



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 11, 2014

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

No. 083

**DRAFT RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPOINTS HEADS OF KEY
CRIMINAL JUSTICE POSITIONS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Today is a good news day. Today we have some wonderful appointments to announce and also some extraordinary progress to announce in terms of safety for our city. Let me start by thanking some of the folks who helped to get us to this day in terms of bringing these extraordinarily talented people into our administration – obviously, our First Deputy Mayor Tony Shorris and my Chief of Staff Laura Santucci. I want to thank them for all of their help and all of their leadership. We have two special guests – I see one, Mike Jacobson, an old friend, now a CUNY – former commissioner of probations and corrections – you just had to do more, didn't you, Mike? And is Jeremy here? Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College, dear friend.

Thank you so much for being here. Both were extremely helpful in our process of finding the best and the brightest to come into the administration for this extraordinary effort to make our city safe. You know, the appointments speak once again to our values. I've talked about creating an administration that is progressive, that is effective, that is diverse, that represents people of lots of different backgrounds but all united by extraordinary capacity. And everyone standing with me today is deeply committed to making this a safe and livable city for the long run. And we know that real consistent lasting public safety involves vigorous law enforcement, aggressive law enforcement, but also respectful law enforcement. We believe in law enforcement that's both tough and fair.

Under Commissioner Bratton's leadership, the NYPD has shown that it is able to keep reducing crime while dialing back the tensions that have too-long marred the relationship between police and community. And during the first 10 weeks of 2014, the NYPD has driven down already historically low levels of crime. Overall, major crime has gone down 2 percent in the first 10 weeks of 2014 compared to where the levels stood a year ago. That's overall – that's all major crime categories – a 2 percent decline. But let's talk about homicides. Homicides are down nearly 21 percent from this time a year ago. Shooting incidents down more than 14 percent from this time a year ago. This is extraordinary progress. It is not surprising to me, given that we have the finest police force in the world, that this progress is made. It's not surprising to me, given that we have the finest police leader

in the world, that this progress has been made. Some nay-sayers suggested that you couldn't bring down crime while bringing police and community back together. I think these last 10 weeks show – yes, you can and yes, we will. And I just want to thank Commissioner Bratton and all the men and women of the NYPD for their extraordinary efforts. This is real evidence of what they can achieve and will continue to achieve. And with that, I'd love Commissioner Bratton to share his thoughts.

Commissioner Bill Bratton, Police: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Pleasure to be here today with the mayor and the new appointees that really flesh out the criminal justice team that I'll have the privilege of working with and collaborating with. And I think that theme of collaboration is certainly one I hope that you have seen these last two months as, within the department and all the entities we seek to deal with, the idea is to work with them. And I am looking forward to working with the new appointees that are being announced here today. The mayor talked about the successes of the last couple of months, that we are working with very low crime numbers – doesn't take too much to go up or down a few percentage points. But the reality is that the department has had some significant success over these last couple of months. The number of homicides as of midnight last night – that we've had 13 fewer homicides so far this year – we've had 46 versus 59 at the same point in time last year. And shootings are also down as the mayor has indicated. We've had 141 versus 166 – that's shootings with victims. In fact, on March 5th, we had a 24-hour period in this city of 8.5 million people, that has 3 million visitors on an average day – on that day, there were no murders, there were no shooting victims, there were no stabbing victims, there were no slashing victims. We can't find a day like that in the history of the department since we've been keeping records. And, in February, that we also had the benefit of a 10-day period of time in which there were no murders in the city. We also can't find a period of time that went that long without a murder in the city, again, of 8.5 million people. So we're working very hard, and I think the collaboration that the mayor has talked about, both within the department, as we continue our reorganization of the department, but in trying to also improve our relationships with the communities we police, and the organizations that we collaborate with, that there's some early on indicators of success that we will work very hard to continue expanding on. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much. I just want to just amplify – 10 days straight in New York City in which there was not a single murder is an extraordinary achievement for the NYPD. I feel, as someone who cares so deeply for the neighborhoods of this city, that March 5th is a day I hope we will celebrate for a long time. March 5th, as the commissioner said, not a single murder, not a single shooting, not a single stabbing - that is a portent of what could be possible in this city, of how far we can continue to go. To think that all of these efforts over all these years have led to the fact that we could have a day where no act of that kind of violence happened. That's so encouraging. And, again, kudos to you, Commissioner. I think the spirit of collaboration that has been the hallmark of your career is part of why we're seeing this great success already. And obviously to all the men and women of the NYPD.

That philosophy of collaboration, as Commissioner Bratton indicated, it also clearly describes the relationship between police and community. And that's what we're so focused on. And that will be true in all of the areas of law enforcement – working evermore closely with communities building up that communication, that partnership. And it's something we know will work, has been working at the NYPD already, will work in all of the criminal justice agencies. Today, we're appointing four outstanding justice professionals to key positions in this city. And we know that they are going to make sure – they will make sure – the laws of this city are enforced, and they're enforced effectively, and they're enforced fairly. And they'll use city resources in a very efficient manner because if you look at the careers of each of these individuals, they understand the bottom line. They know how to get a lot done with the resources they have. They'll focus on keeping first time offenders from becoming career criminals. And that, of course, in particular, focuses us on the work of the Department of Corrections.

Now, the Department of Corrections in this city is larger in both budget and in head-count than similar departments in most states. And yet, over the years, it has sadly lagged behind many corrections systems in terms of updating some of its practices and procedures. And that's why I am thrilled that we are bringing on board an outstanding new corrections commissioner, one who has tremendous experience in turning corrections systems around and making them better. Now, we know that is a tough job by definition – the work of corrections is tough, any cultural or institutional turnaround is tough. Well, it takes a tough man and I think that this veteran of the US Marines is exactly the kind of man that we need for the job. Joseph Ponte has garnered a national reputation for the reforms he has instituted as commissioner for the Maine Department of Corrections. And under his watch, solitary confinement rates were reduced by two thirds. And during more than 40 years of work as a corrections leader, he's been the warden of jails and prisons in half a dozen states including in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Florida. And he brings with him to our department of corrections and unparalleled energy in favor of reform and efficiency. His career is filled with achievements and he knows – because he started out as a corrections officer himself – he knows that we have to institute these reforms while always focusing on keeping our officers safe. He knows how to make jails safer for officers and inmates alike. He knows we have to reduce inmate violence and he has achieved that progress in other systems. He knows that we have to reduce the use of force by officers in every possible way. He knows that we have to reform the treatment of mentally ill prisoners. And we have to facilitate inmate reentry into society. He has a tremendous reputation for being a diligent manager and someone who focuses on cost-effectiveness. And let me tell you, with our fiscal situation, Commissioner, I'm really glad about that. We're confident that he will improve our jail system and our city's public safety, and all along work in that kind of spirit of collaboration that Commissioner Bratton talks about. I know that Commissioner Ponte will win the respect of the incredibly hard-working men and women of the corrections department. I want to say they don't get the credit they deserve for the hard work they do. We believe in what they do. We respect and appreciate what they do. We want to keep them safe. We want to keep reforming our system and we know we can do those things together. I'd like to welcome Commissioner Joseph Ponte.

[Applause]

Incoming Department of Correction Commissioner Joseph Ponte: Good afternoon everyone, and Mayor, thank you very much for the respect you've given me and the responsibility I'll share with my counterparts who are being appointed today. What you're seeing in corrections across the country – not just here in New York but in Maine, in Mississippi, in Colorado – is really a debate on how we do business. For those who came into corrections years ago the kinds of strategies – the use of isolation, segregation, solitary confinement – are what we taught people. That's how I was taught to do corrections when I came to work. You know, the leadership across the country is really been moving in a direction that we've proven ourselves wrong. There's enough data and research out there to say some of our practices really conflict with our mission. So if we're truly trying to make people better, long term segregation is not the answer. But we still need to keep our places safe, we still need to keep our staff safe, and we need to treat the offenders so they're better on the way out than when they came in. I do have a history of moving around the country and working in troubled facilities and one of the things I learned through changing jobs – when I went to Shelby County, Tennessee, a fairly large jail system there – they had a plan. The plan was written out on all the things that they were going to do to fix the jail. They were going to get rid of most of the staff, they were going to hire all new staff at a tremendous cost to the county. At the end of the day, what we ended up doing was laying off all the new staff and really collaborating with the staff that were already there to put a plan together that works. Here in New York, we will do that. We will talk to everybody and bring everybody to the table to make a plan that works for New York – not just from where – from a central office point of view, but for the officer that works that line every day, that's important to him

and his safety. I think that if there's anything I bring after 40 plus years is I understand I do not know it all and the people out there working these posts everyday know much more than me. And I'll be seeking their guidance – and the union's guidance – as we move New York forward. So, again, Mayor, thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to the challenge.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much. Welcome aboard. And I just want to say, the work of corrections is really tough, as I mentioned. And I want to thank the man who's been our acting commissioner over these last months, Mark Cranston, who's done an excellent job of keeping the corrections department working well. He's a great leader, and I'm thrilled to say he'll be continuing with us as first deputy commissioner. Mark, thank you for all you've done, and look forward to working with you as we go forward. Let's thank Mark for all that he's done.

Now, let's move to probation. And I have to tell you, this is a particularly moving moment for me because I'm – I'm sorry, I'm turning to camera left – I'm turning to camera right – because we're appointing Ana Bermúdez as our commissioner for the Department of Probation. And she is someone I have admired for a long time and have gotten to know personally and have just tremendous respect for the work she does.

The mission of the probations department is not well known, I have to be honest. And the work it does is so important, because the idea is to prevent recidivism. It's such a foundational mission – stop more crime from happening by taking folks who have gone down the wrong path and not turn back to crime. And folks who work in probation don't get the credit they deserve, they don't get the attention they deserve, but it's such an important part of the puzzle.

Ana Bermúdez has an extraordinary record of achievement in this difficult and demanding field. Since 2010, she's been the deputy commissioner for our city's Department of Probation, the deputy commissioner for juvenile operations. And during her tenure, the annual rate of re-incarceration among juvenile justice probation clients has dropped by 25 percent, which is really extraordinary. Before joining the Probation Department, she directed juvenile justice programs at the Children's Aid Society. She began her legal career as a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society. She is a proud native of Puerto Rico who couldn't get into a good college or law school, so she went to Brown University and Yale University Law School – something she still feels bad about that she couldn't get into someplace better.

She is a longtime resident of Brooklyn, and Ana and I served together on the District 15 school board in Brooklyn. And I got to see up close both her incredible compassion for students and parents, and her incredible work ethic and devotion. She – you know, school boards are places where you find out who people really are. And there's plenty of – plenty of challenges, but through it all, Ana was one of the people who won respect from everyone involved. And in terms of challenges, there are few things more difficult than something that Ana and I actually did around the same time and sometimes did together, which is coaching little league. You know, I don't know any more unruly group than a little league players. I had a tough time trying to get them to pay attention to the drills that I was trying to work on them with. But Ana was substantially more effective, I want to say. But I – I think of your many qualifications, Ana, that has to be high on the list as well. I'd like to welcome Ana Bermúdez as our new commissioner of probations.

Do you want this step? Yeah, let's do the step. I think the step might be –

Incoming Department of Probation Commissioner Ana Bermúdez: I'm breaking the step in today. Okay. So I'm very honored to be here today, and I feel very fortunate to be taking over a department of probation that is strong and able to move this administration's vision forward. And I

owe this honor in great part to Vinny Schiraldi, who's here and he's our outgoing commissioner. I learned so much from you, Vinny, and will carry on whatever we started so that outcomes are better for the people who are involved in the justice system. It's also a bit of a coming back home with Bill de Blasio and others in this administration, so it feels particularly good and positive and all those good things.

Now, our department is committed to having our clients thrive, not just survive. The justice system right now is more known for creating barriers rather than opportunities for success – and in particular, for young men of color. But we have started changing that by investing in our teenage and young adult clients and by developing a wide array of community-based alternatives, through which our clients can develop the skills and competencies they'll need to exit the system permanently. That is the goal here. In this way, we'll continue to contribute to Mayor de Blasio's quest to reduce the burdensome impact the justice system can have on our citizens. Moving forward, we need to work in partnership, as has been said, with other city and state agencies to form a network of support and resources so that fewer and fewer of our youth are entangled in the juvenile and criminal justice system. As I told the mayor last week, I'd love to be out of a job for the right reasons.

A la ciudadanía latina, les quiero asegurar que voy a continuar el trabajo que ya hemos comenzado en el departamento de probatoria. Para ayudar a las personas envueltas en el sistema de justicia a superar esa experiencia, y a obtener las oportunidades y destrezas necesarias para poder tener un futuro exitoso.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family – my wife Jackie, who is my soul mate and my anchor, my children Max and Jessie, and my parents, who are in Puerto Rico. Without you, my life would not be complete and I would definitely not be standing here. Thank you for this great opportunity, and I look forward to serving the great people of New York City and working with all of you. [inaudible] Thank you.

Mayor: Muchas gracias. You like that, Rafael, huh?

Now, bringing all the strands together. You've heard the challenges of some of the particular pieces of our criminal justice system. It's a particular challenge to make all of those pieces come together in a common strategy, to build that collaboration that Commissioner Bratton so consistently talks about. We want that to be the hallmark of this administration – extraordinary leaders of effective agencies all working together for common goals. And the next appointee is tasked with nothing less than achieving that synergy across all of our law enforcement efforts including with agencies that are not part of this administration that are other parts of government that we want to work evermore closely with. And she has just an outstanding reputation and I could say, Liz, I just have to say, having reviewed your resume, I think at this point we can effectively say you've done it all. So, this is the last thing left, okay? You've done it all. Liz Glazer has had an outstanding career and well known as a tough federal and state prosecutor. She's known as a criminal justice innovator and reformer, from the work she did both in Albany and here in our city. And I'm so pleased that Liz Glazer will be serving as the Director for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. She will be a senior advisor on criminal justice policy to both me and the First Deputy Mayor Tony Shorris. And she will also coordinate our criminal justice policy efforts across all city agencies. She'll be our primary representative as well to our city's five district attorneys, to the court system, and to the state's criminal justice agencies.

Liz joins us after distinguished service to the state of New York as Governor Cuomo's Deputy Secretary for Public Safety. In that role she managed and oversaw eight state agencies. She helped to implement one of the – really, I think – one of the exceptional reforms we've had in recent years –

the Close to Home Initiative. Close to Home has given New York City local supervision of low-level juvenile offenders. She's helped to end the practice of sending our young people to remote, often dysfunctional, and definitely very expensive detention facilities upstate. And, while working for Governor Cuomo, she co-chaired the Governor's Work for Success initiative, which promoted job-readiness and post-incarceration employment services for state prison inmates. She helped to engineer the consolidation of the state's corrections and parole services. And if I were to keep going through Liz Glazer's resume, it would take all afternoon. So Liz, I'm going to have to summarize. Couple other quick highlights – she held a number of senior leadership positions at the US Attorney's Office for the southern district. She's been the first Deputy Commissioner for the City's Department of Investigations. Worked for the city's Department of Juvenile Justice as well. Also, sadly Liz, I'm going to have to tell the hard truth here – she could not get into a good school. It plagued her. She had to go to Harvard University and Columbia Law School. And she's still very regretful. And then she wanted to clerk for a judge and no one would take her except Ruth Bader Ginsberg who, at the time, was the judge on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. So, I think we can safely say that Liz has extraordinary experience, extraordinary range, and I'm so glad that she'll be the Director of our Office of Criminal Justice. Liz, welcome to the great frontier. If you've done it all now, this going to be the next great step. Welcome aboard. The next great frontier.

Incoming Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice Director Liz Glazer: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, first for the opportunity to be able to serve this city and to be able to serve it with such an incredibly talented team that you've assembled here. I am particularly excited to be in this position because I think we have this really historical opportunity in New York City in criminal justice. We're at a point where public opinion has caught up with the science and we know that we can get more safety and less incarceration. We know that we can get more public safety with fewer boots on the ground, because crime control is really about changing behavior. And we know a lot now about how to change behavior for the better. Offenders stop returning to prison when they're matched to the right jobs or training. My friend Mindy Tarlow who co-chaired Work for Success with me knows that well.

Mayor: Doesn't she work here?

Director Glazer: Oh, I think she does, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: That would be Director of Operations Mindy Tarlow.

Director Glazer: Very high class. The mentally ill and kids who act up in schools atom churning through the criminal justice system when professionals can break the behavioral cycle – something that Ana talked a little bit about. Thieves stop taking smart phones if kill-switches make them useless, something that Commissioner Bratton, I know, has been a strong champion of. But to achieve all of these changes by changing behavior we really need to do two things. The first is to be absolutely intentional about applying solutions that work to the problems that we face. And the second is to make sure that this whole ecosystem of people that are involved in the solutions operate seamlessly, because it's not just the police, it's Apple and cell phone carriers. It's not just the DA's, defense lawyers, and judges, it's employers and non-profits. It's not just the criminal justice system, it's health housing and education systems that will help reduce crime. And that's why I feel so incredibly privileged to accept your invitation to lead the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, because our commission is to work with our partners to find those solutions and to bring all these moving parts together, as the mayor said, so we can reach our common goals of justice and safety. And so, I just wanted to make one last note because no criminal justice gathering would be complete without a shout-out to New York exceptionalism, which is well-deserved.

Mayor: That's true.

Director Glazer: Isn't that true? But New York City has made and will continue to make, as Commissioner Bratton noted just in the past, the record of the last two months, will make history in reducing crime even further. When Bill Bratton was here on his first tour of duty, he and the late Jack Maple did something really amazing. They discovered this incredible thing that we now take for granted which is that crime isn't inevitable. Crime can be controlled. And they did control it. And it didn't go someplace else. It simply disappeared. There is some crimes that are now virtually extinct, like car thefts, which went down 93 percent. And others dropped to these incredibly low levels – murders down 83 percent. And I think that this effort ignited a kind of virtuous cycle of fewer and fewer crimes that transformed this city. But I think we're also on the brink of a second transformation. And that is that you can drive crime even lower by seizing an opportunity, not just at arrest, but well before and well after arrest. And I am very much looking forward to being part of that work that will bring this city to the next level and that will bend the arc of history towards justice.

Mayor: Last but not least, I want to talk about Vinny Schiraldi, and I have to tell you, I had mentioned to Vinny earlier, his fan club is large. I keep hearing nice things about you, man, that must mean you're doing something right, brother. So, I want to thank Vinny for all he has done. He has done really transformative work, Ana referenced it, that he's done as our City Commissioner of Probation over the last four years. He's overseen some extraordinary innovations and reforms in that agency. He's nationally renowned for being an outside-of-the-box thinker, and for reducing recidivism and increasing community engagement, and applying creative solutions. Now, that includes the creation of 14 "neons" – and these are neighborhood-based probation offices, bringing the services closer to the community. He played a key role in the Close to Home initiative. And I thought, having judged these extraordinary efforts, that it was important for Vinny to be able to continue a lot of his great work.

Now he'll be continuing on, and joining the administration, working closely with Liz Glazer as her senior advisor for the Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice. Vinny's going to focus on two top priorities in particular. First, I'm asking Vinny to collaborate with both the Department of Education and the NYPD, among other agencies, to create more effective school discipline policies. Let me say, as a public school parent – I think I've noted to many of you, I've been a public school parent for 14 years – nothing is more important than the safety of our children. Nothing else is possible unless our kids are safe. But at the same time, our discipline structures have created some problems that we have to address, and here's an astounding statistic that makes the point: New York City public schools suspended more than 53,000 students last year. And, amongst those children, African-American children were four times more likely to be suspended than white students. Look, that's not an acceptable state of affairs, and we have to do something about it. I know Vinny is someone who can help to make a big impact and help to improve the situation. We can have safe schools and fewer arrests and suspensions.

I also know Vinny is the right person to lead a second effort. He'll work with Liz to make New York City a leader in comprehensively addressing the unique needs of young adults who are caught up in the justice system. I've got another pretty astounding fact for you – almost half of all arrests for violent offenses in New York City are of people in the 16-24 year-old age range. Once arrested, these young people are three times as likely to be rearrested for violent felonies as older defendants are. So in the interest of public safety, we cannot ignore that crucial eight-year stretch in the lives of our citizens. We have to get ahead of this. We have to address it. And with his histories, both an advocate for justice-involved youth, and as someone who's been an effective administrator of a juvenile justice system, in this case, in Washington DC, Vinny is uniquely qualified to take on that challenge as well. So, we're thrilled that Vinny will be continuing in city government. I'd like to welcome him to say a

few words and congratulate him.

Senior Advisor Vincent Schiraldi, Criminal Justice: I want to thank Mayor de Blasio and his team, particular First Deputy Anthony Shorris, and Director Liz Glazer. I'm just really, sort of, in some ways overwhelmed and honored to be on a panel with the terrific folks that are being announced today. It's going to be a blast. I grew up in Greenpoint. I now live in Williamsburg. On a really good day, if the wind was right, and my arm was better, and gravity wasn't what it is, I could probably hit my house with a baseball from my roof. And so it's really terrific to be back in New York City, and to be part of your team moving forward, Mr. Mayor. It's a great honor. I've had a lot of respect for you from afar, and I look forward to working closer with you now.

As Mayor de Blasio said, you know, one of the things that I got to sort of grasp, as probation commissioner here – because I had run a juvenile justice system before this – is how different our juvenile and adult systems are. Because probation has both juveniles and adults on our case load: 24,000 adults, 2,000 juveniles. And the juvenile court system is not a perfect system, but they are really trying hard to rehabilitate young people, to have programs for them, to have an environment that's developmentally-appropriate for them when they come to court. And then when people turn 16 in New York, they just drop off a cliff. The programs aren't readily available for them. That doesn't mean some people are working hard to do programs, but systemically, we really do not reach out to try to help turn these young people's lives around, anywhere near the way we ought to. And there is an increasing – both brain science and neurobiology, and developmental psychology, that shows that young people don't fully mature until their mid-20s. Far later than what we used to think. And so, I really look forward to this opportunity, Mr. Mayor, to sort of wrap my arms with Director Glazer, around this issue, and really try to make New York City the first place in the country that truly addresses the needs for 16 to 24 year-olds. And then, as the mayor pointed out, the rates of suspension are far too high in our schools. The racial disparities are terrible, and, every suspension makes the next suspension more likely, every suspension makes a dropout more likely, every suspension makes attachment to the juvenile justice system more likely. We can do better in both these areas. It's not a dichotomy. We can have both – more decent treatment for young people and better public safety and better school safety, and that's the job that they've asked me to help do. And I intend to do it. And my lovely wife Grace is here, who would do bad things to me if I didn't acknowledge how fantastic she has absolutely been. And deeply in a way where the people on Probation, they know my wife, when I ran that juvenile justice system, she used to have the kids do plays that she and my daughter helped arrange. Really a deep involvement, not just support at home, but support right on the job in a very personal and meaningful way. So thank you, Grace. I love you.

[Applause]

Mayor: So you see before you a dream team. There could not be a more experienced group of leaders to ensure that this city will be safe. There could not be a more progressive group of leaders, reforming our efforts, ever improving them. This is an extraordinary group and the people of New York City are going to be very, very well served. So let's take questions about this announcement, and then we'll go to off-topic questions. This announcement first, on this announcement.

Question: Thank you, I'm wondering if Commissioner Bratton can say little more on the crime statistics. How significant are they today and what do you attribute to the reduction?

Commissioner Bratton: Well first off, the good news is they're continuing to go in the right direction, which is down. And we're working against historically low crime numbers, as you know. We're now into our 24th year of continuous crime decline. So we really don't know where the bottom is and the bottom is zero. We'll continue trying to go in that direction. At the same time it

doesn't take too many incidents to give us a spike but the good news is, as has been referenced, one of the things that we began to do back in 1994 was embrace the concept that crime can be controlled, it can be reduced. And it can be done in a way that's reflected in the group that stands in front of you. Not only the idea of reducing crime but trying to find ways to prevent it from reoccurring. And since crime is caused by individuals, it's influenced certainly by a lot of elements, but it's primarily about individuals who are committing crime, and so much of what this group represents is the idea, how do we work with people to keep them out of a life of crime in the first place but once they start going down that path how do we basically divert them much more quickly than we have been in the past. So, it was music to my ears hearing all four of them talk about this - the mayor talked about their experiences - but how think they of how to deal with crime. I think with this group you're going to see not only the ability of a - when you ask well why is crime down, principally because we have a great police department with a lot of cops who are working very hard to do that, but they're also working within a system that the Mayor is intending to reinforce--that we are working collectively and collaboratively and I think you're going to see a lot of good things, a lot of great ideas, a lot of great programs coming in the months and years ahead.

Mayor: One other point I'd like to make is - I've literally read Commissioner Bratton's book on collaboration and I think you hear in everyone's world view that sense of partnership. This is not a turf kind of crowd. This is a crowd that believes in partnership and collaboration. And that's going to unlock a lot of energies and capacity to keep driving down crime and keep deepening our connection to the community. The commissioner has done a fantastic job already of reaching out to other elements of the law enforcement community including our federal agencies. And giving them a clear understanding of the kind of partnership that we need to have. I know Liz Glazer's going to do an extraordinary job and really has the respect of people throughout the criminal justice system, at the local level, the state, the federal government. This is going to really deepen our efforts and I'm excited to see what we're going to be able to achieve. On topic. On topic. Yes.

Question: Commissioner Ponte can you say what your top priorities are for when you come in to head city jails?

Commissioner Ponte: I think it'd be to truly identify the issues. I mean, you read in the newspaper some of the issues but those aren't really the causes. I think we need to boil these issues down to a reality and what are causing the behaviors that we need to go after and correct. And as some have already said, it starts in the community. What can we do in the community to avoid these things? You know, the pipeline from schools to juvenile corrections - in Maine, they've done a great job. Prior to me - I'm not taking credit for it - but they divert 96, 97 percent of their kids never come to the juvenile system. But looking at what's causing the behaviors - the schools, the expulsions, low tolerance policies, and putting kids out where their only good tie to the community was the school and that was a pipeline that's been identified nationally. But I think as we look at adult corrections here in New York, we want to boil it down to what are the causes - what are the causes of the violence, what's going on these facilities - so we can write a plan. I'd be - I wouldn't attempt to give you an answer on how to address that. I would ask that the unions and the fine staff be at the table when we make a plan.

Mayor: Thank you. On topic. Yes.

Question: The focus on reaching out to younger people - 16 to 24 - I was wondering if you could address how your administration will look to tackle the prescription drug epidemic that's winding a lot of these younger people in contact with the criminal justice system whether it's through prescription drugs or moving on to heroin [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, let me offer just a broad point about our view of how we give kids hope and how we give them opportunity and then I'd welcome Commissioner Bratton or any other of our leaders here to jump in. I don't think you can - I'm not a criminal justice expert, everyone around me is, but I'm going to speak from common sense - I don't think you can minimize an issue like drugs down to one factor only but I think we can certainly say that a kid who's getting a good education, a kid who has hope, a kid who has positive alternatives in their life, that we have a better chance of keeping that kid away from drugs. And, you know, I've talked about reaching our children earlier with pre-K. I've talked about that effect that after-school programs can have in giving kids positive alternatives. Helping them do better in school, which is very important, of course, for their self-esteem and their sense of possibility and hope. Giving them recreation options, cultural options - a lot of things that I think help kids to keep their lives on the right track. By the way, keeping kids - afterschool is so powerful because it keeps kids away from bad influences too, from gangs and crews and so many other bad influences. We also want to move in the direction of community schools. This is something I've pledged to create: a hundred community schools in the first term. It's a model started by the Children's Aid Society here in the city. It spread around the country. Cincinnati is now the great exemplar - every one of their schools is a community school, meaning there's physical health options available in the school, mental health services available in the school, an open invitation for parents to come into the school and participate in a lot of ways. I think there's a lot of research that shows if you address both physical and mental health issues earlier you also have a better chance of helping to keep a young child on the right path and helping to keep them away from drugs. So that's my layman's explanation. Let's see if some of the experts would like to jump in.

Commissioner Bratton: On the issue of drugs, your basic question that - let's face it, drugs are really at the heart of so much of what we're all dealing with, in the sense of drug addiction, behavior that's shaped by addiction, sale of drugs, purchase of drugs, abuse of drugs. And the collaboration that will be necessary to deal with that use, which is ongoing - it spiked back in the '80s, we had crack. Now we have different types of drugs that folks are on. That involves not only this group but it goes into the hospitals and into the schools. And we learn from our past. And in this city, in the 1980's, we at that time celebrated the Rockefeller drug laws that twenty years later, we came to understand that we really went down the wrong road. And incarceration was appropriate for some but not for the thousands who ended up in jails unnecessarily. Money would have been better spent on treatment. So I think the foundation we're working from this time is that we start from the base of learning from the mistakes of the past, and understand that is it all about controlling behavior. And that controlling behavior is not just about putting them in jail, but many other options that are now open to us.

Mayor: Rafael?

Question: Commissioner, what is your stance on decriminalizing marijuana and using it for medical purposes?

Commissioner Bratton: We're drifting a little off subject. But very quickly, I've always been very supportive of the use of marijuana for medical purposes. I'm not supportive of legalizing it for other than that purpose. I'm very supportive of some of the efforts that are being made in this state to approach the reality of how drugs are used here and the idea of not trying to criminalize everybody who does use it. But I think it would be a terrible mistake to legalize it for everybody. I think those states that have done that are going to have significant problems going forward. But for medical purposes, I'm a long champion of that, going back to when it was not a popular position to take.

Mayor: On this topic, yes?

Question: For the Mayor and for Commissioner Ponte, you talk about it when you named him – the size of the corrections departments between Maine and the City of New York are vastly different. I'm curious to know how Commissioner Ponte, you're going to start wrapping your arms around all the issues across the five boroughs? And to you, Mayor de Blasio, why was it important to look to someone outside of the City of New York for that position?

Mayor: Because Commissioner Ponte has an extraordinary reputation and a body of achievement in terms of reform and in terms of effective leadership. You know, I appreciate people who have come up through the grassroots and understand the whole perspective of any agency that they run. There's a lot of things you think about when you make an appointment, but this is one of the things I value. I deeply appreciate that Bill Bratton started out as a beat cop. I deeply appreciate that Carmen Fariña started out as a teacher at PS 29. I think Joe Ponte, having started out as a corrections officer, worked his way up to warden, and then became the head of major systems around the country, including state level systems. I think he has that experience, of course, he has that grassroots understanding but he also knows what's happening all over the country. He understands reforms that are working, he understands how to innovate. He is well known as a guy who stretches every dollar and makes things happen. That's a pretty rare combination. I thought it was important to – given the challenges that Corrections faces – to get someone who had that kind of experience. Commissioner?

Commissioner Ponte: I would only say corrections is corrections. I've been in the business all over the country, working in prisons and jails. I really don't find the difference in the – you know, it's almost like when you work with line staff in New York City or Maine or Shelby County, Tennessee, Nevada – you know, people who work in corrections are kind of alike. It's kind of like you can always pick personalities that I've worked with in other places. You know, the system is designed because it's a big system. So in Maine, I take all emergency calls personally. I won't do that in New York City –

[Laughter]

Commissioner Ponte: Because I'm sure we have a system to do that. So the system's already there, so identifying the issues and how to resolve them within the system that currently exists would be my priority.

Question: Let me ask Commissioner Bratton if there's any update on finding the murderers of Max Stark. It has been a long time, and [inaudible] the NYPD [inaudible]

Mayor: This is the man that was tragically killed in Nassau County, yes? Same case?

Commissioner Bratton: That investigation is still very active. I was briefed this morning on that case, it is still very actively under investigation and we fully expect that it will be successfully concluded.

Question: Question for Commissioner Ponte and perhaps Commissioner Bratton. One of your predecessors in the Bloomberg administration, one of the higher Corrections Commissioners, was at odds with Commissioner Kelly with the subject of what you call 'frequent flyers', which were people who'd come in and out of Riker's again and again, for short periods of time for low level offenses. And it didn't really seem like being in jail made any difference in their recidivism. He thought there needed to be something else done. The Police Commissioner felt like you have to send them to jail or there's no deterrent from committing these crimes. Where do you stand on this issue? And do you think that cycle needs to be broken?

Mayor: Before the Commissioner comes up, I want to say: I think you're hearing from all these leaders that we want to address the recidivism issue head on. We think there's a lot of ways to do it, particularly with our young people. So there's something powerful when you know what your philosophy is and you can express it publicly. You've heard it here. It's seamless across all five people. So we are going to go at that issue with a lot of tools, and we're going to go at it from the grassroots up. Commissioner?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: But I would argue the community focused approach is also applicable for older people. I mean obviously the single biggest problem is the young people. But I think the same concept that we're bonding all of these agencies to communities, and we're working in a proactive way – we think that's going to make a huge difference.

Commissioner Ponte: The answer is 'frequent flyers' are something that we call in the jail system in Memphis, Tennessee – which was a big city – they would be back in hours. I mean, in hours. And the answer was that the police officer on the beat, that's getting the call from the citizens saying, 'I'm being annoyed by this individual.' His option was arrest him or put him in jail. So we had to look at what options were we giving the officer on the beat – some of it was training and education – but there was nowhere to bring them. The jail has been – across the country – the default to the mental health system in a lot of places that's really falling apart. So as we look at outcomes, and if that's an issues – and I think collectively look at how do we get better outcomes. Because putting them in jail, I don't think anybody here would say that's a good idea. But what options does the officer on the beat have?

Mayor: But just on the mental health point – very, very powerful point. So many of our fellow citizens who suffer from mental illness end up in the corrections system. There's a lot we can do better, but again I say, it starts with reaching our young people as early as possible. And we know we can do that – even with existing resources – we can do that more effectively. And we're going to do that through the community schools model. On topic, yes?

Question: Commissioner Bratton, may I try you again on the significance of the low crime? Is it an anomaly, is it the norm going forward? Does weather play a role?

Bratton: We've always talked about in policing, going back to my days, when I was freezing my rear end off directing traffic in 1970 on a very bad winter, that Jack Frost is the best friend of a police officer. No, I think that the weather certainly made—it might be one of those influences that we talk about, much the same as the economy and demographics. But no, I think the numbers we're seeing are just reflective that this has become an incredibly safe city. Speaking of Riker's, Riker's, back in 1994-95 had a population of what 22,000? We were actually opening the barges to house because we had so many people to put there. Population now, I think on a daily basis, 11 to 12,000. So that idea of controlling behavior that you prevent crime is the focus, and that's going to be continued to be the focus going forward. So the crime declines, I think the ways that were found to control crime, and what we're continuing to try to do, is find even better and more humane and more successful ways to do it.

Mayor: I am not a statistician. I have never claimed to be. But I think we can say when homicides are down 21 percent, shootings are down 14 percent; that is a trend. That is something powerful. And we're going to deepen that. Last call on this. Yes? Where, where am I looking? I'm looking. I'm looking. I'm looking. Last call. Anything on these announcements? Now to general topics. Yes.

Question: Any update on your search for a parks commissioner?

Mayor: We're going to be acting on that very quickly. We've got some great names before us, and I'm going to start interviews in the coming days.

Question: The Central Labor Council and a [inaudible] of prominent labor unions wrote a letter to—asking you to reconsider the horse carriage ban. I mean, obviously these are very prominent allies of yours. Have you reconsidered it at all? I mean, what do you think about that letter?

Mayor: No I haven't reconsidered. I respect those organizations. They're friends. They're people I respect, and—but they know where I stand. I've told them many, many times where I stand. We're going to work with that industry on the transition. We're going to take every effort to make sure folks working in that industry have new options, but I know where I stand. Yes, Sally.

Question: The City Comptroller put out his report today on your budget, and one of the things people focused on was the structural deficit for out here. I was wondering if you have any, any thoughts beyond the labor contracts that go unresolved on how you can solve those [inaudible] deficits [inaudible] and the fact that there is a structural deficit in the budget?

Mayor: Hire a bunch of great managers who know how to save money. Check, we did that. Okay, that was good. You know, we do know—I've talked about it at the budget presentation—we have a structural deficit, really this fiscal year, next fiscal year, and the one after fiscal '16, so we understand that is the reality before you even talk about the labor contracts. Labor contracts will put additional stress. That's why every time I say the words 'labor contracts' I say the words 'cost savings,' because it's the only way to achieve balance going forward. But we're going to constantly look for ways to save money. We're going to constantly look for ways – look for ways to make government more efficient. We think a lot of the proactive strategies save money in the long run. Keeping people out of our jails saves money. We can help to make people who might not have been law-abiding citizens into law-abiding citizens. That also saves money. We can keep folks who would have been homeless from going into our shelter system. That saves money. So we're very much believers in proactive strategies and preventative strategies, and we think that will add up over the coming years. So – and by the way, there's some other areas I've said we're going to reevaluate. There's, for example, the Department of Education. Definitely been some initiatives of the previous administration that I think were not cost effective. We'll be looking at those. So a lot of different pieces. Michael.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you'll be addressing a group of very wealthy New Yorkers tonight at a Democratic fundraiser. Do you—

Mayor: They needed a token non-wealthy person. So I was there. They called me in. Yes.

Question: Do you plan to promote your tax for pre-kindergarten and after-school, and what sort of reception do you expect to receive at the event?

Mayor: If I say anything it's only going to be informal. It's a gathering with President Obama. But from my point-of-view, one that's very important to the future of New York City and New York State, because it will have something to say with whether the U.S. Senate continues to be in the hands of the Democratic Party. And I think in terms of our two senators, Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand, they're incredibly effective. And they need to be in the majority to do all they can for New York City. So that's why I'm going to that event. If I'm speaking it will simply be in support of that idea.

Question: I 'm not sure if you saw last night, there was an editorial on channel 5 attacking you, and something they had was 'de Blasio time'. What do you think about the meaning of them attacking you?

Mayor: The media, the media is, is doing its job and I've told you my view of Jeffersonian democracy and that I believe in a vigorous media and it's part of what provides a check and balance in a democracy. Nothing is happening that is surprising to me. And I, you know, it's, we're, we're a free-wheeling city. So it's all good. Yes.

Question: Do you have intention of asking Albany to change the formulas for property taxation, of co-ops, condos, single family, double family, triple family housing? The inequities and consequence of some of these tax formulations with who are very wealthy. I think are very tiny percentage.

Mayor: Our property tax system needs a real hard look, and it's very complicated, it will not happen overnight, but there are obvious inequities. There are obvious areas where there's a lack of clarity and transparency. There's a lot to do. I want to work with a variety of stakeholders to figure out a way forward. I am not comfortable with the status quo. But I also have to tell you that I am sane enough to know it's an exceedingly complicated endeavor where all the pieces interconnect so if you start to make reform, you have to account for all the pieces of the equation. So we're going to give it a hard look, but that's going to take some time.

Question: On specialized high schools, there was very low number of black and Hispanic students who got into those. I know that this is an issue you've spoken out in the past. I'm wondering if you are planning on taking any concrete steps to address that racial disparity?