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# DAILY NEWS

## BJ's spurs big-box battle

A BIG VOTE AFFECTING big-box stores is looming in the City Council — prompted by a request by BJ's Wholesale Club chain to build its first Bronx outlet.

BJ's application for zoning changes and a special permit has stirred up a backlash in the Council over big-box stores that, like BJ's, are regarded as anti-union.

It's also being fueled by Wal-Mart's interest in building its first city store in Rego Park, Queens.

A testy preliminary skirmish on the BJ's issue occurred last week before the Council's zoning and franchise subcommittee, which held a public hearing as a prelude to a Feb. 16 vote by the full Council.

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DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

BJ's developer, the Related Companies, wants to build a 130,000-square-foot store on Brush Ave. on the border of Soundview and Castle Hill.

The Council has the final say in the zoning approval procedure known as ULURP, the Uniform Land Use Review Process.

During the hearing, several councilmembers raised the issue of BJ's purported anti-union policies.

"The stories I've heard about

BJ's are frankly appalling," fumed Councilman Eric Gioia (D-Queens).

Councilman Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn) contended that the company used intimidation tactics to squelch a union-organizing effort last year at the BJ's store in Gateway Center.

"I just want to warn the Bronx, we have our BJ's and we're not happy about it," Barron told the subcommittee.

Paul Brickman, BJ's assistant vice president of real estate, countered that BJ's did not prohibit unionizing activities.

"People certainly have the opportunity to do that sort of thing if they want to," he said.

Various union officials who al-

so testified noted that none of 151 BJ's in the country are unionized, including the two in Queens and one in Brooklyn.

After listening to the BJ's officials, Ed Ott of the New York City Central Labor Council, told the subcommittee, "When they're talking, they're lying."

Richard Lipsky, a consultant, testified that BJ's should have been required by the Planning Commission to do a full-blown economic impact study to determine the possible effects of locating a BJ's in the Bronx.

The commission and BJ's representatives say that study was not required.

Some Council officials maintain that while the union-bust-

ing issue is important, it's irrelevant to the zoning-approval process. But others — who appear to be growing in number — argue that the Council's zoning power is broad enough to also weigh the social and economic impact of an applicant's labor actions.

"It's difficult to support this kind of project," said Councilwoman Annabel Palma (D-Bronx).

Councilman Tony Avella (D-Queens), chairman of the zoning subcommittee, said of the BJ's application, "This is the first time in the three years I've been chairman when I really don't know how it's going to turn out."