayor, I know you were asked on Friday about the parking placard that Senator Martin Golden was issued by the city and that there were concerns that he was perhaps misusing it or certainly not driving always in a safe manner – wondering if you guys have decided whether or not to pull that from him or [inaudible] at all?

Mayor: I have to look into that. I know that when the issue came up folks in my administration who work on those issues were following up. But I don't know what's been learned so we will certainly get back to you on that. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, Mr. Mayor, two questions – one, I'm curious given the election, the election of Councilman Johnson, are you looking to have more diversity in other committees in the council that play a big role? Are you hoping that we can see some diversity in those positions?

Mayor: Yes, look as a former councilmember, again everything begins and ends with the members. The members make the ultimate decisions but I certainly weighed in on the speaker. And I'll certainly offer my input in terms of ensuring there is diversity in senior position, it's something I believe in so yes. The answer is we will weigh in and encourage that for sure.

Question: And, so this council, you will be term limited, many of the members of the council will also be term limited. Do you foresee a less, collegial, more tense relationship in the next four years because everyone's political calculations might be a little different?

Mayor: I think that's the hype and I would argue some days might you see that, sure, but I would argue that the reality is more complex for a couple of reasons. One – there was a real priority put on unity here and trying to learn from last time how to foster an outcome that hopefully would lead to a sense of a fair outcome for all. And I think that will get things off on a good start.

Two – unlike last time, you know, we have the experience now of dealing with the vast majority of members and I think we've ended up with very good working relationships with the vast majority. And I think people understand that those good relationships have been really productive for those communities – for their communities that they serve and they want to continue that.

So, I get that people might be running for another office want headlines or want attention but they also you know have to work for their constituents and they need to do that too to advance to another office too. So, I think there are some balances in that reality.

And then I would also note the new group of Council members, a number of whom I supported when they were running, I'm really impressed by them and we are starting off, I think, with a very positive relationship.

So, you know, again, I'm not going to be surprised by any individual instance but I would not overrate this notion. I think it's going to play out in a very collegial fashion going forward.

Wait, who has not gone – not gone in this section? You, let's go right there.

Question: Commissioner Nigro, as you celebrate diversity – more diversity in the department, I'm curious what you're doing to combat discrimination within the firehouses internally. I know sometimes that can be a bit of a problem internally.

Commissioner Nigro: Well, specifically one of the things I did was spoke directly and personally to every chief and every captain in the fire department and told them what I expected of them, what I expected of their leadership, that we had zero tolerance for it.

Diversity is not effective without inclusivity. So, inviting someone into your home without welcoming them – you're only halfway there. And I think everyone in the department knows where I stand and where the department draws the line.

So, we've trained each and every member of the department in this. We have now a deputy commissioner specifically for diversity inclusion who runs this for the department. And it is a – you know, other than life safety of the people in this city – it's the number one priority in the fire department in my administration.

Question: Mr. Mayor, [inaudible] concerned that the Speaker race [inaudible] taken seriously [inaudible] lack of diversity [inaudible] and that maybe New York City shouldn't be so [inaudible]. What do you think of that notion? Can the city still call itself [inaudible] –

Mayor: Of course.

Question: [Inaudible] diversity [inaudible] –

Mayor: Of course we're a progressive city and we've got to look at this on many levels and it begins with the policies that actually affect human beings. The greatest fairness we can show is by creating progressive policies that reach people, that change their lives for the better, that address the mistakes of the past, and whether that is ending the overuse of stop-and-frisk or training our police force in de-escalation or body cameras for officers, or whether it's aggressive affordable housing initiatives, or Pre-K for All and 3-K for All – I'm 100 percent clear, these are profoundly progressive policies that also do a lot to achieve equality and right the wrongs of the past. The process of determining leadership – look around the City, it's constantly evolving. You see in different roles around the City change happening all the time. Tish James got elected Public Advocate; Rubin Diaz in the Bronx as Borough President; Eric Adams in Brooklyn as Borough President; not unimportantly at all, very crucial – Carl Heastie as Speaker of the State Assembly. I hope soon that Andrea Stewart Cousins will be the majority leader of the Senate. I think there's a lot that's in motion, so I don't think you can ever judge by a single election. And I also think, as a progressive and an internationalist – I believe what unites us all is the need for economic change that is fair to working people of all backgrounds, and I believe my administration has done that regardless of my particular ethnic background. So, we had eight candidates, they were good candidates. It was a very open process. By the way, very good process in terms of debates and open discussion of the issues – I think that was a good thing for New York City. And there will be another one in four years, and I think you'll see continued opportunity for leaders to move forward.

Question: What conversations did you have with Frank Seddio, the head of the Brooklyn Democratic Party. I mean, I know the two of you worked together to help Melissa Mark-Viverito win, but clearly he wasn't involved this time.

Mayor: He was involved, everyone was involved – that’s the point. Brooklyn is obviously my home. I think very, very highly of Chair Seddio. I was in regular touch with him, as was my team, just like we were in regular touch with other county Democratic organizations, and with a host of labor leaders, and, most importantly, with the members themselves. So, we talked about how we saw things evolving and we talked about the importance of having Brooklyn members represented in key positions and that’s all going to play out over time.

Question: Is there any significance to the fact that – it seems you’re not wearing a watch, and you’re always on time at your events.

Mayor: I like that. So, I use my Blackberry as my watch. I used to wear a watch. I kind of miss the watch. My team has done a great job of helping to create more rational schedules, and I have learned how to be realistic about time, and things are going well and the Blackberry serves me well. Since I was drinking heavily with Yoav in a bar in De Moines, proving that unity can happen in our country, people could be brought together. I’m going to turn to Yoav now.

Question: I wanted to ask –

Mayor: Hard-drinking, Yoav, yes?

[Laughter]

Question: I wanted to ask you about when exactly you came around on Corey Johnson because there is – whether it was already clear – the outcome, at that point – because there are some people saying that he was not your candidate and that essentially you had to accept the outcome as it was.

Mayor: Again, guys, look at the difference between last time and this time – it’s really important to pay attention to this – last time I had a strong feeling for Melissa Mark-Viverito, but said to her very clearly, you know, first, I like you, I believe in you, but I need to see if you can generate real support. She proceeded to generate an extraordinary amount of support. I joined her effort to help build upon it, which was consistent with the pattern of the previous Speaker races too. This one evolved very differently. And I said to you guys a bunch of times – we would weigh in when we felt it was the right time to weigh in. But this was a slower, different kind of play-out I think, in part, because of having eight candidates, which, really, there is not precedent for eight candidates hanging in this long in a process previously that I’ve seen at least. And I spent a lot of time with folks, getting to know them, and watching the evolution of the race, and talking to Council members, etcetera, and all of the other players. And I was very clear – when I felt ready to say something publicly is when I was convinced. And you never saw me say anything publicly until now because we became convinced in the last few days, talked to everyone, agreed that this was the right direction – here we are.

Question: [Inaudible] the notion that you were excluded from the decision?

Mayor: I just described the whole – I don’t know what I have to do here to get this across. Maybe if you drank more this would become clearer to you. This was months and months of

dialog. By the way, including when I was in De Moines, I was on the phone with people here about the situation with my team, and outside. It never ended, it was an ongoing dialog. Life is not flip-a-switch, this was going on and on. So, a number of people expressed their preferences along the way. People also evolved some of their thinking as they saw events unfold and as they saw campaigns unfold, like with every other campaign in the world. And it was days ago that I increasingly felt that Corey had put together the right combination of support and an approach that made sense. He had the right kind of dialog with us and with other folks, and everyone was comparing notes. So, this was a process that ultimately worked, and I think he'll be a good Speaker.

We'll do the last two –

Question: One, I don't think you've said yet what about Corey Johnson – why he –

Mayor: I think I said it at the very beginning, but I'll restate it – when someone runs a really good campaign, it tells you something about them. I challenged him and all of the candidates throughout – what's your vision? I said, what's your vision for the City? How are you going to work with me and my team? And what kind of support do you have? I literally met with all eight of them, I said the same exact thing to all eight. And then, there were follow-up discussions, and then I said to all eight, to their faces – whatever you tell me about your support levels, we're going to go to the members and confirm from the members, which we proceeded to do on basically a daily basis. And Corey laid out a strong progressive vision for the City. He argued persuasively that based on the real experiences that we've had with him on land-use issues in his district, on his work as Health Committee Chair, that we could be good partners, communicative partners, that we could seek consensus and effectively achieve consensus on a regular basis. And he said, look, I've got a lot of support, but he was always great about saying, I'm not going to overstate my support, and he was very accurate, which was encouraging to us. You know, someone who is an honest broker – that's what you want in that kind of role. So, what you see is what you get. He was accurate about his support levels – that support started to grow – and he ran a great campaign. And when you see someone run a great campaign, and they're very well organized, and they give you consistent information – that certainly is a recommender of how they will serve in a higher office.

Question: [Inaudible] you look forward to when Andrea Stewart Cousins is majority leader – do you want to see Marty Golden – it's an interesting thing in City and State politics – if there's a Republican State Senator in Brooklyn who seems to never be targeted by Democrats in New York City. Do you want to see Marty Golden defeated next year?

Mayor: I want to separate the personal from the political here. There are three Republican members and I've worked with all of them for a long time, and there's many times when they've worked with us productively and effectively, and I can see that fact and say that while they're there they play an important role in New York City, and respect them, and like them humanly, but I'm still a Democrat. If I had my druthers, any seat in the State Senate would be Democratic, it's as simple as that.

Okay, last call –

Question: [Inaudible] union played – you talked about the different dynamics this time around in the Speaker’s race. The unions played a major role [inaudible] there was a lot of union among them. That didn’t seem to be that case this time around. Do you have anything to say about that? And there were some members who voiced concern about [inaudible] involvement with Corey Johnson’s campaign. Are you concerned that there’s less [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think that the unity dynamic is a composite, meaning, in the end, folks have to decide – could they work with each candidate. And what happened over time is, you know, some unions had a preference, but that didn’t mean they couldn’t still work with someone. Other unions did not state a preference. It did play out over a long period of time, but, in the end, because we were in touch with everyone, there was a growing consensus that people felt they could work with him, we certainly felt we could work with him, and they have run the best campaign and put together the most support. And, I’ve got to tell you, anyone who is in political life values that. So, there were certainly some differences at the outset, but I think in the final days of this process that people are ready to work together in a way that was not as clear at the end of the previous process, again, notwithstanding which Melissa Mark-Viverito was an extraordinarily successful Speaker – and couldn’t be prouder of what she achieved and couldn’t been prouder of having been her colleague. But I think this process ends in a better place when all is said and done.

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