

# After budget tiger, Miami mayor shifts focus to q

BY JACQUELYN WEINER

The Chinese calendar marks years not by number but by animals like the tiger.

For the City of Miami, 2010 was the year of a very different animal – the budget, Mayor Tomás Regalado quipped at the year's last commission meeting.

And with the fiscal turmoil of filling a \$100 million-plus budget hole behind Miami, Mr. Regalado says 2011 will be "The Year of Quality of Life."

"We have to get on with the work for the people of Miami," Mr. Regalado said at the meeting. "This is my commitment."

Among his New Year's resolutions for the city: seeking untapped funding sources, increasing transparency through online public records and making Miami the most social-media-savvy government around.

His "only grandiose" goal of 2011 is to move forward with a complete renovation of Miami Marine Stadium, a one-time gem now abandoned and littered with graffiti.

Built in 1963, the waterfront amphitheater on Virginia Key played host in its heyday to powerboat events and concerts performed on a floating stage, including a Jimmy Buffett performance in 1985.

The stadium closed in 1992 after sustaining extensive damage in Hurricane Andrew.

Mr. Regalado said in an interview that he is "working on the details" of the renovation and hopes to secure full funds in coming months.

The aim is to establish a public/private partnership to rehab the facility.

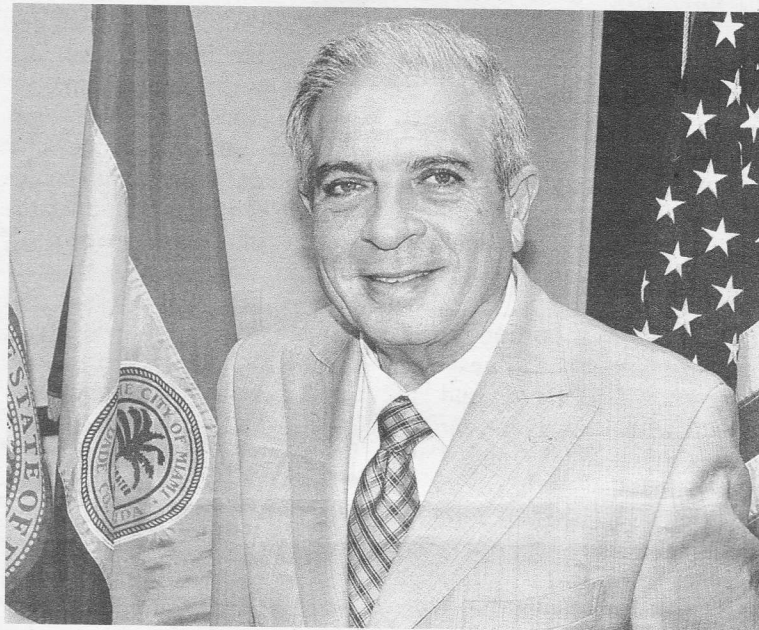
The estimated cost is \$20 million to \$24 million, he said, with \$3 million from the county and \$175,000 from the Florida Inland Navigation District already in hand.

Mr. Regalado said he also hopes to work more closely with



Photos by Maxine Usdan

Mayor Tomás Regalado says he hopes for full funding in coming months to renovate Miami Marine Stadium.



Tomás Regalado: "We have to get on with the work for the people..."

the private sector on other initiatives, which include holding free concerts sponsored by businesses at "zero cost to the city."

The city has historically financed activities on its own, he said, but its recent financial woes have prompted help from the

business world.

He pointed to plans championed by Miami executive Herman Echevarria to manage the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts through a private foundation as an example.

After the city cuts its subsidy of one-third of the theater's spending from its 2011 budget, the historic building faced closure before the private sector came to its rescue.

The idea is to have 100 trustees join the nonprofit, Olympia Center Inc., who pledge to contribute \$10,000 a year for five years.

Turning over management to the nonprofit, Olympia Center Inc., is pending city commission approval.

"We have realized that the private sector does cooperate," Mr. Regalado said.

This increased interest in private funds goes beyond event sponsors.

"The City of Miami in the past has only focused on... government-run entities," he said. "We have not touched the private foundations."

Mr. Regalado said the city's grants department is to have an employee solely responsible for obtaining funding from busi-

Miami taxable sales show economy leads state:

# Quality of life

nesses and private foundations

They department will also be charged with seeking tax credits and new avenues for funding, he said.

In addition, increased communication with residents is also on his list of priorities.

By February, Mr. Regalado said, the city aims to "completely modernize" its website, incorporating social-media offerings to allow residents "to participate" in government.

This includes posting short video bits online frequently to keep residents in tune with city happenings and their commissioners.

"We will be one of the cities with best coverage in social media next year," he said.

Residents are to also have increased access to city documents online, he said, saving Miami from processing records requests and increasing transparency.

"My goal is to have every check paid by the City of Miami online," Mr. Regalado said. "Every document, every contract, every [request for proposals]... should be in the public domain."

Yet even in an increasingly web-centric society, he said, "It's important to have a face."

Mr. Regalado said he hopes to get out into the community and meet with residents more often, including appearances at events and homeowners' association meetings.

He also plans to make good on his promise to create an Office of Residents, which is to serve as an ombudsman linking residents with commissioners and city departments.

And because it's "The Year of Quality of Life," staff is to go district by district, looking for ways to help residents — even if it's as small as patching a pothole.

Building a legacy isn't a concern, Mr. Regalado said.

"I don't mind being called the 'pothole mayor,'" he said. "It's about quality of life for the residents."

... the county to draw  
ds at lower short-term vari-  
e rates, the program would

Dec. 23 report, man  
mercial paper pro  
require close moni