

Bernards man in governor race touts love for N.J.

BY LINDA SADLOUSKOS • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 2, 2009

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More recently, Daggett was appointed by Gov. Jon S. Corzine as chairman of the New Jersey DEP Permit Efficiency Task Force. Again, he said he was able to achieve consensus in a group ranging from developers to environmentalists.

These days, he said he serves as an adviser for projects involving the redevelopers of "brownfield" sites with potential contamination.

Daggett works as a principal for JM Sorge Inc., environmental consultants based in Somerville. In that capacity, Daggett said he advised the owners of Millington Quarry in the township about monitoring of potential contamination at its Stone House Road facility.

But Daggett said he was not involved with the preparation of a technical report about the quarry submitted to the DEP. That report is under review by the state agency, and is being criticized as inadequate by township officials and some local residents.

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No matter his credentials, John Weingart, associate director for the Eagleton Institute for Politics at Rutgers University, said Daggett faces heavy odds of being elected governor. No Independent candidate has ever been elected to that post, Weingart said.

Even so, Weingart said Daggett could still potentially affect the outcome of the election, either by changing the vote count for the major candidates or by broadening the campaign issues being debated. New Jersey has a history of extremely close vote counts for governor, Weingart said. Of about 2.3 million votes cast in the 1981 gubernatorial race, Kean eked out a victory by a 1,797-vote margin, Weingart said.

Daggett officially jumped into the governor's race on April 20. Early in July, he announced he had raised more than \$340,000 in campaign donations, enough to qualify him for public campaign financing. He also will be included in candidate debates with Corzine and Christie, to be scheduled this fall.

A Quinnipiac poll in mid-July gave Daggett an estimated 8 percent of the vote, compared with 47 percent for Christie and 38 percent for Corzine.

If elected, Daggett said he would make hard decisions in areas such as employee pensions, and state aid to schools and municipalities.

He said new state employees shouldn't be receiving the same level of benefits as those already employed, and current employees might need to pick up more of the cost of those benefits. He said governments at all levels should be unafraid of reopening negotiations with unions on multiyear pacts that would give annual raises of 4 percent.

Further, Daggett said he favors charter schools or a voucher system to raise performance levels in failing school districts. He added that the state should boost industries such as local tourism and pharmaceuticals.

Linda Sadlouskos: 908-243-6608; lsadlouskos@MyCentralJersey.com



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Chris Daggett, a Bernards Township resident since 1994, is an independent candidate for governor this year.

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