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City Council kills Rudy's bid to bring in megastores

By TOM TOPOUSIS

Mayor Giuliani's plan to lure superstores to the city fell to pieces at the 11th hour last night — after days of talks between the administration and the City Council broke down in rancor.

"It's dead now," declared City Councilman Walter McCaffrey, chairman of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, which unanimously voted down the mayor's proposal.

The breakdown, after three days of intense talks, left both sides accusing the other of sabotage and bad faith.

McCaffrey charged that mayoral aides used "bait and switch" tactics. Deputy Mayor Fran Reiter accused council members of doing the bidding of entrenched retailers afraid of competition.

Despite the bitterness, mayoral aides held out

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CITY COUNCILMAN SHELDON LEFFLER

hope a deal could still be struck before Dec. 19, the last council meeting of the year.

"We're prepared to keep talking. They walked out on us, we didn't walk out on them," said Planning Commissioner Joseph Rose.

Mistrust between the two wings of City Hall was the key to the breakdown.

The council wanted the superstore regulations to include a category of giant retailers — hardware stores, drugstores and toy stores — that can now legally build up to 200,000 square feet "as of right."

Mayoral aides agreed — but only after a compromise was clinched on all other points. And, the aides said, the new restrictions for the hardware stores and others would require a six-month legal review.

Furious council members said the six-month waiting time was a "last-minute" deal-breaker. They insisted city lawyers could find a way to enact all the regulations immediately.

Giuliani wants to allow superstores of up to 200,000 square feet on land now zoned for manufacturing. And he wants the

stores to be built "as of right," meaning developers would not need special permits.

Last-ditch negotiations focused on reducing the maximum size of superstores from 200,000 to 125,000 square feet.

The compromise would have limited superstores to sites located close to arterial highways, in effect cutting the number of superstores from 57 to 25.

Building "as of right," strips the council and community boards of the power to review superstore plans under the city's seven-month-long Uniform Land Use review procedures.

Councilman Sheldon Leffler (D-Queens), a member of the subcommittee, said he opposed Giuliani's proposal to strip the council and community of input on siting superstores.

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MAYOR GIULIANI
Aides still hopeful.

mensch, you may not feel you have to listen to what ordinary citizens of this city have to say," Leffler said.

Leffler's description — aimed at Giuliani — drew an explosive reaction from Reiter.

"That is an inflammatory, disgusting remark," she fumed, jabbing her finger in the air.