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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS-COPELAND AND  
PARKS COMMISSIONER SILVER LAUNCH FLUSHING MEADOWS CORONA PARK ALLIANCE**

**Audience:** Sí se puede! Sí se puede! Sí se puede!

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Buenos días a todos! It is great to be here today. Please, gather around, everyone. Come on up.

Well, this really is a great day for Queens and a great day for New York City and a great day for this park. Flushing Meadows Corona Park is an iconic part of our city. This is one of the symbols of our city. And I know a lot of people in the community have fought long and hard to get this park the help it deserves, to give it the support to live up to its legendary status, to make sure it is truly a park for everyone and a park that everyone can enjoy the kind of quality that they deserve.

And now, thanks to the hard work of so many people present today, this very important park in our city will have something it deserves. This is a major park, and a major park deserves a major conservancy. And now we will have a conservancy for Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

[Applause]

And that's how we're going to help ensure that it'll be one of the great parks of this city for years and decades to come.

The new alliance is going to do so much to uplift the people of the communities around this park, people from all over Queens, people from all over the city who come here to enjoy this extraordinary place.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is one of the crown jewels of the borough of Queens. People from all over the world enjoy it – families and children and seniors, people from all backgrounds come here – it's one of the great melting pots of New York City – and now it will be even better.

And there are so many people who deserve praise and who deserve a share of the credit. I want to thank all the community members and all the activists who worked so hard. Let's give you all a round of applause – thank you for your great work.

[Applause]

And there is a famous phrase that success has many fathers and mothers, but in this case, success has a particularly excellent mother, who worked so hard and made it her passionate goal to achieve this effort – we want to thank Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland for her extraordinary leadership.

[Applause]

She's been working on this for years. She was looking forward to this day and now we're here. And I had the honor of standing with so many of you years ago, when I was public advocate – we were fighting then to protect this park. This is not a new struggle, but people stuck with it. There was tremendous persistence in the community. And I want to thank Julissa and all the elected leaders who believed and stuck with it as well. In addition to Julissa, I want to thank Council Member Karen Koslowitz for joining us and for her tremendous support.

[Applause]

You're going to hear from a couple other folks, but I also want to thank someone who's making so much of this happen every day in this park and in parks all over the city – our commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Mitchell Silver – thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

And one of the institutions that helps make this park and everything around it so great – the Queens Museum – I want to thank their new – newish – president, Laura Raicovich for your leadership – thank you.

[Applause]

Now, we know our parks are one of our treasures in this city. Even though we are thought of as a city of skyscrapers and concrete, we're a place where our parks are our great outlet, where the parks are where we breathe, where we play, where we experience life with our friends and families. Our parks mean so much to us – and to this day in New York City, there are many, many people for whom their local park is where they take their summer vacation, because that's what they can afford to do – they can't afford anything more. Our parks are precious on every level.

And in our parks, our children learn so much. They learn about nature. They learn teamwork through playing sports. They learn some sports that are traditional in this country, like baseball, and they learn some sports that are more and more popular, like cricket. And if you ever see a cricket match here, you know there's a lot of people who [inaudible] cricket as their first passion. You can experience that here too.

Now, Flushing Meadows Corona Park – the largest park in Queens – it's the fourth largest in the city, and so much happens here. There's special events, and the every-day moments that happen here mean so much to people. There's also an incredibly historically important site – the site of both the 1939 and the 1964 World's Fairs that really gave the entire world a sense of what New York City meant, and was part of building the reputation of New York City globally. And that is very pertinent to our standing in the world today where we are admired all over the world, and more and more people from all over the world come here for all that we have to offer. And, as I mentioned with the museums, the cultural and recreational institutions around this park are some of the greatest in the city.

We are very, very committed as an administration to this park, and that's why we have eight major capital projects going right now in Flushing Meadows Corona Park – eight major capital projects, totaling about \$20 million dollars that are part of our contribution to this park. But now, with the creation of the alliance, this park will go even farther. There'll be additional resources to make it stronger, to make it a great place for everyone. And we believe in this administration that there are many ways to help our parks and to reach parks that didn't always have their fair share. And we believe in reaching parks that often were left behind, and that's why we started our communities parks initiative.

Through 2019, we'll be investing \$285 million dollars – capital dollars to revitalize 67 community parks in all five boroughs – parks that are now getting the attention they deserve, and that people depend on as part of their

every-day lives. It's going to improve the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, and we're very, very proud of that fact. And we're proud to say, as this conservancy comes to life, that we have just come to an agreement with eight conservancies that have been around for a while, they're well established, have a great track record of bringing together resources. We called upon them to join us in the effort to list parks that haven't had as much, and these eight conservancies have answered the call, have agreed to add \$15 million dollars to our effort to uplift community parks in less advantaged neighborhoods, and we're very, very appreciative for their support, and we know a lot of people are going to benefit because of that.

For a long time, I've talked about what it's going to take to create one New York – a place where everyone has opportunity, everyone has a chance to enjoy this city. These actions today, the creation of this conservancy, the fact that the other historic conservancies are joining to help us reach parks that haven't had as much, the fact that our community parks initiative is investing so much – all of this will lead to a more fair city, and a city where more and more people can enjoy all the we have to offer.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, whether she is speaking in English or Spanish, she is equally eloquent, an equally passionate, and she believed in this vision, and through force of will, working with all of you, brought us to this day of fruition. Let's thank Council Member Julissa Ferreras.

[...]

I'd also like to welcome another council member who's been a great supporter of this effort, and so many of his constituents enjoy this park and depend on it and are going to be happy to know it will be stronger now – Council Member Peter Koo, thank you for joining us. Thank you.

[Applause]

Okay, we're going to take questions on this topic first, and then we'll go to off-topic. Yes.

**Question:** [inaudible] Why does the communities on the other side of the park, represented by Council member Rory Lancman, why are they not given [inaudible] on conservancy and also I'd also hear your – get your response on to some comments that Council Lancman made saying that this is part of a pattern of you [inaudible] town halls in the district [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Okay, let's do this, lets – I think I get both questions. On the first question, so Council member Ferreras-Copeland covers the vast majority of this park and in addition to her role on this board, the speaker of the City Council will have a role as well. And obviously the board will work closely with all of the other council members from the surrounding area and all the elected officials beyond the council in the surrounding area.

On the question on the town hall meetings, it's a interesting sample size. We've had two so far, I would urge the council member to wait a little while before he passes judgement.

**Question:** [inaudible] the 2013, under [inaudible] I know what the USDA deal was, if the money could not be distributed within 21 days of the board [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** I don't know [inaudible] 2013, so I'll let the council member speak to that.

**Question:** The question being is, and actually it is for you, what took your administration so long to creating this board, the money has [inaudible] within the USDA since 2013 –

**Mayor:** With all due respect, we focused on getting this done, we're very proud it's done. I don't know that history from the previous administration so the council member will speak to that.

**Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland:** So, the deal that we worked out with the USDA was that the money would be made available once the [inaudible] Road, which is this new road that you can see just out here, was finished. We were in the process, obviously this is the new administration, we were given – we were allowing them the time to be able to look over everything. This is something that was done with the prior administration and we're here today. This is a great day and a day that, you know, I've been dreaming of for a long time, even with prior administrations. As I've said, I have a history with this park. I understood that this park needed this for a long time and also I just wanted to speak – this board has one appointee from the City Council and I'm sure, and I'm very eager to, when we announce and roll out the CAB which is where we will have all the voices. So, that statement that we don't have representation, the CAB is the Community Advisory Board, which is where everyone from the community will sit. So, for that statement to be made without us having the first CAB meeting, I think it a bit inappropriate or poorly timed. We are eager to see everyone represented and all the voices heard from this entire park but I'm very excited that so many people are interested.

[Applause]

**Question:** You mentioned that every major park [inaudible] my question is in two parts; one, are there any other parks that you think could benefit from the conservancy and if so which ones and [inaudible] why do you think public parks have become so reliant on private funding for, you know, [inaudible].

**Mayor:** Well, without getting into a definitional exercise, I think we can say this is obviously one of the very largest, most iconic, most central of the parks in this city, that's what I was referring to, the ones that really have that huge reach, really a borough-wide reach. We're mixing the public funds with other funds to achieve the maximum impact. So, we all know that public funds will get us part of the way, that's why doing the efforts to reach community parks, that's why we're putting \$20 million here into this park but we also know there are limits to what public funding can achieve and I think it's wise to get additional funding in for the parks that have the ability to that. It's wise to do it. It's going to allow us to reach more people and have stronger parks.

**Question:** Are there any updates [inaudible] plans or hopes of large musical festivals to help [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Commissioner Silver will add, amend whatever I say, and obviously, Council Member, you may want to add. These are very initial proposals. And I am not surprised people are very interested, but they are very initial proposals that haven't even been evaluated yet by the Parks Department, so we are not going to comment formally until we have done a real evaluation. We're going to be centrally concerned with whether it is something we think benefits the surrounding community – obviously, what kind of impact it would have on the park itself. These are the criteria we have to look at, but, you know, we can't give you a formal answer until we look at the proposals, which we literally, you know, just received.

Wait, I saw somebody. Yes, [inaudible] – do you – sorry. Do you want to add? If you want to add, you have to – you have to jump in. This is like street ball.

**Commissioner Mitchell Silver, Department of Parks and Recreation:** So, we are always getting proposals on a regular basis, but this month, November, is when proposals for all the permits and the actual special requests to submit it. Once that is submitted, we will be able to vet it very thoroughly. We do a lot of outreach, ask a lot of questions. So, as the mayor said, it is a bit premature. There was a proposal out there, but we have yet to sit down and fully vet those proposals.

**Question:** Is there a time when you – an internal deadline for issuing those permits for [inaudible]?

**Commissioner Silver:** Yes, we do try to that relatively quickly within the beginning of the year. Because of the lead up time to actually prepare such a big event, we try to get a response very – in the early part of the year.

**Question:** Mayor, [inaudible] – what incentives are there for businesses [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Yeah, like any other charitable deduction, these – charitable contributions – these are tax deductible contributions that they would make here. And I think for businesses all over Queens, certainly, I suspect they know how much this park means to the people of Queens, to their employees, to their customers. There are a lot of businesses in the area surrounding the park, so I think there is going to be a lot – a very big audience to turn to, and I hope, as Danny said, they will be very generous.

Okay, who hasn't gone yet? On this topic – anyone hasn't gone yet? Then back to you, Dana.

**Question:** So with [inaudible] for a contribution [inaudible] in exchange for getting [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Well, again, I will start, and if anyone else wants to add, they can feel free. The idea of the first question is what will be the impact of any proposed event on a park. What are the pros and cons? What does it mean for the surrounding neighborhood? Is – does the community want it? Is it something good for the community? What impact does it have on the park? Does it bring positives and benefits to the park? What is the wear and tear considerations? We have to look at all of that. So I am not familiar with how various contributions are considered. I think the first thing we have to think about is what are the overall positives and negatives to have it, and having it? Now, that happens all the time in the city. We all know Central Park, for example has hosted a number of events, and what Mitch and his team do is they assess each one, looking for the overall impact. So once that's done, then we can figure out how – if there were to be any such event, how they could work with the conservancy.

Yeah, [inaudible], yeah?

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Commissioner Silver:** Each conservancy, alliance, or friends group is different. First, they'll want to get the [inaudible] structure in order, so I would suspect at the start-up – and I am an ex-officio member of that – of the board – is that there is the start-up work you have to do. Then you start having conversations about the priorities – the programming, the capital improvements, establishing a strong relationship with the community. So I suspect – is within the first year, that will – where the conversation will occur. And I am sure from that, the board will want to hear from the community about what those priorities are as well. So there's a lot of work to go around, but typically in any start-up situation, you want to get that vision, that program set in place to see how the alliance can make an impact in this park.

**Mayor:** Council Member.

**Council Member Ferreras-Copeland:** And just because I thought this is exactly what would happen – we are – we have – we are calling on the CAB to meet first. And then the CAB is going to put together a report – or the Community Advisory Board, will put together a report for the board, so that they can know – begin to discuss and, you know, creative ideas. This is an opportunity here from the community, and that is what the board will then be challenged to set forth in priority, and cost, and things like that. So they will get the voice of the community as their first assignment. And then I just wanted to speak a little bit on the businesses and the giving. You know, when I was negotiating this, years ago, or when I thought of the idea of putting the conservancy together – I can't remember his name, and somebody could probably remember it for me – but – I'm trying to

look at my staff – but there was someone who gave a contribution of \$50 million dollars to Central Park – exactly, the guy from Bayside, Queens. And all I could think about was, if I had this Conservancy up and running four years ago or five years ago, maybe he could have given us \$10 – right? So it is also about creating the opportunity or the mechanism for which people can give. Not that I am trying to gyp ourselves – I think we should get the \$50 if anyone wants to give. But it is to create the mechanism, and that is why this conservancy, or this Alliance, is being put together – it's to create the – the mechanism for giving.

**Question:** What is the process by which you determine how to structure the board?

**Mayor:** I [inaudible] if the Council Member of the Commissioner want to get into the details of that, obviously we have some examples from other boards, but – [inaudible].

**Council Member Ferreras-Copeland:** It was a lot of conversations, a lot of meetings with this administration and the prior administration. It was looking at existing conservancies – we understood that we weren't going to be Central Park, nor do we want to be Central Park. We looked at Prospect Park, we met with New Yorkers for Parks, we met with many organizations – the Fairness Coalition had many conversations. And it was figuring out the mechanism that made most sense for this park. So it really is taking the best practices of a lot of other conservancies – large ones, small ones – and looking at how we can be most successful. So that is how we came about this – what we have today as an Alliance.

**Mayor:** Okay, last call on questions, media questions about this topic. Going once, going twice – we are in off topic now – off topic. Yes sir?

**Question:** Do you have any plans in the upcoming weeks or months to campaign with Hillary Clinton?

**Mayor:** I'll happily do whatever that campaign needs, obviously, within the boundaries of my schedule. So we will see what they need.

**Question:** You know, given the report that there was at least one refugee involved [inaudible] the attacks in Paris, has that made reconsider your stance –

**Mayor:** I would like to – with your indulgence, I would like to speak to that when we are with Commissioner Bratton later, because we can give you a much fuller answer. We are going to be talking about all those issues in just a little bit, later on today.

**Question:** Transportation advocates are now calling Hylan Boulevard the “Boulevard of Death.” There have been eight pedestrian deaths on Staten Island this year, and half have been on that boulevard. What is your take on this? They are saying that not enough is being done specifically for Hylan Boulevard.

**Mayor:** I think they are right to be very, very concerned, and we are very concerned as well. Queens Boulevard, sadly, still, you know – we are making a host of changes on Queens Boulevard, but to this day, it has still been the most serious challenge anywhere in this city for a number of years. But Hylan Boulevard has been very, very problematic. So, so far, we have changed the crossing times at eight intersections to give pedestrians more time to cross; we've put up mobile speed cameras at a number of locations, as needed; we are in the process of putting in some new pedestrian islands to give people a better time to cross. But we are going to be making more changes beyond that. So we will have some announcements [inaudible] on Hylan Boulevard, because certainly more needs to be done.

**Question:** To follow up, I mean, obviously a lot of Staten Islanders drive, and they are not particularly fond of some of the changes made under Vision Zero. Do you have any plans to, kind of –

**Mayor:** It is not about who is fond or not fond. It is about saving lives and protecting people. So, I will have that discussion with anyone, anytime, anywhere. We have lowered the speed limit; we have put in the speed cameras; we have a lot more NYPD enforcement. As I said at the memorial yesterday for victims of traffic violence, we are going educate the people of this city that they have to drive more carefully and they have to drive within the speed limit. And it will not just be based on public service announcements, you will see an NYPD cruiser pulling you over and giving you a ticket if you break the speeding laws or if you fail to yield to pedestrians. And I think that will be the strongest form of public education. So this is about saving lives. It is hypocrisy to say we want to address issues of crime, but we are not going to address the problems of traffic. We have to get tough on this situation, and that is what Vision Zero is there to do.

**Question:** The Thanksgiving Parade is right around the corner. Are you concerned about security [inaudible] – worried, you know, about even going?

**Mayor:** I think there is a real understanding all over the world that this the safest big city in America, that the NYPD is by far the most advanced force for addressing these issues. Again, I would like to go into more detail later, when we have the press conference with Commissioner Bratton. But I think it is quite clear that people know when they come to a big event here, there will be tremendous NYPD presence and tremendous preparation. So, again, any issues on security, let's hold for the – later on, for the press conference with Commissioner Bratton.

Do you have something else?

**Question:** [Inaudible] I know you are going to address the specifics later on, but in terms of New Yorkers [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Again, I would really like to – we are going to be within Commissioner Bratton. We are going to go into a great deal of detail on the measures we are taking. Let's do that later.

**Question:** Are you planning any other, kind of, progressive-oriented events, [inaudible] the one you had planned for Iowa [inaudible]. In the upcoming months, do you plan to, kind of, revisit that?

**Mayor:** We are going to work with progressive leaders around the country on a series of efforts. Some will be events, and some will be other types of initiatives. But the bottom line is – I have said it very clearly – this year, next year we are going to push the issue of income inequality before the national debate. There are progressive leaders who have gathered together around the Progressive Agenda, and we are going – working in all different parts of the country to make sure that this issue is at the front of the presidential discussion and the discussion in other elections, for Senate, governor, etcetera. And then, continue it past then into the new term of whoever is president, whatever the Congress looks like. That work is going to continue and deepen. So, this is just the very beginning of what will be a multiyear effort.

**Question:** What did you think of Secretary Clinton's answer that [inaudible] because of 9/11? And also, do you think – do you agree with her that – that [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Well, I would say a couple of things. I would say, whoever you take donations from, you can't let it influence your thinking. And I think she understands that fully. Your beliefs are your beliefs, and I am very proud to support her, because she has a strong progressive agenda for addressing income inequality. And I can certainly say there's a lot of folks on Wall Street who don't agree with her platform and her agenda, but she has stuck to it. She clearly, strongly defended Dodd Frank throughout. She has spoken very powerfully about reigning in executive compensation, about cracking down on shadow banking. She has been strong on desire for the – closing the carried interest loophole. I think there are plenty of powerful folks on Wall Street who fundamentally hope that what she is trying to achieve won't happen. So I think she has clearly maintained the independence of her positions. I think – or what she was talking about in terms of relationships – it is clear that

she had real relationships with people on Wall Street, and she did spend a lot of time – I certainly saw it with my own eyes – she spent a lot of time with people in Lower Manhattan, including the financial community, after 9/11 working together, so obviously personal relationships developed. But I don't think that changed her position one iota. I think she has been very clear that what happened with the financial crisis and the Great Recession cannot happen again, and it is going to take much stricter control of Wall Street to make sure that doesn't happen again.

Last call, anything else? Then we will see you at the later press conference on security matters. Yes?

**Question:** Any update on how the [inaudible] negotiations over 421-a are going between the Real Estate Board and the [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Only to say I think they've been productive. I have not gotten an update in the last days. But my strong impression is they've been productive. And I think, given the amount of support, the fact that people believe in affordable housing, support these reforms, the fact that so much of the real estate community supports them, obviously the Assembly and the Senate supported them – I feel very confident that we will get to a good agreement and move these reforms forward.

Last call – yes.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** I obviously respect our community boards. I – as a Council Member for eight years, I worked very close with the community boards in my district. They're always going to raise concerns and critiques, and often help us to get to a better outcome. But I would also say, what we are talking about is about fundamental change in this city – creating a lot more affordable housing than has been created ever before in our past, ensuring that developers have to provide affordable housing at a much percentage than ever before. These are the kinds of reforms we need if people are going to be able to live in this city. So, I am never surprised when a community board raises concerns, and particularly local concerns. But we're going to keep moving full speed ahead to make these reforms, because we must create a vast amount of – more of affordable housing. We must preserve a huge amount of affordable housing, or else people will not be able to live in this city. It's as simple as that.

Thanks, everyone.

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