



Local News

Fair Grounds wants temporary casino

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Alan Sayre / Associated Press

Focusing back on its plan to have slot machines, the Fair Grounds Race Course said Wednesday that it will ask the city for permission to have a temporary casino at the horse racing facility's off-track betting parlor.



Lou Hodges Jr. /
Associated Press, Fair
Grounds Race Course

File Photo.

The Fair Grounds, owned by Louisville, Ky.-based Churchill Downs Inc., had planned to begin construction on a 30,000-square-foot building to house 700 machines in September 2005.

But that plan was put on hold by Hurricane Katrina, which resulted in the track's 2005-06 race meet being moved to Louisiana Downs in Bossier City. Racing resumed in New Orleans in November after \$16 million in repairs and renovations to the Fair Grounds.

Under the track's plan, which would have to be approved by the city planning commission and the City Council, the first floor of the OTB parlor would house 225 slot machines, beginning in October.

Construction of the permanent casino, which already has been approved by the city, is scheduled to start this summer with completion in the fall of 2008, Churchill Downs said.

So far during the current racing season, the betting handle -- a portion of which goes to purses -- has

been high enough for the Fair Grounds to twice order an overall purse increase. Average daily purses now stand at \$405,000 per day.

A portion of slot machine proceeds, under state law, also go to racing purses. The state's other three race tracks -- Louisiana Downs, Delta Downs at Vinton and Evangeline Downs at Opelousas -- already have slot machines.

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