



New Lights make for a Brighter Vineyard Tennis Center

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The Workout & Vineyard Tennis Center (VTC) in Edgartown recently replaced the lighting at its two, year-round indoor tennis courts with energy efficient induction fluorescent fixtures. Not only are the courts bathed in brighter, whiter light, but the upgrade will also reduce the center's energy costs by over \$5,000 a year.

The old lights used 23,000 watts to light the two courts. The new lights, a solution designed by ThinkLite, a global lighting efficiency company, needs only 11,450 watts.

The lights and the installation cost \$29,900. Program incentives of \$23,970 from the Cape Light Compact (CLC), a public electricity aggregator and advocate for energy efficiency, reduced that cost to about \$5,930. CLC subsidizes energy saving projects with funds generated by the energy conservation charge that is a part of electrical bills in Massachusetts.

The new lights were installed by Thiesch Engineering last month and replaced metal halide bulbs and fixtures that were state of the art when they were installed almost 20 years ago, VTC owner Connie McHugh said.

Playing tennis on Martha's Vineyard during the cold, dark months of winter or during the stormy days of summer became a comfortable possibility when Ken Martin and Connie McHugh opened The Vineyard Tennis Center with two indoor courts in 1996.

"The old lights were better and brighter than most of the indoor courts on the Cape and were as bright as any tennis court lighting I had seen," Ms. McHugh said. But they came with a cost. Ms. McHugh said that the tennis center's monthly electrical bill averages over \$3,000 and a big chunk of the bill is the cost of running the lights.

Ms. McHugh expects the savings from the new lights will cover her out-of-pocket costs within a year and a half. "It was a no-brainer," she said. "Not only will we save money in the long run but the new lights are brighter, whiter and easier to use. The bulbs last longer and we can turn them on and off whenever we want."

She said the light from the old metal halide lights would turn yellowish as the lights aged giving the courts a dingy look and the lights often had to be left on, an additional cost, even when no one was playing because it took about 10 minutes for the lights to reach their full intensity when turned on. When the old lights were shut off it took about 15 minutes for the lights to cool down before they could be turned on again.



Twelve-year-old tennis player Hannah Rabasca said she likes the new lights as she walked off a court with her doubles partner, her grandfather, Peter Norris. Ms. Rabasca will be 17 when the new bulbs need to be replaced.

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"When the power went down, not an uncommon occurrence on the Vineyard, there was nothing we could do but wait," Ms. McHugh said. "Now we can turn them on and off whenever we want and the new lights reach full brightness within a minute." Another advantage of the new lights is that they do not need the heat and noise generating ballasts that covered a large section of one wall that the old lights required.

The old light bulbs had to be replaced every 18 months to two years. She expects the new bulbs to last between four and five years.

Energy audit

The idea for new lights resulted from a no-cost commercial energy audit conducted by CLC, similar to audits offered to all NSTAR customers. Information on audits is on the CLC website www.capelightcompact.org. The audit pointed to the replacement of the old metal halide lights as a way of conserving a significant amount of energy, according to CLC program coordinator Briana Kane.

Ms. Kane said the project qualified for a CLC retrofit program that is designed for commercial and industrial customers to help replace aging, inefficient equipment and systems with energy efficient technologies.

The retrofit program provides customers with incentives and technical services that facilitate the installation of premium efficient equipment, including refrigeration, motors, air conditioning and water heating systems and almost anything that uses electricity. Ms. Kane said the cost of the audit was also covered by the energy conservation charge. She said audits, energy-efficiency programs and services, rebates and incentives are ways the conservation charge is returned to the customer.

Brighter courts?

Whether the new lights are any better than the old lights will ultimately be determined by the players, Ms. McHugh said. "I think they are better and tests conducted at several other tennis facilities off-Island that have switched to the same ThinkLite solution indicate that these lights are brighter."

Ms. McHugh said that Michael Anderson, the vice president for sales at ThinkLite, an international lighting efficiency company with headquarters in Natick that designed the new lights, conducted tests last week and suggested that some fine-tuning could improve the court illumination even more. "He recommended increasing the wattage of some of the fixtures with brighter bulbs and repositioning some of the fixtures, Ms. McHugh said." She also said that the tune-up work was scheduled for September at no additional cost.

VTC employee and tennis player Steve Mussell said that he thinks the new lights are brighter and whiter. "They are more like natural sunlight," he said.

