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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MARKING SANDY ANNIVERSARY, MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES
THAT BUILD IT BACK PROGRAM WILL BE COMPLETE BY END OF 2016**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, we all know three years ago our city suffered its – literally, its worst natural disaster ever, and it changed people's lives fundamentally, and so many of the communities affected. Now, I remember being right around here with Jimmy Oddo, just days after the storm, and it was astounding how much pain people were in and how many families had suffered. We saw homes that were just absolutely destroyed – homes that had been a part of people's entire lives. So, you cannot underestimate – even though three years later things are much better, we can't for a moment forget how much pain people went through, how much dislocation, and how much fear, and how Sandy exacted an extraordinarily negative toll on this city.

We know that some communities were hit particularly hard – this was one of them. We also know that neighbors did an amazing job helping neighbors. And in the midst of all of the problems, in the midst of all the pain, the silver lining was what people did for each other – what neighbors did, what community organizations did, what faith organizations did. We saw with our own eyes, a lot of times it was people on the ground long before government agencies got here to help. And I think we can safely say that the story of the response to Sandy is that there were some things government did well, there were some things government did not do well. There are a lot of lessons to learn. I want to believe that over time we've learned those lessons and we've put them into action, and we've learned with each passing month how to do things a little better, and how to finally make people whole. It's not enough – it won't be enough until every family is situated, but we have learned some ways to do things better, and that's helping a lot of families right here in this community.

I want to make sure everyone understands we will not be satisfied until everyone who was dislocated is back in their home. And we have a mission ahead, and it's going to be a very long and complicated mission to create resiliency for this city in all neighborhoods for the long-term. It's going to take a lot of work. It's going to take many years, as a lot of you know. It's a \$20 billion-dollar effort – one we've made some real progress on, and we have great federal partners, but it's going to be a long-haul project to make us safer. The good news in that is we will get safer with each passing year.

Let me thank some of the folks who are here from my administration who did so much to get us to this day where we've made, finally, some real progress, and then you're going to hear some other folks in just a minutes. I have to start with a woman I did not know before we hired her to run our Housing Recovery Office. But I have to tell you, in all – I can say this with no fear of contradiction – in all my years in public service, I don't think I've ever seen a more passionate appreciation for a public servant than what I've seen from people who talk about Amy Peterson, and how she has listened, and how she cares, how she changed things. And she's made a difference for already thousands of families by doing things that weren't done right before. She's fixed them, because she's out in communities listening, and she takes it all very, very personally. Let's give Amy Peterson a round of applause.

[Applause]

I mentioned the \$20 billion-dollar resiliency plan. \$20 billion dollars – a lot of money – very complicated all over the city. The leader of our effort is doing a great job – the director of the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency, Dan Zarrilli. Let’s give him a round of applause

[Applause]

And then two of the leaders of agencies that don’t get a lot of attention, but, I have to tell you, the progress that’s been made over the last two years is largely because they figure out ways to cut red tape, to make agencies do things they hadn’t done before, to streamline things – that’s our commissioner for design and construction, Feniosky Peña-Mora, and our commissioner for buildings, Rick Chandler. Thank you to both of them for helping us get to this day.

[Applause]

And just one other note – I’d like to welcome – we have some folks who we’re very proud of the work they’re doing. They’re graduates of our now fully funded pre-apprenticeship program. These are people who come from communities affected by Sandy, who are going to be getting quality jobs at working on Build It Back projects, helping their own neighbors get back on their feet. So, folks who were affected by Sandy, getting work, getting other people back on their feet after Sandy, and that’s a good thing for everyone. We’re very proud of them.

Let me tell you, it’s so obvious – if you were here in Staten Island in the days and weeks after the storm, you saw Staten Island got hit very, very hard. And we know the human cost – more than half the people who lost their lives in Sandy, lost their lives here. It is very difficult to talk about this tragedy without pausing to remember the many people we lost. We’re focused today, of course, on the families who survived. We’re focused on making them whole and creating the homes, but we lost a lot of people, and we’re devoted to making sure people are safer in the future.

Now, as I said, some people came back and found there literally was no home left, or a home that wouldn’t be possible to live in for a long, long time again. Some were families who had been in that home for decades or even generations. Some were homes that a young couple had just started out in. We knew that we had to make them whole. But the sad fact is, when I came into office, there just hadn’t been progress. There hadn’t been a single construction start. There hadn’t been a single reimbursement check given out well over a year after the storm. And sometimes in life, you can look at something and say it’s just plain broken and we have to start over. And that’s what we did with Build It Back. We said it had to be different, it had to be much faster, it had to help people get back on their feet. And, at the same time, we knew with every home we rebuilt, with everything we did – certainly the homes we’re elevating – we had to create home that would withstand whatever the future brought.

One of the things we had to do – we had to have a lot more capacity. So, we quadrupled the design and construction capacity so we could serve people quickly and fairly. And today, we’re proud to say that we have made an offer to every single homeowner in the program. Every single homeowner knows where we want to help them get through Build It Back. To date – and these are actually different numbers even as recently as Tuesday, because continued progress has been made since Tuesday – to date, 2,015 contraction starts since we came in – 2,015 – and 1,217 homes completed. I can now say that every single homeowner who applied for a reimbursement check has one in hand. We’re very proud of that. 5,319 checks have been sent out, totaling \$104 million dollars. I can tell you that, in total, 63 percent of the Build It Back families now have either...

seen a construction start or completion, or have received the checks. Almost two-thirds of people in the pool have been served in one way or another so far. But that is not enough. We have to finish the job. So, today, we commit to finishing the Build It Back program for single-family homes by the end of next year.

Every single home – that is our mission to get families back in their homes, to use all of the tools we have developed to get it done by the end of next year.

Now, part of what is it is going to take is a real team effort between everyone involved in Build It Back and our homeowners. So, I want to start letting homeowners know today – and we’ll work closely with all the elected officials and community leaders on this – that to keep to this rigorous, rigorous schedule, we’re going to need homeowners who have to relocate during construction or elevation. We’re going to need them to work with us. We will provide them assistance. We will provide them financial help. We will go the distance to make sure they have a good place to be while their home is being elevated or rebuilt. This is going to start for all the ones that are not being worked on right this minute. We’ll come around to the next construction season starting in April of next year. We’re going to need people to have made those accommodations. We will work with them, because when we’re ready to start rebuilding those homes and elevating those homes the first day we can do it, we intend to do it, because we’re going to stick to this schedule.

And I mentioned the long haul. We know – we know what’s going on with climate change. We understand the challenge we’re facing, and we know we’re vulnerable. But because of Sandy, we take it seriously. Because of Sandy, we learned a lot of lessons we had to, and we have the resources now – the \$20 billion dollars – to make a fundamental difference. It’s going to be every borough, and it’s going to have an impact that will protect people for the long haul. Here in Staten Island, we’re making upgrades to the Staten Island University Hospital. We’re improving streets and sewers. We have hundreds of millions invested in coastal protection for the East and South Shores. It’s a very comprehensive effort, and it mirrors what we’re doing elsewhere all over the city, upgrading building standards – the simple things, like getting all those key mechanical elements of the building out of the basement and up higher. There are major coastal protection efforts in Red Hook, in Breezy Point, in Coney Island, Lower Manhattan, and Hunt’s Point. There is already 4.2 million cubic yards of new sand on our beaches to add a barrier, and we built nearly 10 miles of dunes, and over 10,000 feet of bulkheads – again, with extraordinary cooperation from our federal partners. But this is work that will continue, certainly for the entire time that my administration is in office, this work of resiliency will continue, and we hope to constantly improve it as we learn more.

So, it’s simple. We have a mission, to serve these homeowners, to get the job done by the end of next year. We have a long-term mission to make all our neighborhoods safer, and we are devoted to both. And we look forward to the day, not too long from now, where everyone has a home, and when our city and our neighborhoods are even safer. Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Well, there is nothing like meeting someone who went through the storm, and persevered, and showed the resiliency for which Staten Islanders are known and New Yorkers are known, who worked hard to get her home back together, and had to also weather the bureaucratic storms and the mistakes. But I can tell you that Mary Lou Barcia is about to finally – or is now finally back home. Construction recently completed, and, she and her husband Frank, after having to previously live with relatives, and, I guess for some time, even in your garage, right?

Mary Lou Barcia: Yeah.

Mayor: Finally, they get to come home. And we are very, very happy for you, Mary Lou, and we want you to tell everyone your story. Thank you.

Mary Lou Barcia: Starting from the storm?

Mayor: Starting from the storm, absolutely. Please, come on up, Mary Lou.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Marylou.

Well, I said, I saw the – what happened in this immediate area and other parts of Staten Island first hand with Jimmy Oddo. And Jimmy, if you know him, feels what people are going through very personally, very emotionally, and he was distraught seeing what had happened to peoples' lives. And I can safely say that since I came into office, no one has called me more often and pushed harder to get it right on Build It Back than Jimmy Oddo. He has been both a great partner to Amy and a person who has been a conscience in terms of how to do things right. And I want to emphasize that, you know, Jimmy – Jimmy speaks up very, very strongly, and he never pulls his punches, but he also is always constructive about what it's going to take to get something done, and that's part of why we've been able to figure out together some of the solutions that weren't there together.

I want you all to welcome him, and realize that if he seems a little downcast, it's not just this serious subject matter – he's worried his New York Mets.

[Laughter]

And I want him to – there's a phrase, Jimmy – "You gotta believe." Okay? I want you to, kind of, work with that, okay?

Staten Island Borough President James Oddo: I'm going to – I'll work on that."

Mayor: Okay. Ladies and gentleman, the borough president of Staten Island, Jimmy Oddo.

[...]

Mayor: Amen, brother.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: We're going to – we're going to let you jump the line on Senator Lanza. Frank, come over.

[Laughter]

[...]

Mayor: Okay. We have met the contractor who stayed on schedule. We know there was an idea – he existed somewhere – 90 days.

[Laughter]

He kept his word. God bless.

Unknown: Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you, Frank.

Senator Andy Lanza has been a partner in this work. There was a lot that had to be done in Albany, particularly to help make sure homeowners weren't put in double jeopardy on tax issues and other issues. And Senator Lanza has always – has been someone we depend on in Albany – all of New York City depends on in Albany – and we appreciate his leadership. Senator Andrew Lanza.

[...]

Mayor: We also had great partnership from Assemblywoman Malliotakis. And again, she has fought for her constituents and all of New York City in Albany, so we could get it right for everyone. We welcome Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Nicole. Thank you.

[Applause]

Okay, we're going to take questions on this topic, and then we'll do some off-topic as well. Let's start on this topic. Dave?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: You are an observant man, Dave.

[Laughter]

Let's – Amy's going to explain how – what our elevation standards are.

Director Amy Peterson, Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery: Yeah. So, the – this home right here is at the proper flood elevation, but we do give homeowners the option to over-elevate, because it gives them some more space beneath to – to utilize.

Question: [Inaudible]

Director Peterson: You have to go to whatever the base flood elevation is plus two, and I can get you the –

Mayor: Like, here, give an – what's roughly here, you know?

Director Peterson: I think it's like five feet plus the two, but I'll confirm that. And then this home was over-elevated to the eight feet.

Question: So this home right here [inaudible]?

Director Peterson: Correct.

Unknown: Some may be in the program, some may not be in the program. Some may have – this is – this is the challenge of this, and trying to avoid that sort of jack o' lantern feel to a block. You go down the streets of the Upper Ninth Ward, the Lower Ninth Ward – that was the challenge in Katrina. Not everyone is in the Build It Back program. Not everyone chose to be in it. So, this is the – one of the challenges we have.

Mayor: Right. But I think the – given that complexity, Dave, the common sense answer is, for those who are in the program, we're going to make sure their homes are safe for the long haul. And, you know, I think all of us here think about our work in government as literally family by family. Every additional family – we can make sure that they have a safer, more secure future. That's our job, so, when we do it, we make sure it is up to the code, in terms of what's going to keep them safe from flooding. And I think Amy's been really great working with families, to say – in some cases, they want a little more, and that would make their lives better. We're only too happy to do that for them. Anna?

Question: What happens after the end of 2016, when there is another storm? Are you guys going to resurrect the Build It Back program and rapid repairs? Have you guys thought about whether or not –

Mayor: I think that's obviously a premature question. We're focused on helping the victims of Sandy, and we're focused on resiliency. We're learning lessons all the time about what works. And God forbid we end up

in a situation again, I think we've learned a lot about what's going to work. But, you know, right now, we've got a mission we're in the middle of. Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor, are you concerned about setting such a hard deadline? I mean, there's always the possibility of failure when you set a deadline.

Mayor: Rich, that exists in all of life, and it's certainly in the work we do. Look, I – I came into office saying we were going to get pre-k done in two years. We've committed to the most ambitious affordable housing program in the history of the country, over ten years. It's the only way to get something done. I mean, Jimmy has been exceedingly clear on the point that the only way you move a big complicated organization is to set a hard deadline and force everyone to live up to it, no matter how tough it is. It's tough. I – this is going to be – it's going to take all we got. And Amy's as good as it gets. We're going to need a lot of contractors who keep to their schedules, and we're going to push them very hard on that. We're going to need a lot of contractors. I mean, part of the thing I said about the quadrupling of capacity is – when Amy walked in the door, there just weren't enough contractors, so this wasn't enough physical capacity to get the job done. She's done a brilliant job of expanding that greatly. But we're going to push them very hard to stay on schedule and get on to the next house. And it's going to take every bureaucracy getting out of the way, which is why it's great that Feniosky is here, and Rick's here – these are the folks who are going to have to – they're going to be the blockers, you know? They're going to be the ones that get ahead of the running back and block and make things happen, and clear out the bureaucracy and cut the red tape. But it is a very tough deadline – I'm not minimizing how much of a challenge it is – but we believe if we give it all we've got, we can get it done. Yes?

Question: Mayor, just to go back to the [inaudible] question, I mean, not every home in the Build It Back program qualifies for elevation. Not every home is in the Build It Back program. Some homes will end up elevated, some won't. It'll be too costly for some homeowners to do it on their own. And is that an area of concern for you, both in terms of safety – I mean, the city is – and then in money. I mean, the city spending money to rebuild some houses that won't elevate, and then those homeowners will be hit with [inaudible].

Mayor: Look – I'll let Amy speak to some of the details. Look, we obviously want the best outcome for every individual family. This program was built for people to apply for and to be – for those who are eligible, to follow through. Not everyone was eligible. Obviously, a lot of people chose not to apply – they wanted to pursue a different path. Some people applied and then dropped out. So, all we can measure ourselves by is, we made an opportunity available to people, and, those who followed through, we're going to see them through to completion. We know the next big part of the mission is to try and make the whole community safe. And that's what the \$20 billion dollars and, you know, this is – again, there's a lot of sobering lessons and a lot of sadness when it comes to the topic of Sandy, but there's some, you know, there's some heroes and there's – especially at the locally level – and then there's some things where government did do the right thing. The \$20 billion dollars – you know, it took a long time to finally get there. That was a real commitment from Washington. And we should be, you know, appreciative that that finally did come through – and that's a lot of money, by any standard. So, that's the mission to me – is secure those and help those who are part of the program right now, but build that safer future. Do either one of you want to add?

Borough President Oddo: May I just jump in, sort of, to –

Mayor: Yes, you may.

Borough President Oddo: – answer Anna's question, and Jill's at the same time. The – the project that is going to protect this community the way it needs to be protected – the project that's going to protect the portion of the East Shore, from the Verrazano Bridge down to Oakwood, is the Army Corps Project. And this administration, along with the – Senator Schumer's folks, our friends on the National Park Service, in conjunction with the Army Corps – we just had a meeting yesterday, yet again. That is the project – that long awaited project – that's the thing that protects us against the next big one. So, while we're working on the Build It Back, and finishing Build It Back, and figuring out other ways to be more resilient, we're pressing to make sure that that

construction on that project happens as timely as possible and it gets done, because that's the thing that truly protects this portion of Staten Island from the next one.

Mayor: Yeah?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I'm – between Amy and Dan, I'm sure I can give us some sense of that. I mean, what we've been focused on is getting the money spent quickly. And we've been – I have to say, I think we've had unusually good partnership from the federal government – from HUD, from the Army Corps, from FEMA. I've seen lots of situations where federal agencies were not quick off the draw. In this case, I think they've been really focused, and quick, and good partners. But in terms of where the numbers stand today, either one of you want to –

Director Daniel Zarrilli, Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency: Sure. It's worth pointing out that that \$60 billion dollars was for the entire of Sandy-impacted regions. So, some of it is outside of New York City and the rest of New York State. Some of it's in New Jersey, Connecticut, other places. We have, you know – as part of our \$20 billion-dollar program, there's a lot of federal funds – it's nearly \$10 billion dollars from FEMA, the \$4.2 billion from HUD. We're actively pursuing all of these projects to make sure we are not only continuing the Build It Back program, but also the longer term measures, like the Army Corps, like our public assistance programs – \$3 billion dollars for NYCHA – that we're moving those forward. And those – those details are available on our Sandy tracker website.

Mayor: Great. Yeah?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Amy, why don't you go over the overall numbers?

Director Peterson: There's about 9,300 homeowners in the Build It Back program.

Question: That's in all five boroughs?

Director Peterson: Out of the – yes, five boroughs.

Question: Mr. Mayor, 63 percent have already received help. The remaining 37 percent [inaudible] end of next year. What's the single biggest challenge?

Mayor: Well, I think it is the number of moving parts. You know, again, we need lots of contractors to move quickly – get one job done, go on to the next. We need the families to really hear the fact that we've got to be partners in this. And when it comes time to move out so we can do the work, we need families to cooperate right then, because we're going to be on a very, very rigorous schedule. So, I think it's lots of work sites, lots of moving parts, but we have the resources. Thanks to Amy now, we have the capacity, we have the leadership. I just think it's going to be about, you know, rigorously pushing every day to stay on schedule.

Question: [inaudible]

Director Peterson: Yeah. There are – one of the things when we were talking about funding is – I think it's important to remember, a year ago, there were priorities, and we worked closely with HUD and the other agencies to ensure we had enough money to serve everyone who applied for the program. So, there are no priority levels at this point. Homeowners get through the process as they get through the process in terms of submitting their information. By quadrupling the design and construction capacity, we're hitting all the homes now at the same time in design.

Mayor: On-topic, yes?

Question: How much can you tell us – maybe you guys can tell us how much this costs – this elevation. What's the total cost?

Director Peterson: I don't have it with me, but we can give some information afterwards. The cost is borne by the city. I mean, one of the things that's unique about our program – other programs give out checks and grants to help people, but never cover the full cost, and, so, people actually able to elevate. So, we've been elevating homes and the average cost is about \$200,000 to \$250,000 for the elevation. I don't know the cost for this one.

Mayor: Okay, on this topic. Hold on, yes sir?

Question: Is there any further –

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: Is there any further federal or state legislation that would be required in order to take the program through to completion.

Mayor: Further federal or state legislation – that's an interesting question. I don't know. If anyone could come up and say – anyone know of a definitive answer?

Unknown: Not aware of any.

Mayor: Not aware of any, which is a refreshing situation. Okay, last call for immediate questions on this topic – on this topic. Going once – going twice – yeah, media questions on this topic? Off-topic, go ahead.

Question: Mayor, tonight you have a big fundraiser, which some are viewing as the unofficial kickoff of your reelection campaign. Do you view it that way? And, if so, should New Yorkers use your record on Sandy rebuilding as one of the reasons to vote for you again.

Mayor: Yes.

[Laughter]

On the first question, yes. On the second question, look, it's a long time until we get to those discussions. We're going to put a lot of evidence in front of people of the work we've done and they'll make their choice. But I think the way the public judges any public servant is results, product, specific numbers. So, you know, that time will come when we're going to talk about kids in pre-k. We're going to talk about affordable housing. We're going to talk about streets being safer. And we're certainly going to talk about anything we can do to help people live a better life.

Question: Just as a quick follow-up – is two years out too soon to be having a fundraiser for reelection, or is that just the reality of the election cycle?

Mayor: The latter. Look, I think we've seen it at all levels. And again, as you said, it's an informal beginning. But the fact is, this is what has happened in public life all over this country over the last few decades – its things have stretched out more and more, and obviously people who weren't me started the discussion over the last few months for the future. So, we wanted to let them know that I was resolute about coming back and continuing to serve the people, and that we would have a lot of support in doing that. Marcia?

Question: Mr. Mayor, yesterday you received a lot of applause at the funeral where you talked about the need to have federal legislation to get guns off the streets. And I know on Friday, many people praised you for the state legislation in terms of changing bail. I wonder if there's anything that – because a lot of things are

[inaudible] – is there anything the city can do – and you want the city to do to continue this fight, and also the fight in Officer Holder's name.

Mayor: We will continue that fight in Officer Holder's name. There's no two ways about it. And what happened here just shouldn't have happened, and it was fixable. And so, we are resolute. What we've been doing between the police department, the district attorneys, and my office for criminal justice is try to immediately figure out ways to more effectively work together on prosecutions, and to ensure the flow of information. One thing we can say for sure about the tragedy about the death of Officer Holder is, every day it seems like we're getting yet another report on the missed opportunities to stop his killer. And the way the system didn't function, it wasn't for lack of trying, or because the different people involved didn't care, it was because they literally didn't have the same information. I mean, it's just astounding how it's 2015 in the most advanced city in the country, and yet within our judicial systems and our law enforcement universe, people literally don't have access to the same information. So, this is something I've talked to District Attorney Vance about how we can work together to solve some of that problem. I think the answer is yes, the city, and all of us locally – the district attorneys, the police, the mayor's office – can do some of the – can achieve some of the solutions. But let's face it, our state laws just aren't right. You're not giving judges the power to hold someone who's dangerous. It's as simple as that. And we've got to be able to say, if someone is clearly a danger – and Mr. Howard was undoubtedly a danger. He had a clear, tragic track record of one crime after another, after another, and of absolute unwillingness to follow any instruction of the court. It's not close. He should have been in prison. And we need a state law that says a judge can consider the dangerousness of the defendant in making a bail decision, that a judge must look at the dangerousness before any consideration of diversion. We talked about this the other day – there are a lot of people who've been put in diversion very, very successfully. This is not a negative towards diversion. There's plenty of low-level offenders who go into diversion, get their lives together, don't end up in prison. It's better for them. It's better for the taxpayer. But there's people who do not, by any measure, belong in diversion, and Howard was one of them. So, we've got to make that change at the state level, and I think there's going to be a lot support to do it. And then the last point on gun regulations – Commissioner Bratton spoke from the heart the other day, and I think all over the city – probably all over the country – appreciated it. Here is the top police leader in America, by any measure, and he has been fighting the NRA for decades, saying how can you support policies that end up in the death of our officers? And no one's more legitimate on that topic than Bill Bratton. But I want to add one thing – I think what's happening in this country is weighing on people. I think these campus massacres are changing people's minds. I think the loss of our police officers is changing people's minds. I don't think change is impossible, I think it has to happen. We need to ban assault weapons. We need real background checks. And I think what's going to happen is the NRA is going to have to start to yield, or people are going to vote with their feet, and they're going to tell their legislators we can't go on like this. I think this is going to change because it's become more unacceptable. It was always bad, but what we've seen even in just last year has become unlivable.

Question: On the same topic – some groups that are pushing for criminal justice reform, including the Legal Aid Society in New York, don't agree with your push [inaudible] to allow judges to consider dangerousness. And the Legal Aid Society said last week that they thought allowing a judge to determine what kind of crime is dangerous would disproportionately impact the mentally ill, the poor, and people of color. I want to get your thoughts on that.

Mayor: I disagree fundamentally. I respect the Legal Aid Society greatly, but I'll tell you, Judge Lippman – I think the greatest voice for judicial reform in this state has been saying this for a long time – District Attorney Vance. It's so clear we need this change. And look, we need it combined with the reforms that will address mass incarceration, because there's no contradiction between, as I said, the sort of high-end and the low-end of the scale. We know – and I sat in these weekly meetings with the commissioner and his top leadership, and they talk about active shooters who are out on the street, who somehow – they know who they are, and the criminal justice system has not stopped them. I'm not talking about the kind of low-level offenders who belong in diversion and have never hurt anyone. I'm talking about people who have committed repeated violent crimes and are on our streets. Our system's broken. We have to be able to fix that danger, because one of the things the commissioner, and Chief O'Neill, and Chief Gomez – they all say, here's a city of 8.5 million people, and there are a few thousands people doing most of the shooting – a few thousand. Those folks need to be in prison,

period. Then at the low end of the scale are tens of thousands of people who, in many cases, did very low level victimless crimes, and end up, in some cases, with very harsh and long sentences, or end up in jail for months because they couldn't afford a modest bail. That's crazy too. So, I think we have a chance to solve both of those problems. And I think that will create a more fair justice system for all. And I think that is in the spirit of making sure there's actually equal treatment.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I'm going to – I'm obviously a loyal democrat, and I would do whatever is asked of me, and if something is asked of me I'll certainly look forward to doing it whenever I can. But you know, that's – you that's up to the candidate and I respect his judgment.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: So we – we said a moment ago that these campaigns have stretched out a bit, but that question is downright crazy because we haven't stretched out that far. We're in the – we're not even – amazingly its not even 2016 yet, and as you heard today people are talking about which presidential candidate should stay in the race or not, and there hasn't even been a single vote cast in any primary. So, we're going to have the 2016 cycle, then we're going to have the 2017 cycle, then we'll have a chance to talk about the 2018 cycle. When we get closer, we'll certainly have that conversation. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah, well look. We're very, very proud of the contribution that the city has made to the MTA. It's going to have a very big impact, and we said to the MTA, we want to see a lot of things happen. Obviously the continued growth of the Second Avenue subway, and many other projects, but also things that would help on our existing subway lines to reduce the overcrowding and to add frequency of trains, so that's one of the big priorities we have – to fix the signal systems and other things that will help people in the near-term. But, what I understand is that the MTA came to the conclusion that based on their calendar they were not going to be able to spend as much on the next phase of the Second Avenue subway as they originally hoped to – it was just going to take longer. It's a complicated project. We know the first phase has taken a long time, much more than any of us could have imagined. I think it was bluntly an admission that the second phase will take quite a while. But again, we are very proud of the contribution we are making, we are proud of the reforms that came with it, and we think a lot of change is going to happen for our straphangers.

Question: And may I sneak another one in there –

Mayor: You may, because you asked so nicely.

Question: There will be protestors tonight at your fund-raiser calling you mayor sell-out, saying that you sold out on police issues, especially on broken windows –

Mayor: You know, I find it fascinating that some people weren't paying attention in the year 2013. Some of you were there for all 60 of our mayoral forums, or so, and the televised debates, etcetera, etcetera. I've believed in Broken Windows all along, and I believe in quality-of-life policing, and I actually think it is a progressive position to believe in it. It has to be done right, it has to be done fairly, it has to be constantly improved upon, and that's what I use the example – we reduced certain uses for certain approaches. For example, we said we don't think it's fair to have as many arrests for the lowest level of marijuana possession – that was a decision we made with the NYPD. At the same time, we said we think we need more aggressive enforcement when it comes to traffic violations, and things we think endanger people's lives, as part of our Vision Zero plan. So, Broken Windows has to move with the times, change with the times, but the core concept is absolutely sound. It's something Commissioner Bratton and I agree on 100 percent. So, they can protest all they want, but I've had this view for years, and it's not changing.

Unknown: Two more questions.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, Chancellor Fariña recently spoke at a town hall meeting about diversity in schools and she said that you don't need it within one building, but you can work it different ways, like partnering with wealthy schools with a lower income school and having PTAs share resources or create a pen-pal system. I'm just wondering what you think about her ideas about diversity.

Mayor: I think she is responding to the reality of our city, that we are a city that over decades grew a certain way, and we want people to live together and to experience their lives together, their education together, in every way we can. But we also know that there are some things that are achievable in the near-term and some things that aren't. So I think it's clear that things like our pre-k programs, our afterschool programs bring together kids from a lot of different communities. The choice system we have with middle school and high school does that, and I think the kinds of steps she's talking about add to that as well. Yeah?

Question: Mr. Mayor, last week the state, and the public advocate, and other plaintiffs who are suing the city foster care over the city's foster care system reached a settlement in record time, somewhat of a civil rights, class action lawsuit. I was wondering if you could weigh in and tell me what you think of that settlement. Was there politics at work there?

Mayor: Look, we believe that we are headed for very much in the right direction in terms of how we handle foster care. And we've seen tremendous support from the providers and from the advocates. You look at the history on this case – some of the most respected voices in foster care and in child protection were very adamant that the state should not have pursued this legal action. But they did, and we recognize that at a certain point, there was a practical virtue to coming to a settlement. The fact is, when you go back, for example, to the 1980s, there were 50,000 kids in foster care, now we're just over 10,000 kids. There's been real progress. The previous administration deserves credit, we have continued it and made progress even since we came in to office. We're putting a huge amount of resources into preventative sources and reducing foster care caseloads – actually \$100 million – excuse me \$180 million over five years to cut the foster care caseloads. We had done all that before the lawsuit. So, we didn't think the lawsuit was fair, but sometimes you make a practical decision to settle, and that's how we pursued it.

Question: Now, you mentioned the 2016 cycles – I was wondering if you saw any of last night's Republican debate, if you flipped back and forth between that and the Mets game, and, if you did watch it, if you have any thoughts on the candidates, the issues that were discussed or not discussed?

Mayor: I haven't. I saw only pieces. I do think, once again, there needed to be a discussion of the crisis of the middle class, and what income inequality is doing to this country, and I saw precious little of that. It's interesting now, some of the candidates are talking about flat tax. Let's be really clear, a flat tax would help the one percent more than any other idea. They would love a flat tax. So, what I think we need to do is have a discussion of the fact that the middle class has been stuck in this country for a generation, and there are real policies that could change that. But so far, the Republican debates haven't gotten that. I noted a few weeks back, a little bit of a ray of light. I was very impressed when both Donald Trump and Jeb Bush talked about closing the carried interest loophole for hedge funds. That suggested that some of reality was breaking through. But I think from what I saw, too little of that debate actually talked about the economic reality of most Americans.

Question: Here's a follow up, are you going to any of the Mets games this weekend?

Mayor: I am going on tomorrow night, and I am looking forward to it. I want – I want to begin my lecture now on the topic that being two games to nothing is exactly where the New York Mets were in 1986, everybody –

Borough President Oddo: Who played that year, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: We're going to get to that, Jimmy.

[Laughter]

Everybody, everybody take a chill pill. Being down two games to nothing is not a big deal. Coming home to the Roman coliseum-like Citi Field, where there is incredible support. The Mets lineup is outstanding. I remember the year 1986, and anyone who affiliated with any other team who thought that two games and nothing was a good lead really needs to go back and look at that history, because it didn't work out so well.

[Laughter]

But I also am proud to say I had an experience in 2004 being down three games to nothing. Jonathan, can you give me an Amen?

Borough President Oddo: Amen.

Mayor: So –

Borough President Oddo: Who did they play that year?

Mayor: Yes, well, I can tell you, many people were very dire down three games to nothing. Many people were dire, but it ain't over 'till it's over. So, I would say to Mets fans, you gotta believe.

Thank you, everyone.

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