

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. We're starting early this morning, because I'll be going soon to Medal Day for the FDNY. We are going to celebrate heroes, extraordinary firefighters, paramedics, EMT's who did amazing things to save lives and help New Yorkers in the year 2020, the toughest year we've all been through. So, it's going to be a day of celebration and appreciation for people who do so much for us. But, in the meantime, we've got a lot to cover. And I'll tell you something, there is no stopping the FDNY and there's no stop in New York. We have seen it time and time again in our history, but especially in the last year – New Yorkers fight back. We get back up. We keep moving forward. There's no stopping New York.

So, today, I'm going to give you proof of just how amazing the efforts of New Yorkers are and how much when we decide we're going to make a change we really make a change. Today, here's an example of a record we've broken – and this is great for our environment, for stopping climate change, for a healthier city, for a less congested city, for a greener city – more and more people are turning to bikes and that's fantastic. And in May, we had a record and it was broken – this is great news. In the month of May 2021, 2,709,684 rides were taken on Citi Bike. I was one of those, there's your evidence on the screen. And this is amazing that more and more people are turning to Citi Bike as an option. This is good for this city. And what a good way to ride into the Summer of New York City. You're going to see people out on their bikes enjoying the city like never before, as we come back strong. There's going to be a bike boom all over this city. And to make sure folks are safe, we've installed – we are installing, I should say, 30-plus miles of protected bike lanes this year. So, we're continuing to expand bike lanes all over the city.

Now, last year was a record-breaking year for installation of bike lanes. We're going to keep building, we're going to keep encouraging folks to use Citi Bikes and other alternatives. I want you to hear from someone who joined me on my ride from Gracie Mansion to City Hall. We had a great time that day. She is a leading urban transportation advocate and Lyft's General Manager for Citi Bike – my pleasure to welcome Laura Fox.

[...]

Mayor: Amen. Thank you, Laura. Thank you. I appreciate all you are doing to encourage bike usage in the city. I love your enthusiasm for it. And let me tell you, classic – classic is the way to go. So, I'm going to – I'm going to be sticking with my classic Citi Bike. I'll see you out on the road. The next stop is Ocean Parkway, Laura – that's coming up soon, Ocean Parkway. Get ready.

All right. Thank you, Laura. Everyone, look, we're going to keep talking about it – there's no stopping New York. This is such an important time in our history and New Yorkers are stepping

up, setting records, doing new things, making things happen every day. To epitomize this, we've started a campaign to let people know that things are happening in this city, time to get invested in this city, time to come back to the city if you're outside, time to make things happen in New York City. Our no-stopping New York effort epitomizes the energy of the city. We had a 60-second advertisement we showed you earlier. I want you to see now the 30-second version, you'll be seeing this message everywhere. It really captures the spirit of this city, and why we are coming back, and why everyone needs to be a part of this comeback. So, I want you to see the 30-second version of this ad.

[...]

Mayor: So, that says it all. And there's just more and more evidence every day. Yesterday, I told you the amazing news, the lowest positivity level for COVID since the crisis began. We also, every single day, keep seeing more and more vaccinations. The single most important thing in our recovery is getting people vaccinated. So, as of today, 8,340,355 vaccinations. Now, all of these efforts, grassroots efforts, incentives, working with community-based organizations, it's all working. We have great incentives this week. As I said, we're giving away staycations here at great hotels in New York City. So, you're going to have an opportunity if you're getting newly vaccinated or you're making your first dose appointment to win those prizes. You're going to see the vaccine buses and vans all around the city, making it real convenient. Remember, vaccination equals freedom. This is how we move forward.

Now, we're going to create sites anywhere and everywhere that's going to draw people and get them involved. So, a new site is going to be opening at the New York Aquarium to encourage kids to come over, parents to bring their kids. We'll have the Pfizer vaccine there for kids 12 years old and up. You can walk in and get the vaccine at the New York Aquarium or you can schedule an appointment. And when you get your vaccination at the New York Aquarium, you get a ticket for a future visit, just like at the Bronx Zoo, just like at the American Museum of Natural History. Parents are really responding to this. It is a joy to bring your kids someplace they love, get them vaccinated, know they're healthy, know they'll get to enjoy that wonderful location again. So, this is a great, great opportunity. If you want to schedule an appointment or any site, whether it's New York Aquarium or any other site, 877-VAX-4NYC or visit vax4nyc.nyc.gov.

Now, we in New York City have used such a variety of approaches to vaccination. And this is why we've been able to put up really substantial numbers, including at the grassroots. But now, we have an incredible new opportunity, because so many young people are qualifying. Now, we've got hundreds of thousands more New Yorkers who can get vaccinated who couldn't just a month ago. So, we now are really doubling down on focusing on young people, focusing on their parents, focusing on their pediatricians. What's interesting and positive so far is New York City is outpacing the nation at vaccinating our youngest people, and this is exciting. From the moment we got the announcement that 12- to 15-year-olds could get vaccinated, we saw a surge of interest. We saw parents bringing their kids out right away. Here's what we now know – for 12 through 17-year-olds, 118,000 New York kids have already been vaccinated in that 12 to 17 age range – 118,000. That's 23 percent of all the kids in that age range. That surpasses the national average of 22 percent. So, we are doing something here that's working and we want to build on it and go farther, especially in the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID. We care deeply about reaching our young people in every way. So, starting on Friday in certain schools, we're going to

pilot something very exciting. We're going to start launching in school vaccination sites. This is something I think is going to open up a world of possibilities. We're working with our Health Department, our Department of Education, with the UFT. We want to make schools a place where kids can get vaccinated.

Now, for so many kids, of course, that is only been a recent possibility. So, we're going to start this in certain schools around the five boroughs. We're going to see how it goes. We're going to get the most done. We can between now and the end of the school later this month. But it's going to be a way to reach a lot of young people quickly and it's going to be a way to encourage parents to understand how incredible it is, what a great feeling it is to know your child is safe. So, we'll start schools on Friday, expanding more over the days ahead. We will be in all five boroughs in schools, vaccinating kids – select locations, not everywhere yet, but select locations. And we really think this is going to help reach more and more young people and continue to keep New York City ahead of the national average for youth vaccination.

I want you to hear about how important this is from someone who has been a leading voice throughout this crisis, talking about all the things we need to do to reach New Yorkers and do it with equity. I want to introduce the Chair of the City Council Committee on Health, Council Member Mark Levine.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Mark. And we are going to keep pressing on to reach farther and farther to the grassroots, more and more equity. Thank you for your efforts in your community and beyond to support that. And now, I want you to hear from someone who really understands this from a frontline perspective. He, for years, was a public school teacher, understands how important it is to communicate with parents, because he is a current public school parent himself on top of that. He – I've talked to him, he has a passion for education and reaching our young people and, obviously, for keeping them healthy and safe. He is also the newest member of the Bronx delegation in the City Council – Council Member Eric Dinowitz.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Council Member. Thank you for all you did for the city as a teacher and now for what you're doing, and I appreciate, I can tell how much it's in your heart to be there for our kids, and thank you for spreading the word. I agree with you – getting vaccination, wherever kids are, whether it's the New York Aquarium or the Bronx Zoo or in the classroom, we're going to reach kids everywhere and make everyone much, much safer. Thank you very much, Council Member.

All right, now, continuing on this theme, we are going to be doing a series of events all over New York City for New York City Youth Vaccination Week. So, all of these pieces are going to allow us to keep focusing on young people, because here's an area we can make such a difference. We're going to have youth vaccination block parties in all five boroughs. We're going to be working with local organizations, lots of fun activities, lots of direct outreach – Department of Youth and Committee Development is doing a great, great approach called the Barbershop Talk series, going out into communities, going into barbershops, having conversations, beauty salons, talking directly to New Yorkers, talking to kids, talking to their parents. This direct approach

makes all the difference and no voice is more important to a parent, I can tell you this from my own experience, the voice who listened to the most, when it comes to protecting your kids, is your pediatrician. Here to talk about how important it is to get young people vaccinated, all the ways we're going about it. He is a pediatrician himself. He has served the city with tremendous energy during this crisis as Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Health, one of the people who has been at the frontline fighting COVID and particularly focusing on the needs of our young people, Dr. Danny Stevens.

Deputy Commissioner Danny Stephens, Family & Child Health, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Mr. Mayor, as you know the latest group to be authorized to receive the vaccine are among those who've missed and been missed the most – our children. We have a lot of hugs to catch up on. So as a pediatrician, I've had many conversations with patients, with families, with young people about vaccinations. We talk about their concerns. We talk about their questions, and I know this is an important decision because protecting our children is important. I want to assure young people, parents, and guardians that the Pfizer vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine that's now authorized for use in youth ages 12 to 17 is safe, it's effective, and it saves lives. Tens of thousands. as you mentioned, hundreds of thousands of young New Yorkers have now received the Pfizer vaccine, and by getting vaccinated, they're keeping their families, their loved ones and their communities protected from the virus.

On the other side of vaccination, kids can be kids again. They can hang out with friends, they can go to summer camp, they can visit grandparents and other family members all safely. For Youth Vaccination Week, we're making it as easy as possible for the vaccine to be given, and because the priority of our young people is health and safety. We're also making it as easy as possible for youth, parents, and families to learn about why the vaccine is safe and effective. In all five boroughs, as you mentioned, the City is hosting block parties and resource fairs. At these events, doctors and public health professionals will be on hand to answer questions about the vaccines. There will also be family activities, food, music, and resources from city agencies and community-based organizations. We're also hosting two dozen virtual events with Health Department doctors and leaders from community-based organizations where adults and young people can learn more about the Pfizer vaccine and have their important questions answered, and we are promoting all of the sites throughout the city that carry and offer the Pfizer vaccine. These include new sites like the Brooklyn Museum, the Botanic Gardens, Rockaway Beach, Coney Island, Orchard Beach, and the Van Gogh Exhibit on the Lower East Side. To find a vaccine site near you go to nyc.gov/vaccinefinder, or you can call 8-7-7-VAX-4-NYC to find a City-run site and arrange free round-trip transportation to a vaccine site. You can also reach out to your family's pediatrician or healthcare provider to see if they have the fact that the Pfizer vaccine, and they can answer your questions about the vaccine for your child. Over the past year so many young New Yorkers have been impacted by COVID-19 – whether it's remote learning, or missing their friends, or their after-school activities, including sports. I urge parents and guardians to talk to your children about the COVID-19 vaccine and to discuss their questions and their concerns. And to young people, I urge you to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine and to share your story. Your voice is so powerful. We need your help to encourage your communities to get vaccinated too. Post your pictures, post your videos on social media and talk about the COVID-19 vaccine with family and friends. The more New Yorkers who get vaccinated and protect one another, the closer we will be to moving on from this pandemic and getting back to the people and the activities that we love. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Dr. Stephens, and thank you for all you do for the city and sending a clear message to parents and kids, and by the way, the fact that parents and kids are showing up now, as they've been qualified to get vaccinated, they're showing up in great numbers. This is part of why we see an unimportant uptick in the number of vaccinations in the season. So now we're 4.3 million New Yorkers have received at least one dose. That's more than half the population of the city who has now received at least one dose. We know that pretty much everyone who gets a first dose follows through and gets a second, and we expect a lot more kids coming forward. A lot more parents coming forward. This is going to be crucial to our effort.

Okay, let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report – 66 patients, continues to go down. That's fantastic. Confirmed positivity – 15.38 percent. Hospitalization rate – 0.56 per 100,000. Again, continues to go down. Absolutely outstanding. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average – 240 cases today. Another really good number. Number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, same as yesterday, all-time low since testing began – 0.83 percent on a seven-day rolling average. So that's very good news.

Okay, quickly in Spanish, just a few words on importance of getting young people vaccinated.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Danny Stephens, the Deputy Commissioner for Family and Child Health at DOHMH, by Dr. Dave Chokshi, by Dr. Mitchell Katz, and by the Director of the Mayor's Office of Jeff Thamkittikasem. First question today goes to Stacey from FOX 5.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Stacey. How are you doing?

Question: I'm doing well, thanks. I want to start with a question about the attack on the Asian woman a few days ago, and we know the suspect is under arrest, and has a long, long rap sheet Commissioner Shea has spoken out about it and said, you know, if someone like him being back on the streets is putting New Yorkers at risk. I think he has five arrests this year. So, I'm wondering you know, what does this say to you? Do we need to take another look at bail reform? You know, more of these people who seem to have repeat violent offenses, committing more violent acts that are really sending a lot of fear in certain communities in the city?

Mayor: Stacey, there's lots of different pieces of this equation we have to act on. I know our colleagues in Albany right now, for example, are focused on reforming our parole laws. This is really important. We get a lot of people who come out of prison and are simply dumped in New York City by the State of New York, instead of getting help and support like housing, or support getting employment or any kind of discharge planning that will actually help them turn their life around. That's the kind of change we need. We need to keep looking at laws to see how we can improve them unquestionably, but meanwhile on the ground, the work we do with policing our

Anti-Hate Crime Task Force, our Anti-Asian Hate Crime Task Force in particular has been very effective, including the use of undercover officers. The work we do with mental health, going out and engaging with mobile teams, we're going to have to do all of these approaches, Stacey, to make an impact. Go ahead.

Question: You know, I understand the concept of the multi-pronged approach, but in a case like this and another incident, I believe were a man who had multiple arrests, classified as an emotionally-disturbed person pushed a woman down the stairs. I mean, and these specific cases that are happening now, maybe the Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Task Force couldn't do anything as this is just a random attack for someone that shouldn't be on the street. I mean, do you think that, that these people should be on the streets? Should they be being released when they're picked up [inaudible]?

Mayor: Stacey, I've obviously talked about this a number of times. I think we have to keep working to always balance the equation. I think there are a lot of important changes that have been made in laws in the name of justice and fairness. We obviously always have to balance that with public safety, that's ongoing work. I don't think you pass along – it's just there and done forever. You keep looking at the results. You keep working to make things better and make improvements. So, we got to do that, but we also have to use all these other approaches.

Moderator: The next is Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: Good Juliet. How are you doing?

Question: I'm fine, thank you. So, you were talking about bicycles and bike lanes. So I'm wondering, has any thought been given to a bicycle lane grid where there is a map so that cyclists can follow, that motorists can follow, pedestrians can follow so that people know where the bike lanes are and that rules of the road are followed and enforced so that pedestrians and cyclists and motorists just know where each other is at and what's going on?

Mayor: You know, Julia, it's a real interesting thought. I mean, I think what's happening now is more and more sort of a clear citywide approach, more and more protected bike lanes, more and more options for bicyclists. But I think you're making a good point. We got to keep evolving and helping everyone understand how to respect each other out there on the road and be safe. So, I haven't heard that particular suggestion, but I think that's the right direction for sure. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay. So yeah, just the thought, because I'm thinking of, you know, shared streets as far as lanes for bikes and lanes for cars that people know where they are, they know what to expect on that area. But anyway, my next question involves parades. You know, there was a Memorial Day Parade on Staten Island this weekend. Are there plans to resume parades in New York City? And I'm thinking about, you know, some of the ethnic parades that are usually on in the summer and then there's the West Indian Parade on Labor Day weekend.

Mayor: Yeah, great question. We're looking at that right now. Obviously that parade in Staten Island is something people cherish honoring those who we've lost serving our country. But it's

much smaller than the kind of parade you're talking about that are major, major citywide events. We're looking at that now. I said a while ago when we get to the point that we can bring parades back, it's something New Yorkers appreciate it a lot, but the first parade will be one to honor our healthcare heroes, our first responders, our essential workers – all the people who saw us through the crisis. So, we're looking at that right now to figure out what makes sense to do when, but the good news is we're getting safer every day. So, it's reopening the possibility of having those kinds of events again.

Moderator: The next is Odalys Molina from Telemundo.

Question: Yes, good morning Mayor. More police presence have been allocated to the subway, however, we continue to see more attacks and incidents. What is the plan to make people feel safe when they use the public transportation?

Mayor: Odalys, I think it is continuing to refine the strategy. I mean, we've just now gotten to a point where we have the largest police force in our subways in over 25 years. That presence is going to be felt more and more, but it's also about precision policing, determining exactly where is the best place to have those officers, that work goes on. And I also think, Odalys, the recovery itself. More and more people are choosing to go on the subways, public safety experts will tell you, the more people get on the subways, the safer they get across the board. So, it will be that combination of pieces that I think gets us there quickly. Go ahead, Odalys.

Question: Can you elaborate more on the incentives for young people, apart from the vaccination at school coming soon, for them to get vaccinated, and you were mentioning that before the press conference, but can you elaborate that on that?

Mayor: How – when you say elaborate, you mean on why, how important it is?

Question: No, the incentive – the incentives to get vaccinated and apart from the areas in the school coming soon.

Mayor: Incentive, okay, yes. Look we have the incentives around places that parents and kids love, like the New York Aquarium, like the Bronx Zoo, like the American Museum of Natural History, so it's an opportunity for kids to go someplace positive, exciting, get vaccinated, get tickets, to go to those amazing places, you know, there are so many ways we're going to be reaching out to parents and kids in communities showing them the benefits of vaccination. I think parents – look, every parent thinks first and foremost about the health and safety of their kid. Parents may have some questions, but as Dr. Steven said, we're going to be out there in communities to answer those questions. And pediatricians, we're working with pediatricians, to reach every one of their patients and have the conversation. And the more of those conversations happen, the more parents choose to get their kids vaccinated.

Moderator: The next is Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Reuvain, how you been?

Question: Good, good, sorry for my voice is a little off. I'd like to ask you about a report in the Atlantic that says that earlier this year you convened the meeting of some of the city's most powerful unions to urge them to consolidate their endorsements behind Eric Adams, even though you haven't publicly endorsed Adams for the sake of stopping Andrew Yang, is this report true?

Mayor: Look Reuvain, this was reported a long time ago. We had a meeting, several key labor leaders in me about the future of the city, the future of working people and organized labor. We talked about a lot of things. It was convened to talk about what was important to do for the future. It was not convened for any specific purpose. Go ahead.

Question: You're saying that you did not urge them to support admins, but I do have to move on to my second question. There's a report in the New York Post that a director of the Bronx Defenders Office, which is funded by taxpayer money, sends an email from her work email address to colleagues about, "standing in solidarity with our comrades in Columbia, Brazil, and Palestine who are fighting rampant state violence militarized police force is that the US empire helps to train otherwise support financially and otherwise". Is an employee of a taxpayer funded office permitted to send political emails from they're work emails to colleagues?

Mayor: It is a fair question. We've been really clear about public employees not using public resources to express their political views and understanding how we have to respect each other's viewpoints. I don't know what the law is related to an organization like that. That is, you're absolutely right, supported with taxpayer funding. But I will look at that for sure. I would just say people need to realize how important it is in the most diverse city in the world to respect everyone, and if someone is there to do a particular job, focus on that job and serve people. That's what they're there for.

Moderator: The next is Andrew Siff from WNBC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Mayor, later this morning, Congressman Lee Zeldin, who you know is running for Governor, is going to demand that Governor Cuomo remove the mask order for children in schools. I'm wondering what you think about that in terms of immediately doing that and where things stand as of right now for how likely it is that kids returning in September would still have to wear masks?

Mayor: Right now, we're assuming kids will be wearing masks. That could change depending on the CDC guidance and obviously the fight against COVID, which so far is going really, really well in this city. But we're going to keep that fight going. And my belief is the farther we go, the more freedom we're going to have, the more people get vaccinated, the more freedom we're going to have. But for now, the plan is to keep masks on kids, an abundance of caution, and I think that's the right approach. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: You planning to watch the debate tonight and what are you looking to hear?

Mayor: Definitely going to watch the debate. I want to hear as much as possible from the candidates, how they are going to move us forward after everything we've been through. I want to hear, what about them makes them able to move this city forward in this incredibly sensitive time, and not adjust political answers or, you know, sort of vague answers, but what about them

as a human being is going to allow them to move us forward? That's what I'm going to be listening for.

Moderator: The next is Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: Good, Paul, how you been?

Question: Good, thank you. So, regarding bikeshare, the DOT told us back in April that they were considering other options after Beryl pulled out, I'm just hoping to get a sense of where that stands with the city and those other options?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a good question, and I know that's something we've got to come up with an alternative for. I don't have a perfect answer for you at the ready, but we will get you one today, Paul. Go ahead.

Question: All right. Thank you for that. And just regarding the school vaccine sites, the in-school vaccine sites, I'm hoping to get a better sense of where that's going to start and what the rollout is going to look like, if you have specific sites?

Mayor: On Friday we're starting in the Bronx and we're going to expand out across the five boroughs in the coming days, but specific sites, I want to emphasize, this is something we haven't done before, obviously, because kids didn't qualify. We're going to focus particularly on middle schools where I think you're going to see a lot of parents wanting to see their kids vaccinated, and we're going to move to a number of schools. We are going to see if it makes sense to stay multiple days or one day, we're going to work this through because we have a few weeks to work with now before school is over, and our goal is to reach a lot of kids, and then we're going to keep doing that going forward into the summer because we're going to have potentially hundreds of thousands of kids in our new summer initiative. So, this is a way of finding out the best approach and then applying it more broadly.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Nolan from the Post.

Question: Hey, good morning, everyone.

Mayor: Hey, Nolan, how you been?

Question: I'm all right, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, good.

Question: To follow up on the questions about the man who attacked the woman in Chinatown, what does it say about our criminal justice system that a man can have been arrested a half dozen plus times in the past year and have a rap sheet with some 40 incidents on it and be released back into the general public pending his court date and his trial?

Mayor: It says we have more work to do. Nolan, look, first of all, the most central problem has been not having our court system operating because when the court system is operating, we see constant movement. We see decisions being made. We see consequences, it makes an impact. We haven't had that for over a year. We're starting to get that back now, but I think we have to keep looking constantly at the right approaches. We got to keep people safe. We've got to it fairly. We proved for years in this city you can do both at once, but I think there's more work to be done and we need to keep reconsidering the best way to do it. Go ahead, Nolan.

Question: On the larger issue of crime in the city, we've just gotten the recent shooting numbers for the month of May, there were some 155 – sorry, 150 shootings over the last month. This is levels last seen previously in 2007, and then the last time we touched the number was in 1997 when your former police commissioner was on his first tour of duty. You keep saying there's a plan to do something about this and that the numbers will – and that the success of this plan will be born out in those results, it's now June, we're at shooting levels that we haven't really seen in the last 20 years in the city. What do you say to people who are impatient for results?

Mayor: I say to them exactly what I've been saying, and I'm absolutely convinced that we're going to turn this around. I have a lot of faith in the NYPD we had 850 more officers join the force coming out of the academy last month, 600 coming this month. We have put the most police in the subways in 25 years. We have the court system, finally, this is the second week only. It has been fully operational since over a year ago, it will take time to ramp up, but it's going to make an impact. The recovery itself is helping us to make people safer. The investments we're putting in communities, Cure Violence, Crisis Management System, all of these things are going to add up, but you don't turn around the results of a global pandemic and a whole dislocation of our society, don't turn around overnight, but we are going to turn it around.

Moderator: Last question for today, it goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Look forward to that ride on Ocean Parkway with you at some point –

Mayor: Got to be there, Gersh.

Question: I'll be there. Listen, I know you were asked yesterday about Washington Square Park, but this is clearly an ongoing story about a major change in public space and how public space is policed in this city, especially in a park where you yourself called one of the most important ones in town. So, policing of public space is the central issue of why people are in a lot of ways, protesting police misconduct and brutality. So, having the NYPD close, at 10:00 pm in the summer, a critical public space, is a decision that needs more explanation. So first, can you tell me how you and the NYPD made this decision? And I need you to go beyond restating what you said yesterday that it's a noise issue for a residential community, because as you well know, Washington Square Park has been a boisterous gathering place for far longer than even those current residents have been living there.

Mayor: I didn't say it was just a noise issue. I think there's several different things happening that need to be addressed and coming up with a proactive way of addressing it, making sure everyone is safe, not having a situation where we've got – bigger reality we have to address, but instead dealing with upfront, makes sense at this moment, this is something we're doing now,

Gersh, it's not necessarily something we're doing for the long-term obviously. But there's been a series of activities in the park that just aren't what should be happening in the park, and it's important to do something proactive about it. Go ahead.

Question: Yeah, I appreciate that. You know, it's funny, you mentioned the activities in the park, and we were curious about that too, so we had our reporter, Chris Robbins, ask the NYPD for whether there had been arrests, perhaps there's been a spike in arrests in the park, which would explain at least why the NYPD believes park needs to be closed at 10:00 pm on Friday, summer weekday nights, but the NYPD did not provide any arrest numbers to us. So, we're wondering if you could get that to us by the end of the day as well?

Mayor: Sure, we'll get you whatever the specific facts are. But the bottom line is to come up with strategies that respect a whole community, keep everyone safe, proactive, not reactive. Look, we've all gone through so much with COVID, we're coming out of it now because people have gone out and gotten vaccinated, New Yorkers have helped each other out. We want to move forward, a positive, peaceful summer. We want to move forward an extraordinary recovery in this city, and we got to do that with smart approaches that really listen to communities, and that's what we're trying to do there and all over the city. So, everyone look, today, some really impressive, good news, continuing to build our vaccination effort, continuing to drive down COVID, I will conclude with a simple message, if you haven't done it yet, particularly, if you haven't made sure your kids are vaccinated yet, go out there and make that appointment, get vaccinated, help us move forward. Thank you, everybody.

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