Solar panels efficient in first month

by Cara Spignoli

Allen Giles, president of Turning Mill Energy in Sandwich, MA, presented information on the new renewable energy installations at Cape Cod Community College at the end of last semester. CCCC President John Cox introduced Giles, and began by reassuring listeners of the several tax breaks available to CCCC due to the solar installations. He estimates that the college will save approximately $130,000 by the end of 2013.

“My number one goal is to increase cost efficiency for nonprofit such as Cape Cod Community College. The biggest cost to nonprofit organizations is electricity,” Giles said. Turning Mill Energy grants a 20 percent discount to all nonprofits and works with other large organizations, such as St. Vincent’s Hospital in Worcester, MA, which uses more electricity in one month than CCCC does in one year, Giles said. CCCC uses $675,000 and 4.2 million kilowatts of electricity per year.

CCC is Turning Mill Energy’s second Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), and they continue to customize energy saving installations each year. A PPA defines all commercial terms for the sale of electricity between two parties, including when the project will begin commercial operation, schedule for delivery of electricity, penalties for under delivery, payment terms and termination.

“When we do it, we do it in warranty and maintenance contracts for long periods of time. Cleaning is done twice per year and all panels are monitored via the Internet. If anything goes wrong we know about it right away,” Giles said. When asked how the installations at CCCC have performed so far Giles said, “The installations at CCCC made 6 megawatts of electricity in their first month, saving the college $1,506.”

According to Michael Gross, CCCC director of college communications, the average monthly electric bill at CCCC is $55,000. “This is a substantial decrease from 1998 when the CCCC electric bill was over $75,000 per month,” Gross said. In 1999 CCCC invested $1.3 million with Noreesco to reduce electric use on campus.

The new solar installations were turned on around Nov. 1, 2012 and power amounts were recorded one month later. CCCC’s electricity load is higher in the winter, but production from the solar equipment is higher in the summer, so the monthly savings are sure to increase in the warmer months. According to Gross, the new installations are expected to produce upwards of 20 percent of the institution’s electricity needs, depending upon the time of year.

“Our goal is for the College’s electricity bill to be at $0,” Giles said. Giles was also asked if the carport solar panel in parking lot 6 causes danger to drivers parking under or around it in the winter season.

“Our engineers have designed this panel at a tilt so that snow and ice will collect in the middle of it. There is no danger in parking near or under this panel,” he said.

Food Pantry coming to CCCC

by Haley McShane

Help is on the way for needy and hungry Cape Cod Community College students in mid-February. Over the past three years, several hungry students have been voicing their need for food. CCCC’s Legacy Club has stepped up to take responsibility for running a food pantry. However, it has been a long road to their goal of helping hungry students. It all began two years ago in psychology Professor Nancy Wiley’s Social Welfare Policy Class.

“Two years ago I brought some popcorn in for my class while we watched a movie. After the class, a student told me how appreciative he was to have the popcorn since he had not eaten in the past 24 hours. As he spoke, other students began discussing their hunger issues and those of their campus peers. At first I thought, well, yeah, cold pizza and crackers isn’t really food, I guess. But, the more I listened, I realized they were giving up meals for their children and/or younger siblings. They were not eating anything,” Wiley said.

Determined to overcome the issue of campus hunger, her class spent the semester reviewing current trends. They exchanged emails with community colleges around the United States and in Massachusetts. After the students learned about food pantries, they proposed to the CCCC Student Senate that they should be integrated into student life and Student Senate adviser, Association of Student Affairs vice president, and student clubs and organizations. Currently, CCCC clubs and organizations receive a collective allocation of $90,000 a year from the college’s operating budget. This has been the same allocation since 2007, a time when there were only nine active clubs on campus. There are now 27 active clubs and organizations, meaning more entities are asking for the same amount of money originally intended for nine.

Many clubs and organizations saw major cuts to their budgets for the 2012/2013 academic year. The MainSheet in particular took great issue with the Senate to their budget cut (an over $4,000 cut), ultimately prompting the discussion over funding issues for student clubs and organizations.

According to David Biggs, coordinator of student life and Student Senate adviser, the next step to making this fee a reality would be for the Student Senate to assemble an executive committee that would handle discussions on this matter. This could then potentially lead to a conversations with the administration and action on their part. Pages 4-5