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HEADLINE: Waterfront fight moves up a notch;
Camden hired a lawyer for a hearing sought by the city's chief officer over
redevelopment.

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BODY:

Turning up the heat on Camden's state-appointed economic czar, City Council yesterday hired an attorney to represent it in a showdown with Melvin R. "Randy" Primas Jr. before a Superior Court judge.

The move is part of a power struggle ignited between Primas and Council over redevelopment of the blighted Waterfront South neighborhood.

Council has supported representatives of the Waterfront South community who opposed approval of a neighborhood redevelopment plan backed by Primas that they feared would isolate and eventually destroy their neighborhood, which is pockmarked by numerous environmentally contaminated areas.

The plan called for more industrial development along with new housing, but residents feared their homes would be demolished to make way for an industrial park.

Though Primas, the mayor of the city in the 1980s, has softened his opposition to housing in the neighborhood, City Council rejected the Primas-backed plan, saying it was obsolete and that Primas could not be trusted.

Primas said he needed the plan to continue the city's revitalization and immediately notified Council that he would take the issue before a special arbitrator, Superior Court Judge Francis J. Orlando, as provided for stalemates under Camden's five-year state-enacted recovery act.

Though no date has yet been set for the arbitration hearing, City Council yesterday unanimously approved the hiring of civil-rights lawyer Andrew Dwyer of the Newark firm of Dwyer & Dunnigan L.L.C. to challenge Primas. Dwyer has

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been a labor and employment lawyer representing unions and employees since
1996.

Council also defied Primas yesterday by passing a resolution encouraging the
New Jersey Economic Development Authority to support residential use of the
Gallagher and Litca environmental-remediation site at Fourth and Jackson Streets
in Waterfront South. Primas' redevelopment plan would prohibit such use for that
area.

Council did make one concession to Primas. It reappointed him to the Camden
redevelopment agency.

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