

Hard Rock casino employees vote for union contract

DAVID DANZIS Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — Casino workers from Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City overwhelmingly ratified a labor agreement Thursday.

Nearly 1,780 employees from the casino property are now members of Unite Here Local 54 after 99.6% of eligible workers voted in favor of a contract. Local 54 is Atlantic City's largest casino workers' union and represents almost 10,000 employees, including housekeepers, bartenders, servers and EVS attendants.

Negotiations between Hard Rock — which opened June 27 at the site of the former Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort — and Local 54 began in September.

"I attribute such a high percentage in favor of the contract to the hard work of the committee and their interaction with Hard Rock management at the very highest levels," said Local 54 President Bob McDevitt. "I think the dialogue over these six months has been very beneficial."

McDevitt said the terms of the contract are similar to those in place with other Atlantic City casinos, with some exceptions. For example, McDevitt said, Hard Rock agreed to offer a paid holiday for new citizens attending their swearing-in ceremonies.

Jim Allen, chairman and CEO of Hard Rock International, said the company had a goal when it acquired the Boardwalk property two years ago of developing "positive and productive relationships with our organized partners and I am pleased that we have achieved this objective."

"The agreement validates the thoughtful compromise and diligent efforts of both sides to benefit Hard Rock, the team members and guests," said Allen. "We appreciate that the union leadership and the employee bargaining committee understood the Hard Rock brand and need of the company in this agreement. With all of the talented team member's support, we will continue to move Hard Rock Atlantic City forward to create exceptional experiences for our guests."

A labor dispute between the Taj Mahal's former owner, billionaire hedge-fund manager Carl Icahn, and Local 54 led to a strike that lasted 102 days and ended with the casino closing in October 2016. At the opening of Hard Rock, McDevitt said Local 54 felt "vindicated" by the Boardwalk property's return as a casino hotel.