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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. It is a beautiful, sunny day in New York City. And this is the perfect day to get vaccinated. If you have not yet gotten vaccinated, there is no time like the present. And now at over 30 vaccination sites, all around the city, City-run vaccination sites you can simply walk up, get a vaccination right away if you are 50 years old or older. So, please this is as convenient as it gets. And again, this is an approach we're going to be using more and more. And appointments at all the other sites, there's over 600 sites now around the city. Talk about getting to the grassroots. We have sites everywhere. Appointments are now finally after months and months of challenges, easy to get. This is exactly the right time to go out and get vaccinated. And we know that getting more and more New Yorkers vaccinated is the key to recovery.

So, where do we stand today? From the beginning of our effort, 5,843,222 vaccinations. Amazing number, more vaccinations than the entire population of the State of Wisconsin. So, this is really becoming a bigger and bigger number all the time. And now is the perfect time to add to that number yourself. Now, as I said, we've been opening many new sites and more are coming. I announced yesterday, a wonderful new site at the Museum of Natural History. That's going to be a great one. We have additional sites going live this week. Including a large capacity site coming up soon and a number of pop-up sites in the Rockaways. So, the Rockway is a place that always deserves attention. And historically hasn't gotten its fair share. We're making sure there's lots of options for residents of the Rockaways. So, you'll see pop-up sites in the coming days in public housing, for example. And then a large capacity site coming up in a few days. Also, in Queens innovative new approach at the airport at JFK, a vaccination site for airport employees. We want to make it easy for people to get vaccinated. Sometimes the best place to reach people of course is where they work. So, a new site opening at JFK to reach airport employees. We're going to look under every stone. We're going to go everywhere we can to make sure everyone gets vaccinated.

Now, every time I talk about vaccination, I talk about recovery for all of us. And a recovery for all of us means reaching every part of the city, reaching people in every way, and it obviously means preparing for our future. And a future that is more just and fair. If we're going to do that, we have to address the number one challenge of our time. And that is climate change. As our attention will in the coming months, be less and less on COVID. We got to get our attention back on climate change. This is a week to really focus, Earth Day coming up on Thursday. So, we're making a series of announcements yesterday. We talked about the fact that we have to make sure that the proposed power plants in Astoria and Gowanus do not come online. They use fracked natural gas. That is a danger to all of us. They cannot come online and we need to fight to stop it. And the alternative is clearer than ever, lean into renewable energy. And that's what New York City is going to do. And that takes money, everyone. That takes investment to make renewable energy become more and more available.

And so, we're putting our money where our mouth is. We are taking a major step forward to secure hydropower, reliable and renewable hydropower for New York City. We have formally committed to a long-term purchase of renewable energy. We'll be doing this jointly with the State. And this is something I've talked about in the State of The City. This is crucial to our future. It's crucial to environmental justice and health because the more we turn to renewables, the less we use fossil fuels in the city, the safer the people of the city are, the safer our children are from a horrible challenges like asthma. But it's also about our safety as one of the great coastal cities of the world. It's also about jobs. The more we turn to renewables, there'll be more and more opportunity in those industries and in retrofitting buildings and all the things that go along with the Green New Deal. So, this is going to be a dramatic step. 100 percent of the electricity that New York City government will use by 2025 will be renewable, 100 percent renewable power from New York City government by 2025. This new plan for hydropower will allow us to do that once and for all. So, another way we're going to celebrate Earth Day and Earth Week by leaning into renewable energy for our future.

Now, a recovery for all of us also means constantly investing in our communities. And listening to the voices of our communities. And making sure that when the community feels there's a need, we do everything we possibly can to address that need. Let's face it, last year we had so many challenges and we were looking at a huge fiscal crisis on top of all the other suffering and pain that New York City residents went through. But thank God the Biden administration is here and thank God for the stimulus. It has changed things profoundly and opened up a world of possibilities. So, today we have a great announcement. Something the community in Southeast Queens has been fighting for, for years and years. I can announce today that we are fully funding the new 116th Precinct building and new community center. These are things that the community has said will improve the quality of life, that will allow the community to get what they need. Literally this fight has been going on for decades. And so once, and for all, we'll be able to provide this support to the community in Southeast Queens. Someone who has been fighting for this for decades, and he has called me numerous times pushing this priority. And I know he hears from community leaders all the time about how important it is to them. I want to thank him for being a voice for the community and a leader here in New York City, but also a tremendous leader in Washington in the Congress. My pleasure to introduce Congress Member Gregory Meeks.

[...]

Thank you so much, Congress Member, I'm glad you gave us the exact history, 1977. Well, that's over 40 years. That's an amazing community. You know, the community is just filled with people who care, who are active, who make a difference. And so, I'm glad you shouted out the names, all those folks who are there all along the way. And also glad that Congress Member, you kept the fire burning always. And every time we talked, you said, this is still needed to happen. And here we are. And you gave credit to a lot of people. And one of them we're going to hear from now who is our new Council Member. I want to say the Congress Member is right. The first time the new Council Member came to see me in my office, right after being certified, one of the first things she said was we need this precinct in our community. We had a great conversation about it and about so many of the things we need to do to move this city forward.

I'm so appreciative of the work she's doing already and want to shout her out because she also worked earlier in our administration, in our Office to End Gender-Based Violence and did great work there. So, so happy to see her now move forward with her career as an elected official. And I know she is also feeling this day, and finally, the community's voice has been heard. So, my pleasure is as Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers.

[...]

Thank you so much, Council Member, and thank you for giving credit to a lot of good folks who have worked so hard. It takes a village, they say, and the village of Southeast Queens has made a major step forward today. So, congratulations. Alright, now let's talk about all the neighborhoods of the city and what we need to do to keep everyone safe as we move forward. Now, we know that investing in neighborhoods is crucial to safety. We know that investing in our young people makes a huge difference. We know that neighborhood policing works. We know that part of the strategy to keep people safe, an essential part, not optional, an essential part is bringing community and police together. You cannot have the levels of safety that we need without that. So, we know for years and years, neighborhood policing was proven in just the facts we saw on the ground. The fact that crime kept going down as we drew police and community closer together. And even with the challenges we faced, and we see real challenges right now, we're going to be straightforward about them and how do we address them, but we do need to take stock of some of the progress we've made, including even to this moment. Right now, this point in 2021, overall crime is down 11 percent year-to-date compared to last year.

The fact is when you look at ten years ago, 20 years ago in this city, you see how consistently crime has gone down. Even when we have tough moments, extraordinary moments, perfect storm moments like the coronavirus crisis, we still have to take stock of how much has been achieved, community and police working together over the last ten, 20 years. Robbery and burglaries, crucial example, down 60 percent compared to 20 years ago. So, we're going to fight back the challenges we've had in the last year, but we're also going to keep our eyes on the prize that we know what works. And we're going to put that back into action in a big way in the months ahead. So, we're planning right now for the summer to create a safer summer in New York City to address the scourge of gun violence. And this has been a horrible outgrowth of the COVID crisis. We've seen it all over the country. It has to be stopped and it can be stopped, and it will be stopped. And we also know something that's plaguing this whole country is too many guns in too many places. These mass shootings in recent days put a horrible point on that. We need to turn around that situation nationally for us to achieve everything we want to achieve here in New York City.

But we're going to use all the tools we have right now to ensure a safe summer. And today I announce Safe Summer NYC. This plan focuses on the three pieces that are crucial, our communities, our cops, and our courts. Put those three pieces together and everything's possible. And that's exactly what we intend to do. We're going to invest further in our communities. You've heard about investments today. You're going to be hearing about a lot more. We're going to have the right police presence in key areas, where we need to be to stop the violence. And we're going to coordinate across the whole justice system to make sure that we can act on the most important cases and ensure consequences. These three, community, cops, and courts will

make all the difference. And it's the exact right time to do it because the city is coming back. Everyone can see it. The city is coming back from COVID. All over you see reopenings. All over, you see jobs coming back. We are in a position now to re-knit our social fabric in New York City once and for all. This is the exact time to put this plan into place to ensure we keep moving forward.

Now investing in community is crucial. And over the years, when that has been an essential piece of an approach to achieve safety, we've gotten there. We've made real progress. But when that's left out, you can't achieve real safety. So, we're going to invest more and more. We're already doubling the Cure Violence workforce. That's crucial. You heard the Council Member, Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers talk about how important that is to her community and all communities – more work by the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System. This is a proven approach so much so that President Biden has now invested literally billions in the future of community-based solutions to violence all over the country, and New York City was one of the places that proved that this model works. We're going to double down on it now.

We're also going to double the summer youth anti-violence employment effort. This has been an effort to ensure that young people who are at risk get opportunities for summer youth employment, get steered in the right direction. This is an idea, and I want to give credit where credit is due, it's been championed by Council Member Farah Louis of Brooklyn. This is an idea we're putting into action now. Thank you to Council Member Louis. We'll double that workforce, kids going into youth employment this summer as part of an anti-violence strategy. We're going to be expanding the Saturday Night Lights approach to 100 sites, give young people positive alternatives, including at the hours that are most sensitive. Those are just examples. Many, many other community investments are happening well beyond that such as yesterday, when we talked about the investment in Fair Student Funding in our schools, and so many other things we'll be announcing in the coming days as we look forward to the executive budget on Monday. So, community investment, crucial. Particular focus on our young people, crucial.

And second, cops – ensuring that our cops are in the places we need them most intensely. So, this is the Top 100 Blocks strategy. Focusing our officers, literally pinpointing right down to the block level where there've been problems with violence, stamping out those problems, realizing that it's a very few people who commit most of the violence and having cops in the right place is crucial. Precision policing depends on having enough officers. So, Summer All Out will be instituted again. It's worked in the past. We're going to use it again this summer, and we're going to relaunch, now that we're getting past COVID, we can go deeply again into the Ceasefire program, an innovative, effective, focused, intensive program, focused person by person on those who do violence or might do violence, a proven effort to stop violence before it happens.

Courts. So, I talked about community, cops, and courts. Let's talk about courts. We're getting some good news now from the court system, we're hearing real specific plans to come back and fuller strength. That's good, really good news. Really important news. And we need to coordinate across the entire justice system. So, we're launching the Joint Force to End Gun Violence. This means all of the different elements of the justice system, a variety of City agencies working together, again, focusing on that small number of people driving violence,

focusing one-by-one on the strategies that will stop the violence, and a particular focused effort with district attorneys to ensure that serious gun cases get the attention they deserve. All of this, especially with the courts coming back, will make a huge difference. Now look, these three pieces, community, cops, courts – these will be transcendent. I'm absolutely convinced.

We could go farther though. We need the State of New York to come up with serious reforms with the parole system to address something that's long gone ignored, but we're hearing about more and more lately for good reason. Parolees need a lot more support, jobs, housing, the kinds of things that will get them on the right track, not the wrong track. And we need the Congress to act on the issue of guns once and for all. We all see it with our eyes. You want to help the people in the communities in New York City, you want to help the officers of the NYPD do their job? Stop the flow of guns into New York City once and for all. Only the Congress can do that and it's time for them to act. With all that said, I want you to hear from the person who has engineered this plan. Safe Summer NYC has really been his brainchild and he's put together all of the pieces and he is responsible for making it come to life. As the Chief of Department, he knows a lot, and when we announced him in this role, he spoke pointedly about his youth in Southeast Queens, and seeing the horrible impact of violence on a community and understanding that we have to reach young people in particular, give them positive alternatives while also doing smart focused policing. So, here to tell you about this plan, our Chief of Department of the NYPD, Rodney Harrison.

Chief of Department Rodney Harrison, NYPD: Good morning. And thank you, Mr. Mayor. You know I also want to thank you for your support opening up the 116 Precinct. You are absolutely right, that's where I grew up. My family still lives there. So, it was very important that we do what we have to do to protect a lot of the cities that, unfortunately, are going through some of the violence and too often, I've seen issues in South Jamaica, Queens, and this is going to be a big step in the right direction. So, thank you for your support with that. So, partnership approach is going to be the strategy for 2021. In order for us to make this a safer city cops-plus-community is going to be the strategy. And we have a couple of things in place that we just need to strengthen. One of them is going to be Ceasefire. Just take a look at the shootings and the violence that we've had year-to-date – a lot of it happens to be through gang-motivated violence, and Cease Fire is a big strategy, working in our communities of concern to make sure we let the gang members know that we're not going to take it anymore. And the way Ceasefire works is, we're working with our community partners to make these notifications. And I think that's going to be a big step in the right direction. You know, we want people to come forward. We have all types of hotlines that we want people to utilize. One of them being a gun-stop hotline, that number is going to be 866-GUN-STOP. If anybody has any information about an illegal gun out there, utilize that hotline, and you could be compensated up to a thousand dollars for a firearm that's recovered. We want to maybe even try to implement more – implement more gun buyback amnesty programs, you know, open up the different churches and see if people would be willing to turn over guns. And, once again, there could be reward for handing in a handgun or some type of rifle. And Crime Stoppers – you know, you just take a look at a couple of incidents that we had this year – the one incident that kind of, unfortunately, is somewhat chilling is the shooting into 114 Precinct with [inaudible]. The way we were able to get those individuals and apprehend them was through the Crime Stoppers hotline – 1-800-577-TIPS. You know, people came

forward. There was a frustration and somebody said, I'm not going to take it anymore and gave us the information based upon the pictures that we were able to give out.

So, that's going to be the strategy going into the warmer months. We need the community's help. But it's going to be a partnership, strengthening neighborhood policing, getting back to the build-a-block meetings, making sure it is dialogue, making sure there is communication. What are the issues and how do we fix them together? Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Chief Harrison. So, we're going to be doing a lot of work and a lot of collaborative work with communities and police together, but I also said that it's communities, cops, and courts. It is about bringing all the pieces together. And a lot of what matters most is the work we do with our District Attorneys. District Attorneys understand what it takes to create accountability, to ensure there are consequences for anyone who does violence towards their fellow community members. They also understand the importance of neighborhood policing and neighborhood solutions to violence. So, I want to turn now to the District Attorney of Queens who is really focused on reducing gun violence, reducing recidivism, getting to the actions that will really turn things around in Queens and this whole city. My pleasure to introduce District Attorney Melinda Katz.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very much, District Attorney. And thank you, you always speak from the heart. And I also want to congratulate you and your team, and everyone in the NYPD for that really important operation. You talked about stopping someone, trafficking guns in the city. No matter what is thrown against us from the outside our boundaries, we're still making things happen. I give you a lot of credit for that. Thank you.

I want you to hear now from another one of our district attorneys from Brooklyn, who has been a leader in reform efforts, comes from the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, understands that neighborhoods of Brooklyn, understands that the only way forward is reform and creating real consequences for those who do violence against their fellow Brooklynites. And he's been a leader in the efforts to change and improve the justice system. And he's going to be a crucial partner in this new effort for a safe summer in 2021. The District Attorney of Brooklyn, Eric Gonzalez –

[...]

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you so much, District Attorney. And congratulations to you and your team. Things are getting back in gear and you're already moving successful prosecutions. So, I commend you and thank you for your partnership. And as I said, I know, you know the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, I know you know the impact of this violence and what we can do to stop it, and we're going to do that together in 2021. So, thank you very, very much.

And now, we're going to go back to Queens for one more – one more speaker to give you some insight on how important these moves are. For years, he was Chair of the Public Safety Committee in the City Council. Now, as Borough President, he is someone who really

understands what we've got to do at the grassroots for our young people, the kinds of investments we have to make, but also the way we have to create the right consequences for anyone that does violence. And he's going to be helping us in many ways as we advance this plan. My pleasure to introduce Borough President of Queens, Donovan, Richards.

[Inaudible]

Borough president, are you there?

[Inaudible]

Hold on, we have a technical difficulty, Borough President. Hold on. Hold on, hold on – let's see if we can fix that or we'll reset it if we can.

[Inaudible]

Want to give him a moment? Okay. We'll give him one moment while we do a few other things, because I've got my indicators next. So, I'm going to do all three indicators and I'm going to say a few words in Spanish, and, hopefully, by the time that is done, you'll have the Borough President back. Okay. Technical difficulties happen in this world, we'll just flow with it. Okay. Let me go over – why don't you turn that off? Turn the volume off for now while we do this first and just reset. Good. Okay. You have him or should I do indicators? Indicators. Okay. Live television –

Okay. Indicator number one – now, today, again, like yesterday, we have some real progress and I want to highlight this. We are far from out of the woods, I'll keep saying it, but we see really good numbers today. So, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report, 161 patients. Again, well below our threshold. That's great. Confirmed positivity, 52.35 percent. And today's hospitalization rate, 2.65 per 100,000. So, that number is going down too. We're very happy about that. New reported cases on a seven-day average, that number now is 2,233 cases. Again, you see steady decline there. That's fantastic. And again, always the most important percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19 – today's number, on a seven-day rolling average, 4.67 percent. Squarely below that threshold of five percent we set a long, long time ago. So, that is definitely good news. Let me say a few words in Spanish, and going back to Safe Summer NYC –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Before we go to our colleagues in the media –

Moderator: We'll go to Q-and-A.

Mayor: We're going to go to Q-and-A, and, at some point, we're going to get the Borough President back. He will be heard. Okay. So, now, we're going to go to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chief Rodney Harrison, by Dr. Chokshi, by Corporation Counsel Jim Johnson, by Ben Furnas, the Director of the Office of Climate and Sustainability, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to James Ford from PIX11.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. It's very exciting to be first.

Mayor: You are the lead-off hitter, James. A position of honor.

[Laughter]

Question: Well, I greatly appreciate it. You just did the indicators and I'd love to just get maybe some more reactions from you. Here we are two days in a row below the five percent threshold for seven-day rolling averages for infections, to what do you attribute that? And is – while it's worth noting that pleasant weather allows more people, like myself, to be outdoors, how much is that part of the improving picture? And what are your concerns for the later months of the year when weather gets more harsh and people, including school children, will be back indoors more?

Mayor: I'll give you my very quick summary, James, then we'll get Dr. Varma into this. I think it proves the power of vaccination, first and foremost. We're talking now, as you see, we're getting close to six million vaccinations – that is such a huge number that, unquestionably, that is changing the trajectory. And it is a clear message, the more vaccinations, the better. If we want to get out of this crisis, go get vaccinated, period. I think on top of that, people are being real smart. Continue to wear their masks and I'll keep saying it, at least through June, stick with the mask, stick with the social distancing, people are still being smart and cautious and that's helping us. And then all the extraordinary efforts that people are making, starting with everyone in our schools, which have been the safest places in the city, all the constant focused on health and safety. That's been the difference maker. Dr. Varma, you want to add.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah. Thank you, James, for the question, and I will say that we are very cautiously optimistic about the numbers that we see. You know, we had looked at different scenarios and our real concern was that when the variants take hold that we might see a third wave and we have been, you know, pleased to see now that we're actually heading in the exact right direction. You know, over the past two weeks, we've seen an over 25 percent decline in all of the major things that we follow, case numbers, test positivity, hospitalization and, you know, I can't give unfortunately a clean answer to say it's any one thing. As the Mayor has noted, it's really a combination of things that have all come down to the same facts, New Yorkers are doing the things they need to do. They're continuing to wear masks, particularly indoors. They're continuing to get tested at high levels, again we're seeing 70 to 80,000 tests being done on average in any given day. They're continuing to stay home when they're sick except for needed medical services, and they're getting vaccinated. And now we know that we have the supply that we need to get people to get vaccinated, anybody 16 and above should be getting in and getting those vaccines right now. So, we are optimistic that if we continue all of these things, individual measures, we continue our testing and tracing, we continue vaccinations, that we're going to continue to drive case numbers down, and then we will, as the Mayor has said, you know,

sometime in June and onward, we can start looking at and really reopening our society and relaxing some of those measures. But now is not the time to relax.

Mayor: Yeah, and James, look, it's also just following the data and the science. And one thing that has been really consistent in a city is we've made the decisions based on the data and the science. Some other places didn't do that. They really got burned. We continue to do that. And it, it really proves to be the right way. Go ahead, James.

Question: Thank you for that. And also, for my colleague, Nicole Johnson, for you, Mr. Mayor, and for Chief Harrison. Can you detail – we're obviously we have jury deliberations going on in the Derek Chauvin trial. Can you detail the preparations the city and the NYPD are taking to prepare for reactions to the verdict, and how do you feel about the trial and the process related to the prosecution of Mr. Chauvin?

Mayor: I'll start, James, and I'll turn to Chief Harrison. I haven't followed all the intricacies of the trial. I'll tell you that the the horrible, just disgusting images we saw of a man being killed before our eyes and the just blatant disregard of Chauvin at that moment, I think that's something that lives in all of us painfully, and I just want to see justice served. It's up to that jury to decide that, but that's just what I feel. We saw something horrendous and unacceptable, and there has to be a consequence for that. The preparation has been to be ready for any outcome. What I hope and pray is that justice is served, and if people come out to, in any way, express themselves that they realize the power of peaceful protest and we'll be ready to support peaceful protest and respect it. We'll certainly have enough officers ready, and we've been preparing carefully and obviously learning lessons from the past as well and how to do better. So, in a world with a lot of variables, I can at least say that a lot of thought has gone into the preparation here and Chief Harrison's has been deeply involved in that planning, so I'll turn to him.

Chief Harrison: So, we've been preparing for if there's going to be some concern for about a month now, and it's all hands on deck. All the police officers right now are ready to go with the press of a button. You know, we've taken a look at some of the issues that we had to deal with in 2020 during the summer months and some of the looting and the rioting, and we've learned from it. But we also have other things that we learned from the DOI report regarding implementing community affairs for those that want to protest peacefully. So, we have some good strategies in place. We've had some tabletops with our executives to make sure that if there's a different scenario, how do we deploy our officers? We haven't gone to 12 hour towards yet, no days off, but that's something that we need to implement. We're ready to do that as well. So, we're prepared to protect the city.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Chief. We're going to hold up on our colleagues in the media for a moment because we have resolved our technical difficulties and thank you for your patience Borough President, and you heard me talk about your long experience on these issues. And so, I want you to really give your insights into how we go about creating a safe summer in this city.

[...]

Thank you so much Borough President, and I want to give you credit because you reached out to me about Woodside Houses and Astoria Houses, and you said very consistent with your values, we need to get the Cure Violence Movement and the Crisis Management System in there quickly. We're seeing some signs of challenges. We need to address that with community-based solutions, and we moved immediately on your suggestion and are getting that support there right away. So, thank you for looking out for the residents of those developments and thank you for being a believer in these community-based solutions. All right, we are going back to our colleagues in the media. Who's up now?

Moderator: The next is Katie Honan from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning everybody. How are you, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Good, Katie, how you been?

Question: I'm good. My question is about some of these initiatives for safety. Is there – I know a lot of them seem geared towards young people but is there data that shows there's a disproportionate amount of gun violence by young people, because I – you know, I've seen some of the gun arrests, it's older people. So how does the – how will the NYPD and you plan to target gun possession and arrests of older people who have guns?

Mayor: I'm going to just say something quickly and then turn to the Chief. Yeah, I mean, look, you're absolutely right. I watch the constant flow of information and you're right. You do see some older folks involved in gun violence, including some gang and crew situations. But I think what we know is that we can make a huge impact on young people. We can reach young people and turn them towards a better path. We do know that too much of the violence is committed by young people. And so, you know, both from everything we've experienced, but also what we're hearing from community leaders, there's a real focus on trying to get there early and intervene in young people's lives. Obviously, so much of what the Cure Violence Movement and Crisis Management System does is diverting young people away from violence or convincing them not to participate in violence. So, it's central to every strategy, but Chief Harrison, do you want to add?

Chief Harrison: Yeah, so Katie, you know, I stated earlier regarding our concern with a lot of these gang violence, it's actually youth crews that we're seeing too often committing the violence. In order for us to stop the violence, we have to get these young men and women in the right direction and get them out of these gangs, teach them a trade, teach them a skill set, the community centers that we have hopefully sooner than later in the 116, we had one in the 75 Precinct. Those are the little things that are going to help. Those are the little things that are going to give kids hope in the city, and it's important that we all invest into what the police department is going to provide going into the future.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: Thanks. And I want to go back to the restoration of funding for the one 116th Precinct. I know when it was cut from the most recent budget in June, it was also kind of

included in the list of things that you cited as one example of you reducing the NYPD's budget which you said that was sort of important and especially after protests. So, will there be other funds you're taking away from the NYPD's budget, or I'm just confused because it's – I know there was a great need there, and there was a large community push to restore that funding for the 116, but it was also held up by you as an example of how you were cutting funds from the NYPD's budget. So, can you just explain a little bit?

Mayor: Sure, it's a good question, Katie, and I appreciate it. Look, there was an environment at that moment where the central concern that I was responding to, another City Council was responding to is the desire for investment in communities. And at that point a year ago, as you remember well, we did not have resources. We were going through a horrible situation because of COVID and the ability to invest in communities meant we had to make choices. And we did take resources from the NYPD and put them into community needs like youth centers, recreation centers, et cetera. This 116th Precinct building was something that could not happen in that environment because of those trade-offs. We're continuing with those investments in young people, but now, because there are some resources, we can make good on that deep desire in the community to have this precinct building. And this is a community-based response, you heard from all the elected officials. This is something the community has been asking for a long time, to address real on the ground problems in the community. So, we end up being able to do both is the answer, Katie. If it was one or the other, which was the choice in 2020, we leaned into the investment in young people. Now, thankfully, we have the resources to address both these issues. And one thing that was very clear in the last months was community leaders kept coming back and saying, hey, now that we're getting a stimulus, this is something that still needs to be fulfilled. So, we heard those community voices.

Moderator: The next is Matt Troutman from Patch.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking my call. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Matt. How have you been?

Question: Well, hoping to get outside and enjoy this weather.

Mayor: You have that opportunity. Take it, Matt.

Question: Yeah, we'll see when that happens. Okay, I have a question from a colleague. He recently reported that the last Ethiopian Orthodox church in Harlem faces eviction by May 28th. Now what happened is their landlord, which is the Housing Preservation Department struck a deal with East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust that was set up affordable housing in the building. It's on Adam Clayton Powell and West 121st. Now members of the church obviously have some mixed feelings about the eviction given who's going in there, but more than that, it's clear that they're not getting any help from their council member or the city. Were you aware of the situation and is there anything that the city could do on the eviction or to help them find a new home?

Mayor: I'm glad you're raising it, Matt. I was not aware of this. I'm concerned about it based on what you're saying. I'm going to ask right away HPD to see what we can do to help them either on that same site or on a different site. But no, this is the first I'm hearing of it and I'm definitely going to look into it personally. Thank you for raising it. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, and my second question, it relates to the Homebound Senior Vaccination Program. Obviously, it's on pause or was on pause because of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, but recently a council member tweeted out that is going to – it is restarting but with the Moderna vaccine. I hadn't seen anything official on it. Obviously, I might've missed something, but has it been restarted and has it been restarted with Moderna?

Mayor: Okay, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi in just a second to say this, first of all yes, the answer – first the answer is yes, it has been restarted with Moderna, but we have not made a final judgment on where we're going because we expect by the end of the week clarity from the federal government on Johnson & Johnson. And I've been pretty open about this, and I think Dr. Fauci has been very clear about it. You know, we expect resolution soon, most likely resolution is some restrictions or limits on who gets Johnson & Johnson, but still allowing for plenty of people to be able to receive it safely. In that instance, the best thing to do would be go back to Johnson & Johnson for the homebound, because it's by far the more usable option and better option for homebound folks. It's one shot and done. But we need that answer. In the meantime, we're starting to use Moderna to see how that goes and to give us something to keep the effort moving in the meantime, those folks of course will need a second shot later on. Dr. Chokshi, you want to add?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes, sir. Just to build on what you've said. That homebound program encompasses a range of different providers of vaccination. There are – there's the city program, which includes some contracted providers, and then there are private providers who also do in-home vaccination. We know that some of the providers within both groups are starting to use Moderna in large part because we've gained experience with respect to the stability and the storage and the handling of the Moderna vaccine, and so some in-home vaccination is occurring with Moderna due to those developments. But as the Mayor has said, Johnson & Johnson vaccine offers a host of advantages, particularly given that it's one dose, it's easier to store, and it is more stable and easier to handle as well. So, we'll await the decision this Friday, and make a sort of the longer-term plan with respect to homebound vaccination based on that.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Mayor, good morning, and good morning to Chief Harrison. I guess my first question is this: I know this is a summer anti-violence program, but I wonder why we would wait until the summer given the fact that the latest crime stats showed that in the last week, shootings and shooting victims are up 250 percent, and I wonder if you're going to start immediately or wait until sometime this summer?

Mayor: Marcia, everything we're talking about is things that we're moving on right now that we're going to build up for the summer as well. Obviously, at this point last year, things were really, really suspended in this city because of the depth of the crisis. So, those percentage numbers, they're factual, but then I don't think they represent truly what's going on. What's going on is the NYPD is out there really rigorously, achieving more gun arrest than any time we've seen in 25 years. We're getting a lot more work being done between police and community. This is what Chief Harrison's been talking about, bringing police and community back together. We see a lot of evidence of that happening, and we're going to turn the tide, but this work has been going on already, and it will deepen all the way to the summer. Go ahead, Marcia.

Question: One of the problems that the Police Commissioner has talked about recently, and I'm sure that both you and Chief Harrison are concerned about is the fact that as soon as you arrest people, they seem to be put back on the street. Is there any effort that's going to be made to try to change the bail laws or go to Albany to change it so that people who are arrested on serious gun crimes are actually put in jail on bail – without bail?

Mayor: Marcia, most important thing that can happen to make sure there's consequences is that the courts are going to reopen, and we're hearing good news. Literally in the last 24 hours, the plans being put forward by the court system to start moving back to full strength in these next few weeks that's absolute crucial. That's what's going to lead to the consequences. That's, what's going to lead to folks who are arrested for a gun offense, actually experiencing the consequences they should. It was not possible when the courts weren't functioning – it's going to be happening again now. You heard the District Attorney of Brooklyn talk about prosecutions now. They are beginning again. You heard the District Attorney at Queens talk about the bust they did, stopping guns from coming into the city. What we've been saying for the last year is bring back the court system and we can make all the pieces come together again, and I'm very happy to say we now know the court system is coming back soon and that'll make all the difference.

Moderator: The next is Erin from Politico.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. With regards to the 116th Precinct, first of all, how much are you spending on this? What's the cost? And then just to sort of follow up on, on Katie's question, I'm just wondering, I know there was a push to invest in communities. At the same time, there was a lot of pressure to explicitly cut the Police Department budget, and that is something that you responded to, and you know, in the year that his intervened since, have you made come to the conclusion that it was the wrong decision to do that because a lot of these items have been rolled back. What is your thinking right now on is it right to cut the Police Department budget for the sake of doing so? Or should we not be doing that?

Mayor: First of all, I'd just say it's a fair question, Erin there, and I think what we set forward in the budget in June we've been doing, so I don't agree with the words “roll back.” We set out a vision, we've acted on the vision. We've made some adjustments along the way, but the essential set of decisions made in June are absolutely moving forward. This is about investing in communities. That's the plea I heard from communities all over the city, invest more in communities, invest in kids, invest in community centers, invest in education. Again, thank God, we're now doing that in an unprecedented manner because of the stimulus, because of the actions

of the State Legislature, we're able to make those investments. That's where we're going to keep our focus. But this particular, specific decision around the 116th precinct, this is something that for decades the community asked for and we had hoped to do and believed it was a smart thing to do. Now we can do it again, because the resources are there.

I am – to your bigger question, and I think you asked the dollar figure. I have the capital expenditure for this new precinct and community centers, \$105 million, and that will play out over several years as it's being built. But I think right now we're in the right place in terms of the ability to make huge investments in communities, root-cause investments, go at education, go at youth services, Cure Violence Movement, Crisis Management System, affordable housing, all the root cause kinds of things that people care about, and maintain an effective police force that can serve communities respectfully. So, I think we're at the right place in terms of the number of police officers, for example, and I think that's, what's going to allow us to, you know, turn the city, continue to move this city forward, continue recovery, you know, have a safer summer. I think we're in the right place to achieve that. Go ahead, Erin.

Question: Great, thanks, and then you referred a few times to, you know, more consequences for people who possess guns and commit gun violence. Is there, is that totally due to the courts going back to normal operations or is there actually a policy change in here that will increase consequences for those crimes?

Mayor: The crucial thing is just having the courts operate again. We haven't had an outlet for all the activity. You know, you can have the police doing their job in an amazing way. As you're hearing, highest level of gun arrests in a quarter-century, police out there doing their job, working with community members, folks getting arrested, who unfortunately, you know, carried a gun and cause harm to others, and then nothing could be done because the court system wasn't functioning and there weren't consequences, and that was backing up everything. The fact that the courts are reopening and we're waiting for all the details, but we're hearing, you know, very good direction from the Office of Court Administration. That's going to allow everything now to start moving forward. That's going to create a culture of consequence again, which you need. So, I think this'll be exactly what we've been needing. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Nolan from the Post.

Question: Hey, good morning everybody.

Mayor: Hey, Nolan. How've you been?

Question: I'm alright, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good.

Question: To the shootings plan – you rolled out a plan last summer called Summer All-Out, which said it was going to focus 300 officers across I think it was 10 precincts in the city. The current plan talks about putting 200 officers back in these – back in high-risk precincts, which

aren't identified in the bullet points your office just sent out. So, one which precincts are you guys going to be focusing on? And two, why a hundred fewer officers, this summer?

Mayor: I'll turn to Chief Harrison. Look, we're going to make sure that the officers are where we need them to be, and we'll make adjustments constantly. This is what CompStat is all about, and this is what precision policing is all about, and I really want people to remember, this is the NYPD, the same NYPD that over, you know, 25, 30 years has done extraordinary things to make this city safer. They're very good at figuring out how to make these adjustments, but what we're saying more and more as we're going to be adjusting, not to the precinct level, but down to the block level, you know, looking at the blocks that are the most problematic looking at the individuals that are the most problematic, that has been proven more and more to be the most effective approach, and we'll move officers around as needed to achieve that approach. Chief Harrison, you want to explain that further?

Chief Harrison: Sure. So, there's a couple precincts that where we're struggling in. 7-5 Precinct in East New York, they have a big spike of shootings are up to 67 percent, and you take a look at Brownsville, Brooklyn they're up 67 percent in shooting incidents as well. So, those are two of the commands that were more than likely get a bulk of the other all-out personnel. We're also seeing a big spike, unfortunately, in the Bronx. There's several commands that we're really taking a close look at, one of them being the 4-8 Precinct. We're going to more than likely send officers from the All-Out process to that command as well. It's important that we put them on the right tours, the right hours, the right days-off to make sure we do whatever we got to do to interdict some of this shooting violence that we've seen in the city. So, the plan is in process and it should be squared away before the end of the week.

Mayor: Excellent. Go ahead, Nolan.

Question: The point about using precision policing to make lasting impacts on the street. That Summer All-Out plan that I previously referenced, identified those 10 precincts, and in the course of the press conference, I had to check the shooting stats of those 10 precincts. All of them are up. Two of the precincts, just – all of the seven that I managed to spot [inaudible] up two of the precincts that the Chief just identified our precincts that were identified as part of the Summer All-Out plan last year. So, why should we have confidence that there will be a lasting impact from this plan to cutting shootings when last summer's plan doesn't appear to have had one?

Mayor: No, I don't agree with that analysis. I respect it, but I don't agree with it. Last year, again, perfect storm, literal perfect storm, global pandemic, society shut down, a million jobs lost almost, schools shut down, houses of worship shut down. Everything went wrong simultaneously. The social fabric was profoundly disrupted, and we had to work in that context to figure out a way forward. Since then, thank God, the city is clearly coming back. Huge number of jobs have come back and schools in session coming back fully in September, NYPD clearly has approached the gun situation with real success, the gun violence, excuse me, the gun arrest proved that it's just a very, very different situation. We also have a lot more community cooperation and Chief Harrison has been very straightforward about this. The relationship that had been built meticulously for six years was troubled last year and it was stressed last year and

we needed to bring it back, and a lot of work has been done. A lot of reforms, a lot of dialogue to improve that relationship again, and that now is going to help us as we go into this summer.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Michael Gold from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Michael, how you been?

Question: I'm doing well, thanks. I wanted to start by asking you about the gun violence epidemic that we've seen recently. We've been hearing from police officials and particularly from the Commissioner that much of the rise has come from the delay in court proceedings and a number of recent criminal justice reforms that have put offenders back on the streets. But your administration's analysis has shown a big jump in gun arrests from people with no prior arrest or criminal history. So, I'm wondering what you guys think is behind that and why so much public messaging it's focusing on repeat offenders, but not that data.

Mayor: Well, it's a really good question, Michael and I will start with the most universal answer: it's all of the above. Whether it is someone who unfortunately is committing an offense for the first time, or it's repeat. We have to be on top of both situations, and I do think the interplay of pinpoint policing, precision policing, where we're seeing problems, being out there in the right way to get guns off the street, but also the anti-violence work, which really helps dissuade young people from violence helps them to determine not to get a gun or not to use a gun. That's been really effective and powerful, and so we're doubling down literally on those Cure Violence and Crisis Management strategies. I think both Matt – so I would not differentiate – your question's a really fair question, but I wouldn't differentiate our level of concern, whether it's someone for the first time using a gun, or who's used a gun multiple times, we have to get at both. But I think the strategies we're talking about, we know work, we have to apply them in a really pinpoint manner, and the last thing I'd say, Michael is, you know, I remember when Bill Bratton first said to me, you know, the, the public dialogue does not take into account. The fact that it's a few thousand people committing most of the serious violence in New York City. You know, eight and a half million people here, and it's a few thousand who commit the most serious violence. The better we do at pinpointing them, and that's why, you know, the Ceasefire approach is crucial, the 100-Block strategy approach is crucial, find the individuals and then with the court system coming back, you know, they can no longer be a factor because there will be consequences. That really is the way forward. Go ahead, Michael.

Question: Thanks. I also wanted to ask about Operations Ceasefire. I know that the program was limited because of that pandemic last year, but can you elaborate a little bit on why that suspension had to happen and what steps you guys are taking to make sure that it can come back in a robust way this summer, since we've got the pandemic still going on while we're also dealing with this gun violence epidemic?

Mayor: I'm going to start and then turn to Chief Harrison, and Chief, I'm going to urge you to help illustrate this from real personal experience, because I think the fact is something like

Ceasefire, in theory, you can do with Zoom, but you really can't in the final analysis. It's a very human effort. It's a very much, you know, I used the phrase "it takes a village" earlier. I think the epitome of ceasefire is when you bring together community members to address an individual who's unfortunately drifting towards violence. It's also about getting all the elements of the city government, and community institutions to work together, to address a specific person, and that's just really hard to do in a remote world, but finally, we're able to get back in the room together and do these things differently, and I think it is communal. I mean, that's what I'd emphasize, Michael, it's a communal solution, and before I turn to the chief, just say, I think one of the biggest lessons that I've learned over seven years plus is community-based solutions are the most eternal solutions. The history all over the world of how people protected their community, and I always use the village analogy, because not far back in all of our backgrounds is a village. It was, you know, community guardians looking out for the community, people of, and by, and for the community. In the modern context, it's things like identifying a young person in need and really bringing to bear a whole dialogue around them, a whole support system that pulled them in the right direction. It's things like Cure Violence Movement and Crisis Management System, where it's community people talking to community people before we ever talk about the need for a formal policing, I think this is more and more what the future will bring, and I think the Biden administration, to their credit, is recognizing and putting major investments in this direction. But anyway, back to Ceasefire, why I think it's going to be successful now is because now people actually be able to get together and have those dialogues in the room together. Chief, you want to add?

Chief Harrison: Yes, sir. So, Mike, in 2019, when we utilize these five was extremely successful. Doing our [inaudible] delivering and getting individuals that were, we'll say, stuck in some of these [inaudible] crews, these gangs, we provided them resources, and the way we were able to do that is working with our community organizers, our partners, and making sure they provided that information to individuals that were part of the game. So, I thought that was a big step in 2019. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, we were unable to get out there as much as we would have liked to. We had to of course practice social distancing. That's why it's important in 2021, identifying those partners that are going to be willing to work with us, go into the homes of these gang members, explain to them the importance of not participating in any type of violence and maybe get them some assistance to make the city safer.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Ariama from Kings County Politics.

Mayor: Ariama, can you hear us?

Question: Hi. Good morning. Almost afternoon. End on a lighter note today for you guys.

Mayor: How you doing?

Question: I'm good. I'm good. My editor in New York, very cheekily wanted to know what your 4/20 plans were, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: I do understand the reference. No plans, Ariama, that behind a long, long time ago. I'll tell you, I'm very open about it. Tried it a few times when I was a student at NYU, just didn't work for me. Here I am. So, nothing dramatic today, but it is happening now for the first time where we have legalization the State of New York, so that is progress. Go ahead, Ariama.

Question: That was my main question, and I'm good.

Mayor: Okay, thank you. Well, that's a good note to end on. We ended on a high point, everybody. Come on, folks, you loved it. I know they loved it here in the room and they thought that was incredibly inventive. Now, look as we conclude the day, everyone just where I was a moment ago, I'm going to end there. I'm excited about what we're going to be able to do in this city this year, the way we're going to bring this city back, the way we're going to create a recovery for all of us, and that's going to include safety, because of recovery for all of us has to include safety, but it has to be achieved by all of us. It is the community-based solutions that are going to be the most lasting and building that bond between police and community that are really going to help us get there. So, that's what we're going to do for this summer of 2021. Thank you everybody.

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