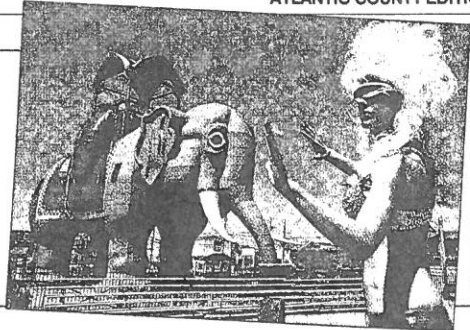


## At The Shore parties at 20

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### CORRUPTION TRIAL

# Van Pelt guilty

## Ex-Ocean legislator took bribe, jury finds



Then-Assemblyman Daniel Van Pelt is seen on a video secretly made by FBI informant Solomon Dwek during a meeting May 15, 2009, at the Ocean Breeze Diner on Route 9 in Ocean Township.

By DONNA WEAVER  
Staff Writer

**TRENTON** — Former 9th District Assemblyman Daniel Van Pelt hung his head as a jury forewoman announced Wednesday that he had been found guilty of bribery and attempted extortion by a public official.

After a two-week trial, Van Pelt's jury deliberated over three days before reaching a verdict Wednesday morning.

Van Pelt, 45, of Ocean Township, accepted \$10,000 cash

stuffed in a white envelope from an FBI informant who posed as a developer. The exchange was caught on tape in a hallway of Caesars Atlantic City outside Morton's The Steakhouse on

### History of corruption

Take a look at the history of New Jersey's corrupt political system and why it continues. A5

Feb. 21, 2009. Solomon Dwek, a crooked businessman working with the FBI as an informant, was wired by the FBI with a video camera.

Van Pelt remains free on a \$100,000 unsecured bond. Judge Joel A. Pisano set Van Pelt's sentencing for Aug. 24. U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig requested a modification to Van Pelt's bail, but Pisano said Van Pelt has been "present and reliable" during the trial.

He faces a maximum of 30 years in prison.



Star-Ledger photo by Matt Rainey

Former 9th District Assemblyman Daniel Van Pelt leaves federal court Wednesday with his attorney Robert Fuggi Jr. Van Pelt was convicted of bribery and attempted extortion by a public official after accepting \$10,000 to help an FBI informant posing as a real estate developer gain project approvals from the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"It doesn't matter what the verdict was. That is irrelevant. I stood up for what is right," Van Pelt said as he stood outside Pisano's courtroom after the verdict.

In his testimony, Van Pelt claimed he was acting as a con-

sultant and that he had asked a state ethics attorney about starting up his private business. But state legislative services attorney Marci Hochman testified that Van Pelt did not tell her he had been paid a retainer or that he had any clients.

Robert Fuggi Jr., Van Pelt's defense attorney, said he was happy his client testified and disappointed in the verdict.

"Unfortunately, the verdict went down the way it did. They (the jury) deliberated long and

□ See Van Pelt, A4

## A.C. to get new fleet of 'green' jitneys

■ The Jitney Association is replacing its old jitneys with ones that operate on compressed natural gas.

By MICHAEL CLARK  
Staff Writer

**ATLANTIC CITY** — Atlantic City jitneys are going green, both in gas consumption and design.

Officials with the city's Jitney Association are in the process of converting their 190-vehicle fleet, now more than 13 years old, to new shuttle buses that operate on compressed natural gas.

"The whole idea behind this is we're going to reduce dependency on foreign oil and save us some money in the process," said association President Tom Woodruff, who has been working on the conversion for about two years.

Various jitney drivers will drive the prototype during the next two months.

Barring any major problems, the association, which is composed of individual jitney owners, expects to see its first 40 new jitneys roaming the city's streets July 1 and the remaining 150 vehicles operational by September or October.

Jitney owner John Lanfranchi test-drove the new vehicle Tuesday and was glowing after his spin.

□ See Jitneys, A6

## Casino profits off 25 percent in 1st quarter

■ Operating profit figures released Wednesday show seven of 11 casinos still in the black for the winter.

By DONALD WITTKOWSKI  
Staff Writer

**ATLANTIC CITY** — Casino earnings plunged 25.2 percent in the first quarter as severe weather, the sluggish economy and competition from surrounding states made it more difficult for Atlantic City's gaming industry to make money.

Combined, the 11 casino hotels posted gross operating profits of \$111.2 million for the quarter, compared with \$148.7 mil-

### Industry performance

See how each casino fared in the first quarter and how quarterly profits have dropped in recent years. A9

### Daniel Van Pelt's rise and fall



Staff file photo by Bill Gross. Nov. 6, 2007

Ocean Township.

**Nov. 6, 2007:** Elected as state assemblyman in the 9th District.

**December 2008:** First meets with FBI informant Solomon Dwek.

**Feb. 21 2009:** Meets Dwek at Caesars Atlantic City and accepts a white envelope with \$10,000 in cash.



is accused of accepting a \$10,000 bribe. Van Pelt is charged with bribery and extortion.

**July 26, 2009:** Loses job as the Lumberton Township administrator.

**July 31, 2009:** Resigns as assemblyman.

**Dec. 10, 2009:** Indicted on federal bribery and extortion charges.