

CIANJ/EBC Panel Discussion/Luncheon Showcases The Expertise of Five Former NJDEP Commissioners



BY ROSEMARY DREGER
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CIANJ'S ENVIRONMENTAL BUSINESS COUNCIL hosted a panel discussion/luncheon to showcase the expertise and experiences of five former commissioners of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Held in June at the Sheraton Hotel at Raritan Center in Edison, the event was an opportunity to discuss and evaluate the Garden State's unique history of random development, unparalleled population density and concentrated industrial use.

Each former commissioner brought unique perspectives to the discussion, yet common themes stood out: the need to bring business and industry into the regulatory process; the potential for New Jersey to seize opportunities in renewable energy and pollution prevention; and the need for all stakeholders—business, regulators, legislators and environmental groups—to find common ground and hammer out creative, workable solutions.

Looking back on her experience running the NJDEP during the Byrne years—a post she held simultaneously as head of the Port Authority of New York—Jerry F. English of Lindabury, McCormick, Estabrook & Cooper, P.C. reflected on how large environmental initiatives managed to get done despite severe budget crises and conflicting political agendas. She reminded CIANJ members in the audience—many of whom came of age pro-

professionally during her tenure—"Our job is not to stay in court but to get things solved...not to check off items in a box, but to move off the black letter and do... what we are supposed to do."

Richard Dewling, principal and founder of Dewling Associates and the NJDEP commissioner in the mid-1980s, had equally thought-provoking words. Characterizing the commissioner's role as the job of "falling on live grenades so the governor doesn't blow up," he noted that a high degree of risk is necessary for any individual or organization to succeed. Yet, he noted, the role of regulators is to avoid risk. Dewling urged business leaders to acknowledge that limitation, to start looking hard at future issues—particularly water supply, coastline depletion and global warming—and to begin taking risks. "Instead of just rallying around issues we can touch and feel such as beach access, polluted water or public toilets," Dewling urged, "get behind a concept and bring it together."

Christopher Daggett, a principal of JM Sorge, Inc., called on New Jersey's environmental community to stay focused on the big picture. At the start of his tenure as commissioner at the NJDEP in 1988, Daggett faced

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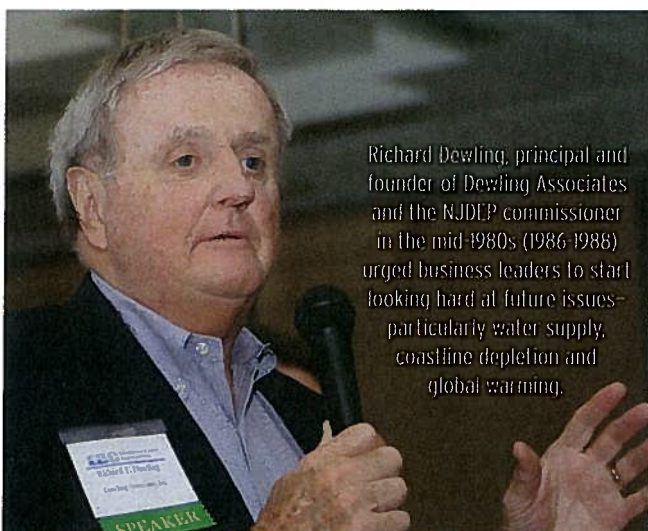
immediate, tangible problems like medical waste washing ashore, soup-thick air pollution and Love Canal. Today, as many of those problems have been addressed, New Jerseyans must grapple with more insidious, long-term issues, particularly global warming. Yet, Daggett noted, regulators are still driven by the “hot issues” of the day, allocating vital resources to the wrong places. Daggett suggested the formation of a group of top people from the various industry sectors—business leaders, attorneys, consultants, and engineers—to review, consolidate and simplify New Jersey’s environmental rules, and to go to the legislature when necessary. Only then, he explained, can large-scale environmental initiatives be effective.

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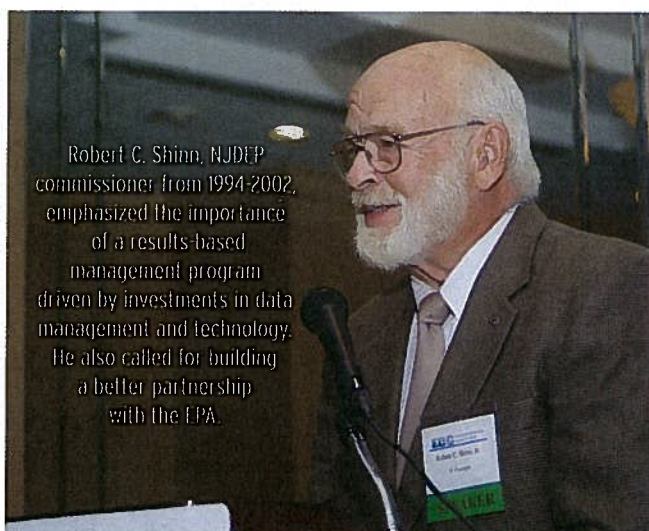
ment and technology. He also called for building a better partnership with the EPA. Currently Principal of S² Concepts, Shinn urged business leaders and regulators to abandon “end-of-pipe, end-of-stack” thinking and focus instead on four key areas of opportunity: renewable energy, pollution prevention, recycling and energy efficiency. “The future holds big promise for the individuals that get behind those areas,” he stated.

Brad Campbell, NJDEP commissioner from 2002-2006 and now a partner at Wolff & Samson, expressed confidence that New Jersey can take the lead on climate change and seize opportunities to create new markets and have them designed first here, in our state. He urged CIANJ members to get commercially involved in renewable energy in innovative ways such as quantifying energy efficiency and going beyond compliance. “In this climate you have to come up with an argument to get to

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(L-R) EBC Chairperson Tracy Straka of Creamer Environmental; former NJDEP Commissioners Robert C. Shinn, Jr., Jerry F. English, Richard T. Dewling; Jorge Berkowitz of Langan Engineering; former NJDEP Commissioners Bradley M. Campbell, Christopher J. Daggett; and Paul Maide of APL.

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the top of the pile at the NJDEP," he explained, "The more you can make your regulatory proposals saleable, the more marketable it will be."

CIANJ members who took advantage of the question and answer period got straightforward answers and guidance on how to move their projects and priorities through the regulatory process, namely: streamline your wish list to a few manageable items and always come to the table with solutions.

Valuable insights like these are available every other month at CIANJ's Environmental Business Council "Members Only" events. The June luncheon was co-sponsored by Langan Engineering and the Sarakem Corporation. For information on the EBC's next event, go to www.cianj.org. ■

Rosemary Dreger is the program coordinator for CIANJ's Environmental Business Council and a freelance writer.



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