

---

# Factions urge teamwork to revitalize A.C.

■ Casino, city and community leaders advocate sharing the cost of events.

By **MICHAEL CLARK**

Staff Writer

**ATLANTIC CITY** — The city's casinos and private businesses may have finally learned the benefits of sharing.

The creation of a financial formula to share costs and revenue from major city events is in its "final stages" of development and is being widely received by casino executives and local restaurant owners as a way to stimulate business.

"I haven't talked to anybody who doesn't think it's a good idea," said Don Marrandino, eastern division president for Harrah's Entertainment. "We're close to laying this thing out. It's weeks away."

The plan is one of the first signs of tangible developments from a series of meetings among city stakeholders that emerged from the group's latest gather-

□ See **Teamwork**, C5

# Teamwork

(Continued from C1)

ing on Tuesday. Mayor Lorenzo Langford originally organized the group in November and dubbed it the Strategic Planning Committee, made up of casino executives, government officials and neighborhood representatives.

The coalition has been meeting ever since, presenting ideas on ways to improve the city, both through public safety and infrastructure and increasing its viability as a premier destination.

"If all these initiatives we're discussing reach fruition, this city is going to be an entirely different place," said Dennis Gomes, a former executive at Atlantic City's Tropicana Casino and Resort.

The suggestion of event cost sharing first came up during the group's last meeting and contrasts with the competitive culture some believe has progressively plagued Atlantic City's casino industry.

Since the initial talks of the plan, it has been pitched to casino executives and area restaurants. Under the proposed formula, Gomes said the casinos would likely "bear the brunt of the costs."

Although Gomes and Marrandino declined to discuss specifics of the financial formula, both said the plan would likely focus on increased use of Boardwalk Hall as a neutral venue. Marrandino noted there were only three major events at Boardwalk Hall last year.

Gomes added: "We need to put it to use for the additional 10 months of the year."

Marrandino said Harrah's latest plans to bring Canadian post-grunge band Nickelback to Boardwalk Hall in April and its inaugural Caesars Tennis

Classic the same month are both results of "an accelerated booking" strategy also motivated through the frequent group meetings. Marrandino said those events will be financed strictly by Harrah's, but other ideas are in the works that could be part of a future cost-sharing network.

Gomes broadly discussed some of those ideas with The Press of Atlantic City on Tuesday, including a citywide Country Western celebration with country music concerts, and a major amateur golf tournament. He said he hopes those events and others would be part of the sharing system by the time they're booked.

Contributions from several businesses are not only important to build private revenue in the city, Marrandino said, but also to make it easier to rebound from a failed event.

"Nickelback is going to do really well, but say it didn't," he said. "I'm going to have less confidence investing in another show in the future."

Kevin DeSanctis, chairman and CEO of Revel Entertainment Group, endorsed the idea Tuesday, but said he would be interested in seeing complete details of the payment ratios.

Revel is currently constructing a \$2.6 billion casino in the city's South Inlet that is projected to open in 2011.

Like Gomes, DeSanctis also chairs one of the strategic group's subcommittees, one that focuses on the city's safety and cleanliness.

DeSanctis said he mostly discussed the Boardwalk on Tuesday and its use as a "year-round amenity."

"The Boardwalk can't close down in September," he said Tuesday. "It's the most valuable thing Atlantic City has."

Contact Michael Clark:  
609-272-7204

Michael.Clark@pressofac.com