

## **ATTORNEY AT LARGE: Bringing sexy back to Atlantic City**

by Lloyd Levenson

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*Dennis C. Gomes is the owner, president, and CEO of Resorts Casino Hotel. He has rebranded Resorts with a "Roaring Twenties" theme and bolstered its standing in Atlantic City. Among many other positions, Gomes served as president of resort operations for the Aztar Corporation (overseeing the Tropicana Casino and Resort in both Atlantic City and Las Vegas) and as president of Trump Taj Mahal Hotel & Casino. In addition to his long and distinguished career as an executive, he has served in law enforcement and as an investigator of casino operations in Nevada and New Jersey. I briefly reminded him of his past and present successes as he proudly showed me around the renovated Resorts Casino Hotel. His response to my questions was typical of his optimism and humility:*

**GOMES:** All we have to do now is make some money!

*You've come back to Atlantic City, so you obviously think you can make some money. How are you going to tackle today's economy and the competition from neighboring states?*

**GOMES:** We have some great projects at Resorts nearing completion. As an example, our new Asian room is just beautiful and it incorporates a whole Chinese food concept that no one else has. It's got a Chinese barbecue, Chinese dim sum, a Chinese bakery, a noodle bar, and a huge variety of special Chinese teas. These are all attached to a gorgeous new gaming room right next to the Boardwalk.

*You were out of the New Jersey gaming industry for about five years from 2005 until 2010. Focusing in on Atlantic City, what do you find to be different?*

**GOMES:** I very much like the new "re-regulation" which has reduced the regulatory costs to the industry. I'm particularly impressed with the Division of Gaming Enforcement's Slot Lab performance and their unprecedented speed of approval of slot machines. This approval is critical to the success of a casino and its ability to get the newest and most exciting products on the casino floor as quickly as possible. The Division's Slot Lab Director, Eric Weiss, and his staff have

done a remarkable job of streamlining the approval and inspection process of slot machines and have allowed us to bring these products to the casino floor before other competing markets.

*What other positive changes do you see?*

**GOMES:** Things started changing with the Atlantic City Mayor convening the Summit Committee. Bringing such people as Kevin DeSanctis, Don Marrandino, Bob Boughner, Bob Griffin and me together with selected representatives of government to work for the common goal of improving Atlantic City was a superb idea and it's changing the whole environment. I am also impressed with Governor Christie's courage to take the lead and to not only say but to do the things that have to be done for the good of the casino industry in Atlantic City. He isn't afraid to defy what seems politically safe or expedient.

*There's been a lot of talk about what's going to happen to Atlantic City when Revel opens. You are a neighbor of Revel, in the same city quadrant. Do you think that Resorts will benefit from the opening of a competing \$2 billion plus development?*

**GOMES:** I think initially it may take a slice out of everybody's revenues. But that's just short term. Ultimately it's going to grow revenue for the city and it's going to bring a lot more people to the city and particularly to this quadrant here on our end of the Boardwalk. It's going to change the whole dynamic by increasing the foot traffic tremendously.

Everybody's going to be walking down the Boardwalk to see Revel and then they're going to be walking back. The opening of Revel, together with the exciting changes we are making at Resorts, are going to put Atlantic City on the map as having some of the best facilities in the world.



*You've just had a big transformation at this hotel and rebranded it with a Roaring Twenties theme. What can patrons expect?*

**GOMES:** OK, the many exciting things they will experience include complete costuming. Not boring old uniforms but costumes detailed in terms of 1920s authentic wear. The cocktail waitresses, the valet people, the doormen, the bellmen, the front desk people, anybody – including security, are all wearing outfits from the 1920s and it all looks stunning. The first things customers will see as they pull up to the porte-cochere are the valets with their knickers and their

argyle socks and their newspaper boy hats and vest sweaters. Then they meet the doormen and bellmen in their red outfits with buttons going down the front, with little round hats – I mean it’s all pretty cool. It really does lend itself to a place that was actually built in the ‘20s. The costumes go along perfectly with rooms which have all been completely redone in a style which also harkens back to the ‘20s. We have some of the nicest rooms in the whole City.

*Now, you just recently opened a nightclub here at Resorts called Prohibition which invites the gay and lesbian community, though not exclusively. What was the reasoning behind that?*

**GOMES:** Historically, Atlantic City has been a friendly destination for gays and lesbians, just as it has been popular with all sorts of people. Today’s generation is more accepting of different life styles and Resorts reflects this. We like to give people a friendly and protected environment, where they can have a great time and also feel safe and welcome.

*Has Atlantic City been too prudish? I am thinking of a certain billboard Resorts put up this spring that raised some eyebrows.*

**GOMES:** (Laughs.) Well, frankly, yes. People in the industry are usually afraid to talk about it, but Atlantic City is far more prudish than Las Vegas in many ways. Las Vegas likes to think of itself as “Sin City,” but I grew up there and it was noted at that time for having more churches per capita than almost every other major city, so I’m not convinced there is really that much sin going on there. I think Atlantic City could stand some more sexy and even risqué elements and still be a great family destination. With courageous leadership, it is poised to be recognized as one of the two centers of casino entertainment in the nation and I think we can work together to see that happen. Then we can all make some money!

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