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## Community hears from Downtown construction czar

BY RONDA KAYSEN

"Lower Manhattan has been a phoenix many times, it will be a phoenix again," Charles Maikish, the new construction czar for Lower Manhattan's mammoth reconstruction projects, told Community Board 1 members at a recent introductory meeting. "The future has great things in store for Lower Manhattan."

Before the phoenix can flap its wings, however, the \$25 million-plus worth of construction projects slated to begin as soon as this summer south of Canal St. must be planned, timed, coordinated and any pitfalls mitigated in a way that keeps Downtown running with some semblance of normalcy. That is where 57-year-old Maikish comes in.

Named executive director of the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center — a construction center that still does not have a home — Maikish was hired by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Governor George Pataki last month to coordinate the details so sidewalks don't find themselves repeatedly torn up and

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# Construction czar's first community meeting

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repaved and intersecting streets don't unexpectedly close simultaneously. The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, a state-city agency, is paying his \$200,000 salary.

"We are trying to coordinate and mitigate the work that's going to be done," Maikish told board members at the March 14 World Trade Center Redevelopment Committee meeting.

Maikish, who was well-received by the board, is less concerned about potential contamination from the deconstruction of the former Deutsche Bank building at 130 Liberty St. than he is about finding a way to transport as many as 7,000 construction workers in and out of the neighborhood. (The original World Trade Center was built with 3,000 workers, Maikish said.) He hopes to create a central receiving area for material.

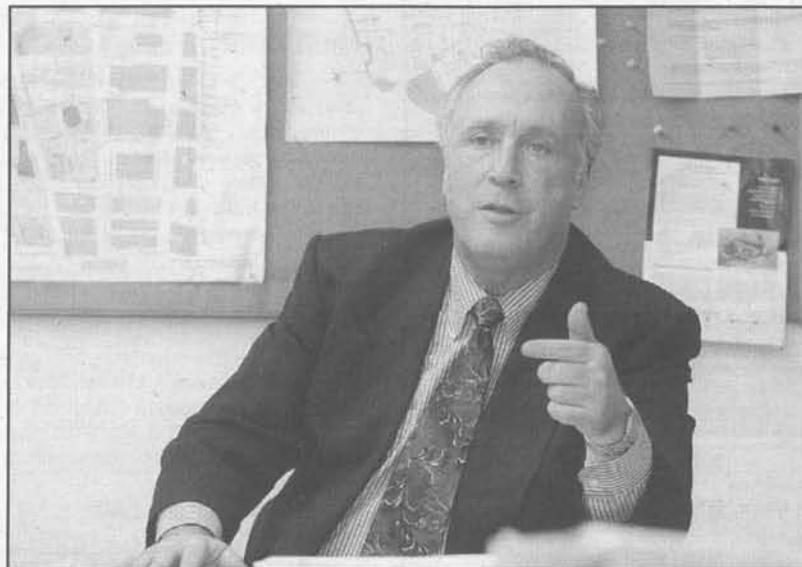
The workers — he does not expect all 7,000 workers to be on site simultaneously — will be bused into the neighborhood from a to-be-determined remote location. "Construction workers are not going to drive," he assured. "They cannot drive here and park."

One glaring obstacle for Maikish is how much authority he has to enforce anything. "What authority do you have? Particularly with agencies that don't respond to other people?" committee member Ray O'Keefe asked. "What is your ability to get people in line?"

Maikish, a Port Authority veteran who had a hand in building the initial World Trade Center and played a pivotal role in reopening it after the 1993 attack, reports directly to the mayor and the governor, but does not have the ability to ticket, tow or fire workers in other agencies. He will manage "construction mobility," he said, and hopes to include standard provisions in all contracts so his office can enforce order.

Representatives from the N.Y.P.D. and the Department of Transportation — who can ticket and make arrests — will be on hand at the command center, Maikish noted.

Maikish told members of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. board last



Downtown Express photo by Jennifer Weisbord

**Charles Maikish, executive director of the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center, spoke to Community Board 1 members on Monday.**

week that he is working with the Port Authority and Metropolitan Transportation Authority to find a central construction receiving area for the W.T.C. train center and the Fulton Transit Center one block away.

Aside from noise, mobility may be the largest inconvenience for Downtowners, who rely on open sidewalks to keep them moving. "Most people walk in Lower Manhattan. It has always been a pedestrian community," he said. "We can't block sidewalks. We need to orchestrate that and plan it in a way that is prudent." Curb cuts, in an effort to accommodate the disabled and elderly, would be preserved, he added.

Many streets, however, will close to vehicular traffic at various times, including two-way Liberty St., but Maikish hopes the command center will at least alleviate some of the confusion that comes when a vital artery is suddenly cut off from the city. He told board members about a four-pronged effort to disseminate information.

LowerManhattan.info, a city and state Web site paid for by funds from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, will include regular street closure updates with interactive maps.

St. "What is your contingency plan for West St.?" committee member Anthony Notaro said at the meeting. "It will affect everything."

"I don't have an answer for you yet," he replied. "[West St.] is the biggest wildcard, and it is the most visible and it is going to have the biggest impact."

Maikish plans to model his command center after the center he established following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. It took his office three weeks to clean and restore 14 million square feet of damaged infrastructure. "It was an amazing feat," he said. He credits the "kitchen-like" atmosphere of a single, centralized location. "Everybody had a location," he said. "If there was a conflict, they could walk across the room."

Several board members wondered where the community's place would be in the command center.

"If there is somebody who can devote themselves full-time from the community, we're willing to have them," Maikish said. He plans to rely on the Downtown Alliance to address business concerns and C.B. 1, particularly the W.T.C. Redevelopment Committee, for all community concerns.

Several board members suggested creating a special task force or sub-committee to address construction issues, a suggestion board chairperson Madelyn Wils indicated she would consider at a March 15 full board meeting.

Maikish expects to have a permanent home for his command center within the next 30 days, he told Downtown Express after the meeting. The World Financial Center is one possible location, he added.

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