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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AND BREAKS GROUND
ON NEW EAST NEW YORK SCHOOL**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Well, a very happy birthday to you, Manny. And I want to thank you for all you have done for this community. You have been deeply involved and I really appreciate what you just said that when you heard there was an idea about rezoning in the neighborhood, you started with a position of skepticism and you wanted to make sure that the neighborhood got what it needed and you fought for it, you worked for it. You and a lot of other really devoted people in this community came together to make sure the rezoning would serve the interest of the people.

So, Manny, I want to thank you for that commitment – lifelong resident and someone who loves this community so much that you’ve done something to make it better. Let’s give Manny a round of applause.

[Applause]

I am really thrilled to be in East New York for the beginning of City Hall in Your Borough week. Mr. Borough President, this is going to be a great week. We got a lot we’re going to be doing and the Borough President wants to see tangible for the people of Brooklyn, and we’re standing on some tangible progress right here.

This is, I think, the first groundbreaking I’ve been to where the foundation is already laid but that’s okay.

[Laughter]

We’ve innovated a new concept here today. We’re just ahead of ourselves, what can I say. East New York – Manny very powerfully laid out the history. This is a community that was often left behind, that did not get investment it deserved, that suffered a lot for decades. If you’re going to talk about fairness, if you going to talk about the fairest big city in America this is one of the places where you have to start. Real investment in a community that was left behind.

And Manny mentioned that the particular community desire for a new school goes back to the early 1990s. So, it's been over a quarter-century that people in this community have been fighting for what is finally happening right here as a result of the rezoning. The community suffered, deserved investment, didn't get it, and then we started to see a very different occur.

And I think for a lot of people here in the community and elsewhere it was a bit of a shock that as the city changed, as the borough changed suddenly there were developers who became interested in East New York.

And what we could have had was a situation where we went from mistake which was disinvestment and neglect of East New York by the government to another mistake which would have been rampant gentrification without the community's needs being addressed.

And I believe in my heart had we not intervened, that second scenario could have played out. And I always say as a Brooklynite, anyone who says that they're better off without a rezoning needs to go look at Bed-Stuy and Bushwick and a lot of other communities that never had a rezoning but did get a huge amount of gentrification.

Rezoning is a way to make sure the people's interest are defended.

Now, the skepticism that Manny just talked about is very, very well-grounded. I felt it too when I was in the City Council and I was watching previous commitments made by the City not kept. I mean it's just the blunt honest truth and one of the great examples is in Greenpoint, Williamsburg.

We saw the City of New York claim that it would create community benefits and create affordable housing, and that didn't happen. And so any community member who says well, why should I buy into something, the City hasn't kept its promises before? Well, they have a right to be skeptical.

We had to address that honest skepticism. And I was out here meeting with community members. Councilman, you remember at your behest, pulled together community members. We had a really blunt conversation about what was needed. We had a town hall meeting after the rezoning to talk to people about how we would keep the commitments. We needed to do that to make up for the mistakes of the past.

Now, had we not engaged in this rezoning, I fundamentally believe developers would have come in and done all they could do as of right and the price of housing would have gone up and up, and there would not have been all the new affordable apartments, and there would not have been all the preserved apartments. There would not have been all the things that go with a rezoning and obviously there would not have been this new school.

This is why it was so crucial to act. I did not run for mayor to watch people be displaced from their own community. I fundamentally believe we had to use the tools of government to balance the equation, to protect people, to give them a real ability to live in the place they love.

And that's what this rezoning allowed. It allowed us to rewrite the rules for the community and put the people's interest front and center. So, when people here said, if you're for real show us that you'll commit to more affordable housing, if you're for real show us that you'll commit to open space, show us you'll commit to new schools.

It was our job to show them it really could happen. As I said, the desire for this school goes back over a quarter century. Finally it's being built. And this is a school that will serve over 1,000 students here in East New York, pre-k to grade eight.

It's going to have state of the art facilities, science labs, and music rooms, library, gym – everything is going to be to the highest standards. A community often left behind will now have some of the very best in this city. There's a lot more that comes with this package.

And I want to commend all of my colleagues in elected office, all of whom were a part of this process but especially Council Member Espinal who fought very hard. And he had a very big checklist. It was not just affordable housing to be built new and to be preserved, it was not just a new school, it was parks and playgrounds that had to be rebuilt and refurbished. It was water and sewer systems that had to be modernized, streets and sidewalks on Atlantic Avenue that had to be redesigned to make them safer. All of these things were needed. They were all part of one big package to improve this community.

One other thing I'd like to mention – I was out here in October of 2015 and I was very near here at St. Rita's Church which is a place that he renowned in this community not only as a spiritual home but as a crucial community gathering place. And I told people then that if we all worked together we could get a good result for this community but we also had to work together or else there was a dangerous to this city. Not just to East New York, not just to Brooklyn, but to the whole city because you could feel it then just like you can feel it now.

There is a danger of so much of this city becoming exclusive. There's a danger of a city that becomes too much playground for the wealthy and not a place for everyday New Yorkers. And I've always said that if that ever were to happen it would no longer be the New York City we know and love. This place is great because it's a place for everyone. We can't let that slip through our fingers.

So that's why we have to intervene. We have to make a difference. We have to put the people's interest first and we have to use the power of government to do it. That was my sense of mission then and it remains my sense of mission and its played out here in East New York with the great partnership of so many people here today.

This is a great way to start off City Hall in Your Borough for Brooklyn because it speaks to so many of the challenges facing Brooklyn but also the solutions that we can all achieve together. So, congratulations to everyone on what today means and the many, many achievements ahead for this community.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

I want you to hear from the elected officials but before that from two of my colleagues in this administration who have done so much to help realize this vision. And our Deputy Mayor has spearheaded so many of our efforts to get communities the investment they deserve and to great the affordable housing they need. It's my pleasure to introduce Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen.

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor For Housing and Economic Development, Alicia Glen: Thank you, thank you so much. Thank you Mr. Mayor and thank you everybody for being here today. It's so great to celebrate the ground breaking of this new school and to deliver on another promise that we made to this community, it's part of this rezoning process. For many of you, you know that East New York was our first neighborhood plan in the de Blasio administration and in many ways, it's really helped to shape how we approach all of the other rezonings that we are doing around the city. And I think that the first lesson and the most important lesson is that we learned to start with community. You start with community, you don't start with the planners back at the planning department. You start with the community and you need to do that in order to understand what the needs are first hand, not just from people who are in downtown in Manhattan but from people who actually live in this neighborhood. And to understand that each neighborhood is different and there's no way to really understand that until you've really get involved in the neighborhood and to work collaboratively with all the groups and the folks who live here. And obviously we were very lucky to work extremely collaboratively with the local council member who I would say was a tough but ultimately really fair negotiator who I think also understood that this was an opportunity to actually do what a lot of us in city government and planning talk about as community planning and community development. And actually do that as opposed to just do a zoning or a rezoning. And that's an incredible important differential between this administration and prior administrations.

And through that planning process there were several clear goals that became prominent. Number one – to protect existing affordable housing and to make sure that we built more permeant affordable housing for the folks who live out here in East New York. Second – to help grow existing businesses, to create new job opportunities and bring more stores and services to the existing shopping centers and corridors around here so the people would have better services. But also to marry that to improve parks, streets, community centers, and why we are here today, to build new schools for this neighborhood. The East New York plan was in many respects the first example in decades of actually aligning social and physical infrastructure investments with the land use process. I can't tell you how important that is to actually match the budget to the zoning and make commitments. And we made real progress to date on those commitments. I'm just going to highlight a few.

To date we have provided over 3,500 households facing eviction or harassment with free legal assistance. We've designated two local mission based developers for two city-owned sites and that will generate approximately 500 units of affordable housing. One of those developers is a local MWBE developers, really excited about that. We've also closed on a private site, just down the block when I was driving up which is another 100 units which are in the ground – you can

see it going up as we speak. We launched a program to legalize basement rentals, helping home owners make ends meet while also tapping into new potential apartments that are unused so we can add more affordable housing to the neighborhood. We opened the Workforce One Career Center on Atlantic Avenue. We've awarded over a million and a half dollars in funding to implement commercial revitalization projects. We've launched a new marketing campaign to grow the jobs in the IBZ because this has always been a place where people make things and we are going to keep it that way in the future. We opened an all new universal pre-k center and 374 Pine Street. And we've begun the design work on the new community center, just up here on Pennsylvania Avenue. And of course, today, beginning the construction of a new 1,000 seat school.

Those are just some of the highlights and there are plenty more coming, including better roadways, better parks, stronger and more resilient infrastructure. And for those of you who really want to track this and we want to be transparent, we want to be held accountable, you can track all of this on the very easily named rezoning commitments tracker. Again I want to thank – yes it's very literal, we couldn't come up with any more acronyms, we've run out of acronyms. You can actually check it all and make sure we are doing our job and delivering on the rezoning commitments tracker. But again I think this is really a testament on the community working together and I really want to thank Council member Espinal for his leadership because of him there are \$270 million that are going to be invested in this community. And that's going to make this a stronger, more resilient community so thank you very much.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you very much Deputy Mayor, now someone who is always happy when he gets a new school and he understands the value of a new school with state of the art equipment for our kids, our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

[Applause]

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you Sir. Good afternoon, it's always a great day when we get an opportunity to break ground on a new school because we know that schools are the corner stones of our communities. So this will be a school with 1,000 new seats for pre-k through eighth graders right here in this community. It's going to be equipped with music and art spaces, a new school yard, a green house, and science labs – makes me want to come to this school. Equity and Excellence, this is Equity and Excellence in action – a school with the tools and resources to support the whole child, right here in Brooklyn. This building will be the hub for the entire neighborhood and as a chancellor I couldn't be more excited about this opportunity to build this learning center right in the heart of our community. Just a few words in Spanish, also taking where the Mayor left off, just saying –

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Let's get to building this school and putting kids inside. Thank you.

[...]

Mayor: Alright let's get the rain to hold off here. First let's take some questions on what we are talking about here today, the rezoning of the new school any questions on the media on any of that. Any of the stuff here today. Yes?

Questions: Students that are going to benefit from this school once it's built. Where are they going now? What's not available to them now that this school applies?

Mayor: Chancellor, can you speak to that? Or maybe Ralf?

Council Member Rafael Espinal: I mean two places as I mentioned earlier the schools in Cypress Hills in East New York has historically been overcrowded which is why we continually built schools in the neighborhood and the former Council members did as well. So we are going to elevate a lot of that pressure and also we are going to have new buildings being built right next door which could potential bring about 1,000 new units of affordable housing and we expect those kids as well to come into the school. And I also do believe that this school will also have a District 75, which will also deal with the kids who are being bussed out of the community who are currently going to school, getting those services and other schools outside of East New York are going to be able to stay here in the community with those services.

Mayor: Okay alright is there anything else on the rezoning from members of the media, rezoning or the school etcetera?

Question: When is the planned opening?

Mayor: Two years is it? Someone help me, the planned opening of the school? 2020? 2020, I hear a voice, 2020. Alright last call on these questions.

Okay let before we go to other topics, I wanted to also speak to some of what we have seen in the last few days. And I really appreciate Borough President Eric Adam's comments, not only as a public servant but as a former police officer, but let me add my own. I tweeted about this last week but I just want to send a message to all my fellow New Yorkers, respect for our police is absolutely necessary. It doesn't matter what your views are, you have to respect police officers – they are here to protect us. You know, when people are in trouble, they want a police officer to be there and our officers work hard and they put themselves in harm's way and they deserve our respect. I've seen some videos that disgust me. They are not acceptable. Anyone who thinks it's cute, it's not cute, knock it off, show them respect. If you don't want to talk to a police officer, don't talk to them. If they come up to you, follow their instructions but don't treat them with disrespect. It doesn't help us move forward as a city. With that I want to open up to any questions on any topics. Yes.

Question: I'm wondering if you've seen video that's surfaced of a guy counting and weighing marijuana on top of a police car?

Mayor: Yes, unacceptable and by the way, that's not just a marijuana charge, there are other charges that go with anything, if you interfere with a police vehicle or police property. So that individual committed an additional crime by doing that. It's not acceptable.

Question: With the reforms that are being made you know in terms of not arresting people for marijuana, should we expect to see more things like this?

Mayor: Of course not. That is, look that is someone who thought they were somehow being cute or being cool and they are not, they are getting themselves in a lot of trouble for what they did. It's not acceptable. There are states all over the country that have legalized marijuana but still public use of marijuana is not acceptable legally in those states and there are summons and other ways of disciplining. We are going to keep doing that, it's still illegal in this state – we are going to keep disciplining, we are going to keep providing those summons, and follow up and enforcement. So people should recognize, nothing has changed, there will be enforcement.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the Wall Street Journal has a report today that says people with outstanding summons for pot smoking will get a police ride to the court house?

Mayor: We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. This is if for an example, and officer comes across someone who's committed an offense and they are providing a summons to them and turns out they have outstanding warrants, we want to address all of them simultaneously. We want people to pay up, clear the slate, move on with their lives. It's a good use of an officer's time compared to an arrest. And this is what – we actually talked about this at One Police Plaza, an arrest will take an officer out of circulation for a whole day basically. You know taking someone over to the nearest court to settle their outstanding issues takes a much briefer amount of time, then the officer is back on patrol so we think it is a smart approach.

Question: Requires additional resources or people to do that?

Mayor: No because actually again compared to a focus on arrests, it takes a lot less officer time and gets the officer back out on patrol. It's a very strong parallel to what we all used to say when there was an overuse of stop and frisk, that a huge amount of officer time was going into stops and frisks instead of more serious crime fighting so part of why you've seen crime continue to go down is that our officers' time is being used on more serious things. Go ahead.

Question: Just one more.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Why can't people get there themselves? Just deal with it and –

Mayor: Well in theory they could but the idea is we want to address these issues, we want people to get right with the law, we want them to pay whatever their outstanding warrants are and clean the slate. And we think it is an encouragement to not get into trouble again. Now you know Commissioner O'Neill was asked this question and he said, it's not like it is a limousine

ride, you're in the back of a police car in handcuffs. So it's a clear message that you have an outstanding issue that has to be addressed but we are giving people a chance to do that. Yes.

Question: The City allocates hundreds of thousands of dollars to the yeshiva institutions – given the fact that so many of them stonewalled the City's investigation, was that taken into account when the City was deciding who to give money to? I guess I'm basically asking if some of the schools that stonewalled the City's investigation get some of that money from the City?

Mayor: So you know the money that flows is for particular mandated services like special ed or whatever it may be, that's part of state law. We've made very clear to the State Education Department, which yeshivas worked with the Department of Education to improve their practices and in about half the cases there was a consistent and serious effort to improve professional development and curriculum and that's going to keep going. And we are going to keep on them and keep communicating with them to make sure that is fully consolidated. But another half of them, 15 schools did not let us in. Which to me was unacceptable. Now I think as we've brought all of this to the floor, some of them are changing their mind and opening their doors which I am happy to see but in terms of what you're raising – what are the consequences? We need guidance from the State Education Department, that's not something we can decide on our own. We need the State Education Department to tell us what we should do now as a result of these actions.

Question: [Inaudible] given with what's going on with Charter, there's been some –

Mayor: Charter? Which one now?

Question: Charter Spectrum.

Mayor: Charter Spectrum.

Question: Yep, there's been some rumblings that the city might be looking at exploring publically owned internet, cable provider for a co-op. What are your feelings toward that?

Mayor: Broadly, and I want to separate it from the question of Charter Spectrum, because I am not familiar with everything that the state has done. Although, I appreciate the state's actions very much, because I thought Charter Spectrum was being unresponsive on a variety of levels. But on the question of should we have competition. We do believe in competition. We know a lot of people are still being underserved in this city. We know that access to the internet is still far from perfect. There's a whole lot of things that need to be addressed better and more competition would be better, and looking at alternative ways to create competition would be better. So that's something we'll have more to say on soon. Gloria?

Question: Mr. Mayor, I just want to go back to the yeshiva thing. So, are these schools going to be required to return their tax breaks? Is that a decision that-

Mayor: Again, the state – I can't speculate on what the State Education Department is going to do. We were charged with doing an investigation, but also trying to fix the problem. And again, I've been very clear about the fact that in half the cases I think the approach really worked

because the dialogue lead to very substantial changes in those schools and those changes will now continue and we'll make sure they now continue. But in the other cases we're not satisfied. But in general we need guidance from the State Education Department. Obviously there was another law passed recently that even more so requires us to get that guidance. Once we get that guidance we're ready to take further action.

Question: So, Chancellor Fariña had originally stated that the visits to the yeshivas began in 2016. But the letter that came last week says that they began in March of 2017. So can you explain that timeline?

Mayor: I don't have what she said in front of me. I can only say that the dialogue with the representatives began earlier before the visits. She might have been referring to that. But what the letter makes clear was a systematic effort to figure out how to improve the schools. Again, in half the cases I am convinced that succeeded. And another half I am unhappy that they were not – the DOE was not given access and that needs to happen.

Question: I just want to follow up on two issues you mentioned already. First, going back to the videos. Do you have a sense or have you spoken to Commissioner O'Neill about this – whether I guess you'd like to see the officers do more in that moment, I guess to put what kind of boarders on harassment, maybe verbal abuse. Do you want them to kind of do more to put a stop to that? Or do you think they are handling it the right way?

Mayor: Again, I will defer to Commissioner O'Neill to instruct the men and women under his command. I would say this that people need to follow the rules as stated by an officer. So for example, if you go into a precinct you're not allowed to video tape something in the precinct that's a rule that's hard and fast. That needs to be recognized, if it's not recognized there's consequences. You can't do anything to a police vehicle, that literally is another crime and there are consequences. So I think in each of these situations they're individual. The Commissioner is the person who will give the guidance to the members of the force. But the bottom line is these are thank God very rare incidents in the city of 8.6 million people but they're unacceptable and they need to stop and for those who do them in any way that goes beyond the narrow question of their constitutional rights – we'll always respect the right to free speech. But in these two incidents recently they went beyond that. One inside a precinct, two on a police vehicle, that's in both cases those are inappropriate.

Question: Just to –

Mayor: Oh, yes.

Question: Just to clarify on the schools. The representative for the yeshivas, Avi Schick has been insisting repeatedly that none of the schools blocked the DOE access to them. So I guess I am wondering in what form was that communication –

Mayor: That's just not the truth. I mean Chancellor, you can feel free to jump in if you'd like. With all due respect to Mr. Schick that's not the truth. Want to add anything?

Chancellor Carranza: [Inaudible]

Question: Did they just – did he communicate –

Mayor: Look, I mean the proof is in the pudding. We went to 15 schools; we had this extensive dialogue with 15 schools. What did the other 15 have a cloak of invisibility? I mean come on. It's like they didn't let us in, or we would have been there. We repeatedly asked, they were evasive, they were unhelpful. He was unhelpful; he should knock it off also. Let us into the schools so we could do our work.

Question: Mayor, I want to ask you about a lawsuit filed by a member of your NYPD security detail alleging age discrimination, and sort of naming the [inaudible] of your Detail Inspector Howard Redmond. It's the third such suit filed since May alleging some kind of discrimination by various members, detectives of the detail. I am curious if you're considering any changes to the detail?

Mayor: No.

Question: And whether you have any concerns [inaudible] around security or anything about kind of I guess the fact that some of the people who are in charge of you and City Hall safer clearly-

Mayor: I think there is some entrepreneurial lawyer at work here trying to make a buck. I have absolute faith in the NYPD, and the way they protect me and my family and all city officials. I have absolute faith in Inspector Redmond. I have never seen anything in four and half years that suggested any discrimination what so ever. That's all I am going to say. Obviously that's a matter for litigation but that's all I have to say.

Question: Mr. Mayor, under a month now until the primary. I am curious to know why you haven't made an endorsement yet in the governor's race, and if you plan to?

Mayor: Again, I'll speak to it when I am ready it's to say the least these are big decisions. I am watching how everything develops. I am listening to what everyone is saying and I have to make a decision in each case. I've gotten involved in a couple of State Senate races; I am looking at the situation too. But I have to look at all the factors and make a decision when I feel it's right.

Question: Mr. Mayor, some parents in Park Slope have expressed frustration over the diversity plan in their school district over there saying that when they've spoken out they have been compared to segregationists. Any response to those parents?

Mayor: No one should ever accuse someone who raises a valid concern with that kind of language. But that said we've got to do more to create diversity in our schools. And I think a lot of parents in my community want to see that and we wholly embrace that. So the Chancellor and the whole team at DOE have been working with District 15 and with the community education council there to further a plan to diversify the schools. This is something I will say when I was on the school board back there and when I was a parent I wanted to see it too. And we tried to do

it in the school that my kids went to in elementary school. And it was hard to do, I think since then we've come up with a lot better ways and new ways to achieve a greater diversity. I welcome them. But we got to be respectful of people who have views on both of sides of this discussion. Yes sir?

Question: Any advice to the Staten Island Little League team? And do you plan on attending if they win on Wednesday?

Mayor: They are doing an amazing, amazing job. I was out there a few years ago with Councilman Matteau – Matteau, I am sorry he says it Matteau. And it's an amazing little league and what they've done; I mean they've captured the hearts of all New Yorkers. This is like extraordinary. As I understand it's been like a half century since a New York City team had the potential of winning the championship. So these guys are doing everything right. They should keep doing what they're doing and we're all behind him. And we'll see what happens in the next few games in terms of what we can do to support them.

Question: What would we do as a follow up if they win? Would you do something?

Mayor: If they go all the way, we're doing a big, big ceremony for them. We'll figure out what it is. But I mean this will be a historic moment for New York City to see one of our teams win the Little League World Series. So I am hoping and praying we get to that point. But we'll have a big ol' party for them. Alright, thanks everyone. Now we're going to do the groundbreaking still because we didn't get rained on, okay.

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