



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF ROOF
REPLACEMENTS AT 65 NYCHA BUILDINGS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: That my friends is a tough act to follow. April, I just want to be the first to tell you. You got a lot of personality. You've got plenty of personality.

April Simpson: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Okay, we'll help you with that. But more than just personality, you're a great leader.

Simpson: Thank you.

Mayor: And you're surrounded by great leaders, and people who care deeply about their development and do something about it. And this is the untold story. Resident leaders, active residents, stake holders, people who act like owners, because they have made public housing work. And you don't get the credit. A lot people like to tell stories about public housing. A lot people like to paint negative pictures. I see good people, I see good people every day working hard.

[Applause]

I want to thank you, and April I'll tell you something about all the work that's been done here at Queensbridge. It didn't happen by accident. We believed that investment was necessary on an unrepresented level, because yes this is the biggest public housing development in North America, right here, right here. And no place deserved the investment more, but it also happened because of your strong voice and the other strong voices of residents. Because this is how democracy is supposed to work. People standing up and saying this is what we need. Here are our priorities; here is how we will work with you to get something done. That's what happened here. So let's thank April, let's thank all of these residents for all they have done.

[Applause]

You mentioned and ill refer to it in a moment, but I want to give some credit where credit is due. The extraordinary improvement and safety that has occurred between 2014 and now, this is a very important story. There are men and women here from the NYPD including the PSA

commander Hugh Bogle. I want to thank commander Bogle, I want to thank all of the men and women of the NYPD who are here.

[Applause]

And I want to thank the elected officials – people had different scheduling realities, including obviously it is the school vacation week, and some are away with their families. But I want to thank all of the elected officials who represented this area. I've been out to Queensbridge before and I have seen how deeply involved the elected officials are in making these changes, and fighting hard from. I want to thank them all, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, and Borough President Melinda Katz, State Senator Mike Gianaris, Assembly member Cathy Nolan, and Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer. And I want to – I spoke to Jimmy Van Bramer yesterday to give him an update, and he was adamant about the next things that we have to keep doing together. And I want to say he has a real special sense of connection to Queensbridge, and a deep sense of it being his mission in the City Council to keep that progress going at Queensbridge. So I want to do a special thank you to Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer for that.

And someone here who people are just starting to get to know, but he is going to be a profound difference maker for 400,000 residents of public housing, our new general manager for NYCHA, Vito Mustaciuolo. I want to thank you Vito for your great work.

[Applause]

Everyone, you will get to know him, but I got to know Vito – I want to tell the story for a moment. I got to know Vito most of a decade ago. I was public advocate; we started something called the worst landlords watch list. And the idea was to shine a light on landlords who were really oppressing their tenants, enforce action. And I did not expect folks in the city agencies to necessarily understand or believe in that approach. We tried to reach to city agencies, we said hey we're putting a light on, we're working of course with the media to bring attention to these situations. Hopefully the city can now really lean on these landlords and push them for results or take punitive action, if they won't do things. I want to tell you the literal truth. There was only one person in city government at that time who said this is the right thing to do and we want to help in every way we can and if you shine a light on them, we're going after them. He was then deputy commissioner of HPD Vito Mustaciuolo. And he went to bat for the tenants every single time. And you will find tenants all over this city who will tell a story about the fact that their heat came back on and their hot water came back on and their repairs got made because Vito got up in the face of their landlords and was the difference maker. He is a get things done guy, and he is going to make a huge difference here at NYCHA. So I want to thank you Vito.

Before I talk about today's update, I want to say after my remarks; you're going to hear from the chair of the housing committee in the state assembly, Steve Cymbrowitz. So I want to thank you so much for being here. We'll take questions on what we're talking about today, and of course everything related to NYCHA, then I am going to offer my thoughts on the tragedy yesterday in Brooklyn. And I want to give you an opportunity to ask questions about that as well. I just want to let you know that will come up after.

So on NYCHA, there are some politicians who suddenly believe it is stylish to visit NYCHA. I've been visiting public housing buildings throughout my entire career, all the time, throughout

my mayoralty I've been deeply involved trying to help our public housing authority, which bluntly for decades didn't get enough help from the city, didn't get enough help from the state, didn't get enough help from the federal government. We're going to tell the real story here, and not again paint stereotypes and simplifications. Let's really talk about what happened.

Decades of a horrible and I think disgusting negligent approach to people's lives. But let's be clear – federal government that was supposed to be the prime support under law for NYCHA started walking away in the 1980's, state government started walking away in the 1990's, and city government in the 20 years before this administration came in, did not do its share. Those are the facts. That did not stop public housing residents from stepping up and defending their developments, in making sure life continued to improve in every way they could. That didn't stop the hard working people who worked at NYCHA from doing their jobs, and taking a really tough situation but still making it work. And again when some people paint, simplistic and alarmist pictures, I think they ignore the residents and all they've done, I think they ignore the workers in all they've done, they ignored the people who had given their life to public housing. Kept the lights on, kept things moving no matter how few resources they had. I hope there will be, if we're going to seriously talk about public housing in the weeks and months ahead, I hope there will be an examination of that totality and not just a drive by attempt to typify the situation and then forget about public housing all again. There is 400,000 people who live in public housing. They are not a political football, they are human beings, they are human beings.

[Applause]

They should not be paid attention to only for a few weeks, and then forgotten. And I want to be very clear, I am not running for reelection, the people have spoken and we have term limits, and I'm in my last term. I'll keep coming to NYCHA, not because it's a politically convenient moment, because it's my job to support NYCHA.

I always say if you want to know what's real. Look at whether people put their money where their mouth is. Look at real dollars and cents, look at real investment, not words, real investment.

In the last four years of this administration \$2.1 billion additional in capital money were devoted to NYCHA. We were not legally obligated to do that, we did it because it was the right thing to do. \$2.1 billion that are already starting to improve the lives of NYCHA residents, and you can see it right here with this roof, and all the roofs around us.

[Applause]

In the last four years in addition we gave \$1.6 billion dollars to NYCHA for expense funding – money that NYCHA did not have before. Let's be clear about the facts. 1.6 billion, because we stopped requiring NYCHA to pay for policing, which it never should have had to pay for it to begin with. We stopped requiring NYCHA to pay taxes to the City of New York which it never should have had to pay to begin with. We started funding faster repairs, and better maintenance, and more security. These things actually happened and a lot of times I showed you them and my colleagues showed you them, they're facts. We understood that people were suffering because there were too many roofs that were faulty. We understood that created health realities that weren't right. We needed new roofs, when we saw the extent of the problem; we put in an unprecedented investment – \$1.3 billion for new roofs alone for NYCHA residents.

[Applause]

And that will fix almost 1,000 building roofs, 1,000 buildings will get new roofs because of this investment. Nothing is more important than having a roof over your head. And our job is to make sure that our NYCHA residents are safe and sound. When this effort is completed, when almost 1,000 buildings have new roofs that will mean 175,000 New Yorkers will be protected – 175,000 people, that is more than the total population of Syracuse, New York to give you one example.

So here's what we are announcing today when it comes to the roofs, we are giving you the names of the developments right here – phase one, 65 buildings total has now been completed and that includes all of the roofs here at Queensbridge.

[Applause]

Every one of these developments, the roofs that needed fixing that were targeted because they were the problem roofs, every single one of them has now been fixed. Phase two is now beginning. In all of these developments, 78 buildings, they will be completed by the summer of 2019. All of these developments will be complete.

Phase three will start in the course of this year and will be bigger than the previous two phases and our goal is to complete that no later than 2020 and what you will see about our new general manager is his mission is to be speed up each and every one of these phases – to improve the approach constantly. We are doing this work on a massive scale. And as we found with our affordable housing initiative the more we do something the faster we learn how to do it, the better we learn how to do it, the more we get to stretch our dollars. That's what our general manager is going to do to make sure more and more roofs are reached.

I want to remind everyone – we will take questions for sure but I want to make sure this is clear in advance, all of this was happening before any action was taken in Albany in fact all of this was happening while we were waiting for \$250 million from Albany from the 2015 and 2017 budgets that still hasn't come. Guess what? Right here in New York City work was happening every single day, every single day.

[Applause]

And I want to hasten to say as I'll bring on the chair momentarily when I say Albany I would like to make a big asterisk that this Chair and Speaker Heastie in the Assembly have consistently fought for New York City and for the residents of NYCHA. I don't mean to put you in a bucket with everyone else, my apology.

Here is the fact about phase one, all of these roofs, all of these roofs were completed on time and under budget. So again to the stereotyping, the negative stereotyping of public housing, which I am personally sick of – I'm sorry these are facts, the money was given by the City to help NYCHA, NYCHA implemented the program, they got the job done on time, under budget.

And that is because – perhaps what’s different for me and a lot of people who serve here at the local level is these are our constituents, these are our neighbors, these are the people I’m accountable to. We make sure these investments happen, real work is getting done, real things are happening because we owe it to the people we serve.

As part of our larger commitment to public housing and to the 400,000 New Yorkers who live in public housing we have additionally invested half a million dollars for exterior repairs for safety at 400 buildings throughout NYCHA – and as you know from the preliminary budget, an additional \$200million for heating improvements at the 20 developments who need them most.

That is the physical part of the work but now I want to come back to the safety element which is paramount for all of these residents. You know, again I understand why at any given moment the media or folks who only drop in on these issues might look at heating or might look at some other issue and then move on but for these folks and for folks all over public housing, safety is an every single day issue. I want to amplify what you heard in the very beginning when April mentioned the security changes.

In the last four years here at Queensbridge Houses, crime is down 21 percent.

[Applause]

That is fundamentally changing people’s lives. And if you know anything about neighborhood policing, if you know anything about our commitment to working with communities you know we intend to bring crime down more. We have proven it can be done, we will go farther.

Security investments at the 15 developments citywide that presented the biggest safety problems back in 2014 because back in 2014 you’ll remember very fairly, a lot of you were not writing about heat, you were writing about a spate of shootings that occurred. And we swung into action at the 15 most dangerous developments. We spent \$140million for security improvements. In the case of Queensbridge alone that meant 360 closed circuit TV cameras and 858 new lighting installations. Because as April said the lack of lighting not only made people feel unsafe, it unfortunately made it too easy for the criminals. It is number one things NYPD said to me back in 2014 when I said how can I help you keep NYCHA safer. They said we need lighting – 858 lighting fixtures put in here at Queensbridge. That’s been a difference maker.

[Applause]

So real work is happening, real changes are happening – this is not about the political silly season quote-unquote, this is not about headlines, this is about people, this is about real work. And we’ll continue to do that work. I’ve said the goal for the next four years is to be the fairest big city in America. We can’t be fairest big city in America until we continue to improve the lives of our public housing residents.

But that’s not a new task for me, that’s not just something I just stumbled upon in the last few weeks. That has been the mission from day one. And the very first preliminary budget of this administration we announced that NYCHA would no longer have to pay money for police protection and that money would be used for repairs. So if you want to look at the record, we are

now four years into an effort to remake our public housing for the good of our residents. And we have only just gotten started. A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor speaks in Spanish]

With that my pleasure to bring up one more speaker and he has been just an extraordinary champion, one of the things I appreciate about Steve Cymbrowitz, he's chair of the committee he's actually knows a whole lot about.

[Laughter]

This is a guy who devoted his lifetime to housing, to affordable housing, to the needs of residents and low and behold democracy actually worked and he became Chair of the housing Committee in the Assembly. I want to thank him because he has been one of the number one voices in Albany calling for fairness for public housing residents, demanding that resources not just get put in the budget but actually arrive in this city and that there be at least the beginning of some real investment by the State once again in helping these 400,000 good people. My honor to introduce Chair of the Assembly Housing Committee Steve Cymbrowitz.

[...]

Mayor: Before we go to questions, I just want to ask some folks to step forward over here. Who's here from the Cure Violence Movement and the Crisis Management System? Come on over. Come join us.

[Applause]

Say the name of the organizations that are represented.

Audience: 6-9-6.

Mayor: 6-9-6. Build Queensbridge.

I want to say, I didn't realize they were here before. I'm so happy you are here. We've also stood together before. The City of New York is proud to support and again not just with pretty words, with resources – we are proud to support the Cure Violence Movement, the Crisis Management System, this good organization, and organizations all over the city.

I told you about that extraordinary success that's been achieved – 21 percent reduction in crime. It's been the residents, the great work of the NYPD, but another big x-factor has been the great men and women of the Cure Violence movement. Let's thank them for all they have achieved.

[Applause]

Questions on NYCHA? Questions, yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, at the beginning you were talking about people who make visits here when it's politically convenient and engage in stereotyping and simplifications. I just wanted to make sure I know who you're talking about.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Do you have no have imagination whatsoever, I guess.

Question: [Inaudible] concerned about accuracy as we all are in journalism –

Mayor: I appreciate that. Of course I'm talking about the Governor. He hadn't been to a NYCHA development for five years previous to his recent tour. Let's be real.

Question: NYCHA residents we've spoken to have said isn't time to stop fighting with the Governor and accept money from the State?

Mayor: Well, let's separate those concepts. I've said consistently I'll work with the Governor when he actually tries to help New York City which I'd like him to do a lot more often considering we're 43 percent of the state's population. And when he does something that hurts New York City, I'll take him on. That's my job. It's actually a concept Ed Koch put forward very powerfully years ago. I think it's the right way to think about it.

Let's be clear and I have a witness in the Chairman, money from the 2015 State budget still hasn't gotten to NYCHA. Money from the 2017 State budget still hasn't gotten to NYCHA. The Governor had plenty of power to get that money to us. Didn't do it, period.

So, I'm not going to look the other way at something like that. That could have helped us do this work. Everything we did here we did with our own money. We didn't get any State help. So, let's just stop fooling around about this.

If he's going to help now, well, let's raise the important questions. First of all we got an executive order out of nowhere, no attempt to work it through with us. Just out of nowhere there it is. We're still analyzing it. We still have to determine what we think it really means.

But here's the challenge. Instead of doing what would have been the simple straightforward thing – give us design-build authority outright for all of NYCHA so Vito Mustaciuolo and all the good people that Steve Cymbrowitz just reminded of us could do their work better, save money, save time, and give us the \$250 million from previous budgets that still hadn't arrived – instead he puts this convoluted executive order on the table.

Maybe there's something in that that could help us but maybe there's something in that that's going to slow things down because often times when you add another layer of bureaucracy it just makes things worse. We don't know yet. We have to analyze it.

But there was an easy solution – get us money and give us design-build, and that's not what we got.

Question: There's also questions just about why you're worried about an independent monitor.

Mayor: I have independent monitors in several agencies. Again, guys, I'm going to be really rigorous on you from this point on, on this topic. I'm going to flood you with facts. There is an independent monitor at the NYPD because of the stop-and-frisk litigation. We work with that monitor perfectly well. In that instance, it's been a cooperative situation. It does sometimes cause delays but it's been a cooperative situation.

There is an independent monitor at the Department of Correction we work with very well. Both cases, those are federal. Been done very responsibly, very sanely, again, sometimes causes delay but ultimately we work with.

We had a state monitor with ACS and that turned out to be a good situation. The monitor allowed work to continue and did not get in the way. It can be a productive arrangement. It can also be – we've also seen situations where it becomes a bureaucratic arrangement that slows things down and makes it harder.

So, I'm always willing to work with other levels of government. But I just want to stop the fiction. If you really care about NYCHA, how do you hold up \$250 million going back to 2015? Let's just be real. I'm going to do this side, I'll come over to that side. Anybody else? Okay.

Question: Mayor, I'm wondering what sort of expertise should an independent monitor have and also is your phase-two approved [inaudible]?

Mayor: First of all, right now we're still accessing the executive order and until we have completed that assessment legally and otherwise I'm not going to assume any particular outcome yet.

This work has already begun. With the first phase done, second phase already begun. So, this is going to happen no matter what. Again, I'm not going to rule out that if we assess this monitor situation and it moves forward and there are some ways it could be productive but I don't know that yet. We need to have a lot more information before we can tell that.

But as to the kind of person – look, I think we have a good model from some other situations of serious highly-regarded above the fray people who are interested in getting work done, not interested in making it political football but serious people who had serious background in the field and were interested in getting the work done. If there is such a monitor as that, we'd look forward to hopefully a good result in that case.

I'm going to do over here and come right over. Last call. Okay.

Question: Is the – was the roofs done with a private contractor? Can you speak about the –

Mayor: Vito. Let me give you some height, though.

General Manager Vito Mustaciuolo: Oh, thank you, Sir.

Mayor: It's as easy as this.

General Manager Mustaciuolo: Okay, I will attempt to answer your question directly but I may need to rely on Deborah Goddard, Executive Vice President for Capital. So the roofs are done using a private contractor.

Question: That's all I have. Can I put the Chairman on the spot as well with a question?

Mayor: [Inaudible] I don't think you can put him on the spot. He's at a press conference.

[Laughter]

Question: You haven't heard my question.

[Laughter]

Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz: Knowing you, Josh, I think I'd know –

Question: If this independent monitor is not necessarily a good idea, why did you vote for it in the budget?

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz: Well, what we did was we voted for a plan for the Governor to put forward. He was going to put out an executive order and the wording in the Article 7 budget was for a plan. And that's what we voted on.

Question: Were you surprised when he signed that executive order?

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz: No, we knew that he was going to sign an executive order. But we did not know what the plan consisted of and we're still, just like the Mayor's people are going through that plan. It was just – he got it the same time we got it.

Question: And are you – knowing what you know now, are you okay with the notion of this independent monitor who subsequently will have to approve private contractors, is this something that you support?

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz: Well, I'm hopeful – I'm really hopeful, Josh, that the independent monitor will be helpful.

Question: Mr. Mayor, if you were [inaudible] political analyst –

[Laughter]

[Inaudible]

Mayor: That's my next career, Rich.

Question: What [inaudible] Governor is up to [inaudible] –

Mayor: I actually am not going to be an independent political analyst right now because I'm not onto my next career yet. So, the – look, you have to ask him. Again, I think people are really

smart. I really think people are smart, voters are smart, the media is smart. You can't just show up after five years and suddenly act like the great white knight.

If you had \$250 million – that's a quarter-billion dollars – why didn't you release it. Let's just get serious. But meanwhile, again, I don't get lost in those games. This is real. This is real work. This is happening and will continue to happen.

Last on this – April come on over. Wait, wait, they got to hear your voice.

April Simpson: So, I have a – I'm sorry.

Mayor: Don't hurt anybody, though.

[Laughter]

Simpson: You know, before I'm a president or a title of anything, I'm a resident here. I've been living here all my life and this is what I don't like. You get people who don't come here on a regular basis and then think they know what's best for the residents living here. You don't know. And if there's money to be released to help the residents of public housing, it needs to be released. You can't keep talking and coming only when it's an election year or whatever.

Do the work. Be like this Mayor. Be out here all the time. Amen.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you. How do you really feel, April?

[Laughter]

I'm coming your way. I'm coming your way. Media questions. I want to tell everyone we're doing media questions only and I'm coming this way. But let me – last one in this section.

Question: [Inaudible] comment about this. Safety at Queensbridge, specifically, I know you were here about a year-and-a-half ago talking about reducing gun violence and crime. And I know in the last couple of weeks there was a homicide here. Back in January a woman was hit by a stray bullet just leaving the subway station in Queensbridge. Are things getting safer? Are residents feeling safer? Are these isolated incidents? Is it getting safer?

Mayor: Sure, I'll certainly let April speak to that too. I want to tell you because I just spoke to the PSA commander on that. There was a homicide. It was not at Queensbridge. It was nearby. It did not involve a resident either – as far as I know at this victim or the perpetrator. That doesn't make it a minor matter. We care about every crime deeply but I just want to be accurate about that.

The overall record, and again incredible credit to the residents, to the Cure Violence movement, the NYPD – the overall record of Queensbridge in the last four years has been something people have never seen before. And there has been steady improvement. That doesn't mean there won't be incidents but we've seen steady improvement.

Do you want to speak to it?

Simpson: You know, in Queensbridge, we're a family. This is a collaborative effort. We also have the Executive Director of Jacob Riis here, Mr. Chris Hanway, who puts on –

[Applause]

Exciting programs where we collaborate – tenant resident association, the Cure Violence, the 696. All of these things that are you seeing implemented and the positiveness that's come to Queens which is due to Mayor de Blasio. I must say. You know, I'm not just tooting his horn because he's in my face. Anybody who know me – I keeps it real, 100.

We work together. And in order for all of this to combine itself into a positive effort – also with NYCHA you can't beat up on NYCHA. We as residents have to work with NYCHA, with the City to bring about positive change for the community. We're about uplifting one another and that's what it's about.

Mayor: But I want to – I think the question I want to ask you to answer it because it would be helpful for everyone to hear your perspective. What feels different? What is different in terms of safety compared to four years ago?

Simpson: When I walk out my building at night, I could see. It's lit up. It's illuminated. There are police walking around that say, "Hey, how you doing," know me, my kids, everybody. That's the difference. That's how it was 50-something years ago when I was a little girl. The beat cop knew your mother, your father, they knew your whole family, knew where you lived. It's coming back to that. We know our neighborhood police. So, it's the lights, the cameras. Now we just really need to work on these doors and that's coming right around the corner, right Mayor de Blasio?

[Laughter]

Mayor: Yes ma'am, thank you ma'am.

[Laughter]

Question: Monica Morales from PIX-11. Thank you for talking to us about this today. This is so important. We've been devoting every day for months now –

Mayor: Good.

Question: I don't know if you've seen our coverage –

Mayor: I have not but I'm glad you have been.

Question: I have been devoting every day to the families of NYCHA, and we're live on Facebook 70,000 strong.

Mayor: Excellent.

Question: Mostly the core of NYCHA. And you know I was at the Bailey Houses just a few days ago. You know, there are so many houses hurting, so many families say not enough is being done, that you are not doing enough. Now, I know you have this presentation but there are so many people hurting and they don't feel like you're doing enough and they want to see more action and they want to see more money. Are you going to devote both of those –

Mayor: So, this is real action for real people. Look, I want to say I feel the pain of people who live in NYCHA because I've been involved in NYCHA buildings, with NYCHA residents for decades. It's not a new thing which is why again I ask you – I'm very happy you're reporting on it so steadily but –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: But then I'm asking you to then look at the history and report on the history. Go check every previous administration and how much they invested. Go check the Bloomberg years. Go check the Giuliani years –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Listen to what I'm saying, listen to what I'm saying. If you want an answer, I'm trying to answer you. Do you want the truth?

Question: Yes.

Mayor: Not just a simple headline, if you want the truth, the question is what do people need? They need money and they need it to be used in way that changes their lives. Look at your feet. This is a brand new roof. Look at every roof around you. This is one development. We're going to go development by development where the need is greatest. And the way we're doing it, and this is important – everyone has legitimate complaints especially because a lot of the buildings are very old and went without the maintenance they deserve.

But let's be honest and real. Let's not play games. We've got 400,000 people. We owe it them to go in order of need. I want to be really clear about this. When we had that crisis with the shootings, the message was this – where is the need greatest? Fifteen developments immediately became clear. The NYPD couldn't have been clearer. The numbers screamed out. Fifteen developments were where a disproportionate amount of the violence was, where people were in danger.

We flooded the zone in those 15 developments with the lights, with additional police presence, with the neighborhood policing initiative, with the youth programs. It made a huge difference. We went where the need is greatest. What we announced just a few weeks ago – \$200 million specifically for heating for the 20 developments with the biggest problems –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Again, if you want to be serious – if you want to be serious then you would look at the fact that the overall need in NYCHA is \$20 billion-plus. New numbers are coming out soon.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I don't have \$20 billion. But whatever I have, I give which is why I gave \$2.1 billion in capital, \$1.6 billion in expense including \$200 million just weeks ago and I intend to keep doing that every chance. But listen the State walked away starting the 1990s and then gave us fake money in the 2015 and 2017 budgets because it never got here.

The federal government has been decreasing its commitment. We've got to be honest about the problem. It's very easy to say why isn't everything fixed overnight. New Yorkers are smarter than that. They're just smarter than that.

Yes, they're in pain –

Question: [Inaudible] taking so long –

Mayor: Because things at this scale – to do this number of roofs, can't do it overnight. It has to be done right. Also, we're going to speed it up. I want to be very clear. This phase – 67, Vito? This phase – 78?

General Manager Mustaciuolo: 79.

Mayor: 79. And the next phase will be over 100.

Just like I said to you the parallel of the affordable housing program. It started with 200,000 apartments. It's now 300,000 apartments. No one – no one is resting on any laurels. We have to do better every single day.

But I want to be clear – 400,000 people with real need. I feel it personally. Can I solve every problem tomorrow? My job is to the most I can to support NYCHA and the people at NYCHA who are doing this work.

Greg – I'll come back to you. Greg?

Question: It's about the timing of this. The Governor signed this thing on Monday. [Inaudible] it's been four days since he signed it and you are part of the process [inaudible] shape this –

Mayor: Can what?

Question: You're part of the process –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Because you get to help choose the monitor. What have you guys done about it since –

Mayor: Again, if you look at that document it is a very complex construct they put forward. And it is going to have a major impact on the lives of 400,000 people. We are not going to speak to it until we are absolutely sure of our position. This is way too important to rush. So, we're thoroughly analyzing it and then we'll have something to say about it.

Question: Have you had any discussions with the other two parties that are –

Mayor: No, because we're still addressing the fundamental question of what we think of the legal structure and approach laid out in the executive order. We've never seen anything like this. No one's ever seen anything like this, Greg.

You know the question before about the previous monitors – those structures were entirely different. And this was obviously thrown together and we need to analyze it fully and what it means. I'll come right back to you. Let me get some other people in. Go ahead, Melissa.

Question: Mr. Mayor, does Cynthia Nixon, in your opinion, who's making a career change deserve the same level of skepticism as the Governor for coming into campaign in public housing [inaudible] –

Mayor: I think – I don't even understand the question in the context of this announcement – I'm talking about substance. That's a political question, we can take that later.

Question: One other question. Can you tell us why Chair Olatoye is not here today?

Mayor: Yes, absolutely. I mentioned it is school vacation week. She is on school vacation with her children.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the announcement you're making today about these roofs. We've been here before talking about these same roofs –

Mayor: They're done now. That's the announcement and the next phase is beginning.

Question: So why is there – is there anything else that the City can do, anything new that it feels like we are revisiting an announcement that was already made?

Mayor: Respectfully, I just explained to you reasons why we are not revisiting but we are speeding up. First of all, Gloria, you've been to a lot of announcements and then I think you would be the first to say sometimes what is pledged doesn't happen. This is an announcement where we pledged we would fix all these roofs. We're doing something I would hope you would like to see once in a while which is evidence that government did exactly what it said it was going to do.

The roof is right below your feet and you can see all the ones around you. These are done. That is actually news. This is a second phase. We're giving you the specific developments and a specific timeline. This is beginning now. We'll be done by the summer of 2019.

We just announced further news that phase three is beginning next year, it will be over 100 more building roofs. Those are actual things.

Question: What about lead? A lot of families that I speak to every single day are concerned they have lead in their homes with small children. They say not enough is being done about the lead crisis –

Mayor: Again I would urge you to look at the facts more. It's really easy to ask the question about human emotions. And I feel it too. I am a parent. If I thought there was anything that might endanger my child, I would be all day, all night just worried about that.

What we said to those parents from day one – we sent in the teams to inspect and we remediated. We send teams a second time to inspect and remediate. The question is – listen, the question is what is the condition of our children? That's what really matters.

Thank God in New York City, lead paint poisoning has been going down constantly in the last decade or two. Thank God, lead paint poisoning has been going down more in NYCHA than even in private housing.

Question: Is enough being done?

Mayor: Enough is being done because every apartment that we know of has been not only inspected but remediated and then that will happen every single year. The question you should ask is, how did that stop in the previous administration? You guys didn't catch it. We didn't catch it. They didn't catch it. No one caught it.

It stopped in the previous administration. I'm not happy that it took us two years to understand that those inspections had stopped. I'm not happy about that one but. What matters is once you know about a problem, what do you do? We immediately inspected and remediate, inspected, remediated. That will happen every single year from this point on and we will spend whatever amount of money it takes to do that.

Question: [Inaudible] the – I think the new federal budget is going to actually give you guys more money for the first time in –

Mayor: Yes, in a long, long time.

Question: I believe it's \$160 million for capital and then \$30 million for operations. So –

Mayor: Yeah, I don't know the numbers and I want to confirm that.

Question: That's just me talking. But supposedly it's a lot of money. This is a while ago that the President signed that thing. Have we already got a plan up and running to go with this money once it –

Mayor: Well, it was just a few weeks ago to be fair. We were pleasantly shocked but you said it exactly right, Greg. This is the first time in a long time anyone has seen something new going into public housing. I wish I could say I think it's a trend. I don't think it is. I'm very happy if some money actually shows up but I want to be really sober about this.

From the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 until this year, we basically saw steady disinvestment. If – and I think this is a lot because of Chuck Schumer to his great credit – if we got suddenly some new money, that’s a blessing. We will take it, we will use it because we got a lot more of this that we can do right away.

Vito, I don’t know again – because this literally was just a couple of weeks ago that that continuing resolution issue – the budget issue was resolved. I don’t know if we’ve been asked to present the formal plan for that money because didn’t know that money was coming.

Okay, but we will do that quickly and we want that money for sure. I don’t want anyone to think it’s like a brave new world where now the federal government is coming in a big way because we have no evidence of that. Someday that’s what should happen.

The federal government should get back in the affordable housing business but I’m not sure we’re there yet.

Question: A lot of the families want you to tour and see where they live. Could you do that on a consistent basis?

Mayor: Sure, I’ve done it many times and I’m –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I’m not going to do it with you but I will happily go.

Question: [Inaudible] talk to your office and –

Mayor: You can talk to my office but I’m doing exclusive tours with you. Sorry. But I have been to NYCHA buildings and I look forward to going to more.

Question: Just following up on Greg’s first question. Is this dispute, to put it mildly, that you have with the Governor, is this going to interfere with the picking of the monitor? Because the sooner you pick the monitor, the sooner the money can start flowing.

Mayor: Again, this executive order is unlike anything we’ve ever seen before. It is a few days old. I want everyone to take a little more of a long view here. We need to understand what it is. Steve said as well – I think the Assembly was just as surprised as us at the wording.

We need to understand what it is and how we will comport ourselves and what it means for the future of 400,000 people. We will come to that opinion and then we’ll act accordingly. I am – we can work with anyone. I have fundamental disagreements with the Governor. I still talk to him. I still – we work with his team. I work with the Republican State Senate. I work with the federal government. I can work with anyone.

But this is so structurally different than anything we’ve seen before that we have to make sure we fully understand it.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you said you were surprised by the wording of that. Could you give –

Mayor: It doesn't resemble any monitor situation we've seen previously. Again I mentioned the other examples. This is some kind of hybrid we've never seen before and again we'll comment more thoroughly when we have the details.

Okay, I'm going to turn to the Brooklyn situation unless –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Say your name again.

Question: My name is [inaudible]. I'm the TA President of the Woodside Houses and I'm also the Chair of all of Queens which is from Long Island City all the way to the Rockaways. Along with my colleagues in the other eight districts, we need NYCHA to include us in their decision making because we live here. We understand the dynamics of NYCHA. So, we want to have an open dialogue with them and give them our opinions of what needs to happen [inaudible] housing residents and they need to include our suggestions. Every time we get together they say they're going to do it but then they bring the plan to us already set. That's not right because we're the ones living here and they – our voices need to be heard. Maybe some of this would have vanished years ago if they would have included us. Can you please put us on your agenda. When you're having a meeting and you're coming up with something new for our developments, include us in the decision making? I know the last answer is yours but have us included.

Mayor: Well, I think that's a very fair construct and you're right. Ultimately what we've try to do is listen to a lot of different voices of the folks who are affected and then yes, the professionals have to ultimately make the decision about what's going to work. But we have some very good experience including here at Queensbridge. Listening to tenants, residents I should say – listening to residents, taking in the advice, helping to shape the plan accordingly, and then acting.

Vito is right here. It's easy to make an appointment. He's standing next to you. And yes, we want and we need that input. Last question on NYCHA before I turn to the situation in Brooklyn.

Okay. So, let me just say at the outset this is a very painful situation – what happened in Crown Heights yesterday. And it is a tragedy by any measure. There's a full investigation going on. I've also been informed the Attorney General is going to initiate an investigation. We will work fully and cooperatively with him.

I'm not going to get into a lot of the detail in the context of an investigation that has just begun. I'm going to say a few things that I think we all already have seen and known. This is a tragedy because a man with a profound mental health problem – from what we understand so far – was doing something that people perceived to be a threat to the safety of others. That's what we know so far. There's still, again, a lot more to know. But from what we've seen from the images that are publically available people in the community thought he had a weapon and was aiming it at residents.

That's the call – that's the kind of call, multiple calls the NYPD received. A man with a gun aiming the gun at residents. It did not say, to the best of my understanding, he might be someone

with emotional distress or a mental health problem. The officers responding only understood, from the best of our knowledge so far, they were dealing with a situation of someone armed who had been aiming that weapon.

There's a lot more we need to know and my understanding is the NYPD will be publically disclosing the 9-1-1 calls, publically disclosing any video that they receive. And we're going to be as transparent as we can in this situation, understanding there will a formal and full investigation.

There's a human tragedy here. One piece of this human tragedy, besides all the other issues we have to sort out, is the mental health element. What I understand is the family members have already said publically this is someone who had a profound mental health problem, was not on medication, hadn't been on medication. This doesn't make it any less a tragedy to say this is its own problem we have to address. And I'm asking all New Yorkers to recognize this, if someone in your life needs medication and isn't taking it and in any way is acting in a way that could be of danger to themselves or others, please call us. These tragedies can be averted if we get people the help they need. Literally we've – you've heard the number many times, 8-8-8-NYC-WELL.

I can't replay history, none of us can, but a man like this if he had gotten the help he needed hopefully would never have been in a situation where such a horrible, painful tragedy would have occurred. And it's our job to get help to people. This is a fundamental way to try and address – this is one part of so many of these problems that we can actually do something about.

So, I'll happily take questions but I want to affirm upfront there's a lot I won't be able to say because the facts are not clear yet and the investigation is underway.

Yes?

Question: Do you have any idea – we don't know a lot about this guy, exactly what the circumstances were at the incident, but it appears that he was kind of known in the neighborhood and that he was in the street. Thrive New York is – one of the aspects of it is to reach out to people.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Is there any way to know if they ever did?

Mayor: So –

Question: Has he had any interaction with the City?

Mayor: We need to find that out. It's a very good question. I want to separate a couple of different pieces in that. We need to know – one of the elements of Thrive is, of course, to provide mental health services much more at the community level, and schools, community-based organizations, clinics, etcetera. We don't know yet whether he had any connection to any of those services, we need to find out.

There's another thing we do, which is a focus on folks who have a history of violence and diagnosed mental health problems. Initial – very initial information, I don't know of him having had that history of violence that would have put him on the radar screen that way. But again, the thing that we need more of is just every-day people to call a problem in, meaning, if someone has a mental health challenge, of course they themselves can call 888-NYC-WELL, but family members too who feel so frustrated. And I understand, if you have a family member with a serious mental health condition, it's painful, it's challenging, it's frustrating, it's confusing. I want to ask people to try and break through those feelings and pick up the phone, because when you call that number you get a trained counselor who could literally tell you step by step what you can do to get that person to help. And we've just got to make that something that becomes common in our society, that people reach out for that help, because we can do so much more for people. But I think your question is a very good one, we need to go back and trace anything and everything we can about whether there was any knowledge of him that could have led to more help earlier.

Yes?

Question: Mayor, you've touted your de-escalation training. Could that have come into play in this situation where police were called to the scene? And it's still unclear whether there was an attempt to de-escalate. And also, I have a follow-up.

Mayor: Yeah, we don't know the facts fully and I want to let the full investigation play out. I will say on that point, you've already seen through body-camera footage – and again, to the best of my understanding, in this case, there were not body cameras on these officers – that will all be fully implemented by the end of the year. But where we have had body camera footage, you've seen the de-escalation efforts already where prolonged efforts continue to try to get people to drop their weapons – many instances where our officers have shown tremendous restraint. I've said recently – reminding people again, that last year, our officers in the entire 365-day year used their weapons in adversarial situations under 40 times. So, there's a lot of restraint that's taught and being practiced. It depends on the individual situation, what the officer is confronted with, and, again, we just don't know the facts fully yet.

Question: The community police officer in that area, where they familiar with this –

Mayor: That's something we need to know more about from the investigation, but I don't know that yet.

Yeah? You're in the last row, actually.

[Laughter]

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: You're scaring me.

[Laughter]

Question: Can you tell us some of the unanswered questions that you want to have answers to?

Mayor: Look, I'm not an investigator, I only will state the common-sense questions. I think everyone wants to understand what happened in what sequence and, you know, based on the information, how did our officers do their best to respond. And again, our job is to put out everything we can while respecting the parameters of the investigation, and then, you know, analyze what it means, going forward. But we just can't draw conclusions until we have all of the facts.

Question: One quick follow-up – how do you understand the gentleman's mental health troubles?

Mayor: Again, I'm taking pieces of the information that are public domain. I want to be the first to say – I said it at the beginning, I'm going to say it again – until there's a full investigation, we can't say anything definitively. We are going to public the 9-1-1 calls – those are facts. We're going to publish the – any of the available pictures, etcetera, that we have of what happened. But public domain interviews with the family apparently indicate there was a mental health challenge.

Question: Any comment on the number of shots that were fired? I believe I read there were 10 and he was hit – the man was –

Mayor: Again, that has to be subject to the investigation.

Question: There are folks who are going to be protesting this, this afternoon. Is there anything that you'd like to say to them?

Mayor: Look, I understand why this is so painful to people. I also want to remind people, every situation is different and there's a very strong commitment to transparency here, and the fact that the Attorney General – that's a new feature, just in the last few years – the Attorney General's gotten involved immediately. We will fully cooperate. Those are things that people should see as examples of an honest process to get to the truth.

Question: [Inaudible] political question – the State Democratic Party – I'm wondering what your understanding is of it as far as whether it's an appendage of the Governor's campaign? Should the get involved in helping him get elected? Should they get involved in primaries at all?

Mayor: No, they should not get involved in primaries. A State party is supposed to be working in the interest of the larger Democratic Party and its members. It is not supposed to be working solely for one leader, it's not supposed to be taking sides in primaries. Look what happened in the National Democratic Party – and sadly, there's some real evidence that the national party took sides in the presidential primaries – that was very corrosive, that was a mistake. That alienated millions of Democrats who felt mistreated by their own party. It should not happen in this state. The history in this state has been a bad one of the party being so fully owned personally by the Governor that it doesn't perform the function of a full Democratic Party. I hope this is a moment – as a lot of changes suddenly happening in our party. We saw a real change starting to happen yesterday in Albany in terms of the State Senate. The Democratic Party should serve all Democrats and should not get involved in primaries, period – same with the national party.

Question: And as it is now, you feel that it's basically a subsidiary [inaudible]

Mayor: Absolutely, it's been a subsidiary of the Governor for the entire time he's been in office. Everyone knows that. When there hasn't been a Democratic Governor, the party has actually started to function as a full party again. But when there's been a Democratic Governor, certainly in his case, it's been a personal thieftom.

By the way, I want to be equal opportunity – I was disgusted by what the DCCC did in the case of the congressional race in Texas, where they started acting against a fellow Democrat – that's just unacceptable. The Democratic Party should not get involved in primaries. It waits for the candidate to be determined, and then supports that candidate. It's supposed to support Democrats up and down the line. The central focus right now should be on winning Congressional seats, for example, in this state. That's where we could really change things for the good of all New Yorkers.

Okay, a few more? Yes?

Question: Just back to the community policing –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Is shooting not a situation where the community police officers should have been possibly aware of this individual and his mental health history? Lots of people in the neighborhood knew this –

Mayor: We need to know that. We need to know that.

Question: But do you know what happened in this –

Mayor: Again – c'mon, you're a very experienced reporter. This happened less than 24 hours ago, there's a full investigation – of course I don't know all of these facts. We need to know, was there a connection to our neighborhood policing officers? Was there information? But I also want to remind everyone, from what we know so far – very preliminarily – multiple reports of a man with a gun, aiming a gun at citizens – that is not a garden variety situation. So, if that's what officers are responding to, in real-time, we've got to recognize if they believed they were dealing with an immediate matter of life and death to the people in the surrounding area, that's an exceedingly difficult, tense, split-second decision that has to be made. But we can't judge until we do a full investigation.

Yes, last question –

Question: Mayor, I know you're saying that you don't know all of the details, but, in general, when we're dealing with someone that's mentally ill and on the street, police often have a lot of interactions with people and know people, even in their house – for instance, in the Deborah Danner case. Shouldn't – isn't there a way for police officers to know, hey, this is someone that we know – when they're responding to a 9-1-1 call – this is someone that we know, this is their history, before they go in?

Mayor: So, let's take what we're trying to build here and answer that. I think it's a very good question. First of all, I've got now about 8,000 officers who have the CIT training to deal with situations with emotionally disturbed folks. That number will reach 20,000. We have a de-escalation strategy that's taught to all officers, and is obviously played out. We've seen the de-escalation in action. You've seen it from body camera footage in many other situations. Neighborhood policing absolutely means our officers have a much greater knowledge of the community and members of the community. That doesn't mean they know everyone in the community, that doesn't mean that officer is right then available at that moment as an immediate emergency is playing out. We have to be really honest about the time dynamics here. This is not the same as someone, for example, in an apartment isolated. The images that we have seen already – it's very plausible that people felt a man was aiming a weapon at them – every-day people on the street, and that's what police were responding to.

So, each situation is different. We have to get a fully investigation to understand how each moment was handled. But the bigger question is fair – just like the question earlier about the connection with Thrive. What we're trying to create is a dynamic where we're not dealing with the moment of emergency – we've addressed the issue, hopefully, a lot sooner, because in that moment of emergency, if someone appears to have a weapon, or if, God forbid, aims it anywhere, we're already very, very late in the trajectory. We want to reach people earlier through the Thrive initiative, through neighborhood policing. If we see someone who need help, our goal is to get them help and get them away from a situation that might lead to danger themselves or others. That's a tough thing to do, that's a tall order, but in this kind of thing that played out in a matter of moments, we need to analyze every step along the way and see what we can learn from it and what the truth is.

Question: [Inaudible] prevention is real important, but I guess what I'm really asking is – is there a way to improve the 9-1-1 system so that even from the dispatcher getting more information, the police officer having more information?

Mayor: Look, I think it's a good question. I think what would have been very important here is if the initial calls had identified more information about the individual. I'm not blaming anyone who put in the call – if someone pointed a gun at you, or believe you had a gun pointed at you, you'd just pick up the phone and call. If we had had more information about who it was, or the situation, that might have really added something. But I'm not sure there's a way that 9-1-1 system can achieve that. I don't know in a split-second dynamic, again, where the assumption is people's lives are in immediate danger.

Let's play out the scenario had it been different. If this is an individual with a loaded weapon who, for whatever reason, including a mental health challenge, was ready to use it, that's a split-second matter of trying to save lives right then and there. How you get the full facts of what the person has in their hand, and what their mental health condition might be, and are they know the anyone in something that's playing out in seconds and minutes, that's a very tall order. But I think it's the right question – is there some way to get more information in a situation even if it's evolving that quickly that could help us to do better. That will certainly be a part of the investigation.

Last call? Yes?

Question: Any changes in police protocol since the shooting death of Deborah Danner?

Mayor: Well, again, Commissioner O'Neill was very clear that the protocol was not followed in that situation and what has been abundantly clear in the training is that the protocol needs to be followed, and that's been amplified many times over and it will continue to be.

Thank you, everyone.

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