



ALL WET Doug Deitch just wants somebody to think about the water.

The Ninja Candidates

Ellen Pirie's District 2 seat is being challenged by two unorthodox campaigns

BY CHRIS J. MAGYAR

MONEY? WHO NEEDS MONEY? Doug Deitch is irrepresible. He comes armed with stacks of photocopied press clippings on his work from the past 16 years, and has a way of interviewing himself, with answers spilling over other answers before questions can even be posed. At one point, he tells me to print the following quote, "Doug Deitch does not have one original thought in his head."

His point is that all his alarm-sounding and every one of his solutions are simply the recommendations of experts. "All I do is connect the dots," he says. And Deitch does sound some alarms, enough to be on the cusp of a Cassandra complex. A property manager and environmental activist, his main focus is on water—mainly, that the county has a groundwater emergency that must be declared under the Well Ordinance put in place by Gary Patton, and that its failure to do so is illegal and going to bleed our water supply dry via overdraft. "That water is our blood, and we're losing it," he says. To that end, he is mounting his fourth consecutive bid for the District 2 seat

on the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors (after briefly flirting with a run at John Laird's seat in the State Assembly), and he has penned numerous editorials, taken out full page ads in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, and even sued the county trying to make his point heard since 1996.

But one thing he hasn't done, and refuses to do, is the first thing most candidates do when trying to make their voice heard: raise money. "I have never taken any money," he says of his self-funded campaign, which has yet to spend the \$1,000 necessary for official paperwork on fundraising to be filed with the county clerk. "I am looking for donations," he adds. "I'm asking for every one of my supporters to donate two things: their votes, and a pledge to do eight hours of work in their community sometime during my four-year term." He also states this will be his last run for the board.

Standing in his way is the well-funded incumbent, Ellen Pirie, who is running for her third term representing District 2 (which essentially covers the Aptos area, from the

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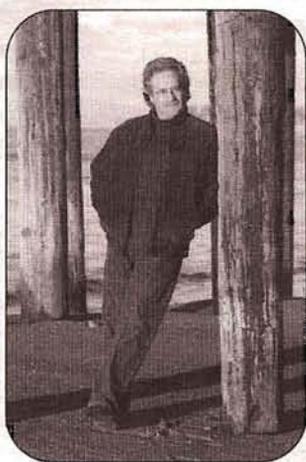
southern part of Capitola to the northern part of Watsonville), and currently serves as the Board Chairperson. When asked how the campaign is going, she's nonplussed at first. "This one, what seems different is I don't see either candidate doing very much," she says. "They're coming to some of the forums, but not all. Neither one showed up for the Democratic Central Committee endorsement. I don't know if that means they aren't really running a campaign, or what."

The other candidate she refers to is high school music teacher and Surfrider Foundation co-founder Dan Young, who is indeed running an unusual campaign. "I'm not seeking endorsements," he says. "The forums are just the same little people. I guess people do politics for a hobby. I surf for a hobby. I have better things to do. And I'm not doing mailers. People ask me all the time from Sacramento to do slate mailers. I'm sorry. A lot of people are just tired of how the system works." Young is running a grassroots word-of-mouth campaign that he says is based on years of getting involved in different communities in mid-county. He also has not raised or spent the requisite \$1,000 to file a campaign finance statement. And his platform is on a different tack from the others.

"I'd like to see the clubhouses at the state parks be kept open until 11 o'clock at night, with open mics, so kids could go there and perform, blow off steam, like they're little nightclubs," he says. "We could put a sheriff's substation in there too, so kids would see that cops are just a normal part of life, not something you have to deal with when bad things happen. That's how communities used to be. But the kids get the short end of everything. Adults lose touch with what it's like to be a kid."

Young says he's maintained that touch by being a stay-at-home father who surfs and performs in ska bands, and by working with high school kids every day. He wants more alternatives for the county's youth, like simple street-style skate parks throughout mid-county and south county. "We don't need a monster X-Games park that takes years of study and haggling," he says. "Parents tried for that and they were driven away by the whole process. It should be simple. Frederick Street in Santa Cruz used to have a single ramp that went into a pool where my wife and I would go on skate dates. It wasn't hardcore, it was just fun. We can do that in every park."

But what about water? Is Deitch right when he asserts that all the county's ills boil down to that one problem? Young actually agrees. "Doug is a one-trick pony, but he's absolutely right that there's an emergency," he says. He adds that his years of studying urban planning and watersheds on behalf of Surfrider Foundation have led him to a solution for the Pajaro Valley's overdraft issue: "All construction has to be self-sufficient. Each and every project. Whether it's a rooftop system or permeability issues with the pad, someone's got to draw a line. Buying credits as a commodity drives me crazy. Every person in this county needs to be contributing to the process of rebuilding our envi-



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ronment. And retrofitting our buildings would open up new jobs. Normal contractors are going out and doing it already. You don't have to hire huge experts."

Deitch, of course, has been trying to stop new wells from being drilled for more than a decade. "If we had done this 10 years ago," he says, "we wouldn't have a water problem. Ellen is a very capable person, but she doesn't have the vision to see the problem." Deitch has been more reticent about saying this lately, but his solution to the water overdraft ultimately is the retirement of the agricultural land in mid-county. He states that making 6,500 acres go fallow would not only relieve the majority of the pressure on our water, but some of the traffic on the highways as well. "You've got 20,000 undocumented people driving on the highways in this county," he says. "They don't all work on the farms, but there are about 20,000 farm workers in the county, and that can't be a coincidence."

"We can't continue to grow 25 percent of the country's berries," he concludes. "The first thing we need is a new model for our economy. We're acting like a third-world country with a feudal system."

Pirie, on her part, fires back. "I don't know if he overstates or doesn't understand or whatever, but a groundwater emergency is a limited action," she says. "It allows us to stop giving out well permits, but it doesn't solve the problem." The reason she's not in favor of declaring an emergency is she wants Pajaro Valley Water Management Authority to have some breathing room to fix its own problem. "I think they know it's now or never. I'm participating and trying to remind people that this is the opportunity for local control and it will slip through our fingers if we don't grab it soon. I see a growing consensus, and part of that is due to the county standing back and giving the community a chance to solve this." She is in favor of preserving zoning for agriculture.

The other major consensus Pirie is working on is a transportation solution, after the two-year process with the Regional Transportation Commission fizzled for lack of voter support. "We are still moving forward," she says. "We are doing the environmental studies and the engineering studies." She wants Highway 1 widened in order to provide better public transportation. "If you want people to use the bus, it has to be easy, convenient, and affordable. If we add the HOV

lane with express buses, that will create a powerful incentive for people to take the bus or form a carpool."

With all the differences of opinion among the candidates, this is one area where they agree, more or less. Young thinks the HOV lane should be done, albeit with federal or state money, but has some cheaper solutions to try first: moving the digital signboard to the Morrissey/Emeline area where cars already have to slow down, because he thinks people decrease their speed to read it; and installing a metering light at the on-ramp from Bay Avenue. "I drove through during rush hour during a power outage in Soquel," he says, "and that stoplight turned into a stop sign, creating a de facto metering light. And the traffic was so much better."

And Deitch, who had a hand in designing the intersection at Mission Street and King/Union Streets, says he would like to serve on the RTC in order to create a package that

would garner the necessary two-thirds vote.

But it's not long before his irrepressible nature bubbles to the surface. "That's something our present supervisor hasn't been able to do in eight years," he says. "And her campaign



slogan is that she doesn't want this place to turn into another Fremont or San Jose. But she doesn't know what the Santa Clara Valley looked like with orchards. I grew up here. The reason it turned into what it is—it's because the water was eliminated under those orchards, just as it is beneath her very feet. Someone's got to draw the line."

Dan Young, after sharing interesting information about how he could take out the helicopter flying over his head with some small arms fire, closed with a similar thought. "If you don't try anything new, you won't know if new works or not. Look where we are. You can't be like that anymore. Someone's got to draw the line in the sand, and I'm willing to do it."

It will be interesting to see if the lines in the sand can compete with the lines on the ledger paper at the county clerk's office; according to the latest paperwork filed, Pirie has raised more than \$26,000, and she says she will probably spend it all. "It's a whole different ballgame up here from Monterey County," she says, in regard to their lack of a \$250 cap on individual donations and other campaign finance restrictions in place for Santa Cruz. "You have to have a lot of supporters. It means nobody can buy the election." **6**