

Solar system brightens Hidden Creek's future

BY TONY REGINA

MEMBER CLUB SPOTLIGHT



Ray Angelini

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Each line played like a broken record in the minds of those at Hidden Creek Golf Club. But the needle finally settled once management decided to go solar.

"We were looking at our operational costs, and in this day and age within the industry of golf, we were looking at ways of increasing revenues and decreasing expenses," David Goddard, president of Ole Hansen and Sons, Inc., owners of Hidden Creek, said. "This worked to further both of those goals. It created extra income, and it saved on our energy expenses."

Hidden Creek didn't look far to find a designer for its solar system. Ray Angelini, a member of six years, owns and operates Ray Angelini, Inc. – a business that specializes in commercial solar design, building and maintenance services. His company completed some of the largest solar energy projects in the region, including the Atlantic City Convention Center, the Government Services Administration's (GSA) Veteran's Administration Center in Philadelphia and the headquarters of glass manufacturer J.E. Berkowitz LP in Pedricktown, N.J.

"We knew of his reputation and experience in the solar industry. It was a natural fit for us to turn and work with Ray on the project," Goddard said. "We knew he could do a great job both from his experience level and, because he was a member at our club, he would have a great deal of pride in doing it for us."

"It means something special to me [to be a part of the solar project]," Angelini, of Woodbury, N.J., added. "I'm very interested in golf, and I'm very interested in the environment."

Hidden Creek is one of the first golf courses in New Jersey to use a solar system as an alternative energy source.

"We're very proud of that fact," Goddard said. "It's great to be out front and a leader in that regard."

Work on the \$2.41 million construction project at Hidden Creek began last August. Crews built a ground array racking structure in a storm water detention basin on the club's property. However, to attain its full solar effect, the structure needed to link with energy sources used in the club's cart barn, clubhouse, maintenance building and pump house.

"We had to interconnect the solar field to each of them separately in order to offset the energy at that particular electric meter," Jason Kaplan, project manager for Ray Angelini, Inc., said. "In order to do that, we had to do a significant amount of excavation through the golf course. We did that on a normally closed day for the course. We limited the impact on operations."

"We had to be very sensitive to the operation of the golf course and the services provided at the golf club," Angelini added.

When construction concluded in December – a mere four months later, Hidden Creek officially inserted a state-of-the-art solar system into its touted

repertoire – one that also features a Bill Coore/Ben Crenshaw designed golf course and locker room facilities wearing national merit. Overall, the new system produces 620,900 kilowatt hours annually and achieves a net-zero electric consumption for the portions of the property.

Translation: it generates an estimated \$99,642 in net energy savings.

"There's an economic benefit to it, no question about it," Goddard said. "We were spending more than \$100,000 in electrical costs at the club, which has been offset by the solar system."

Hidden Creek's membership will get its first glance at the solar system this year, though it will need to look hard to find it. The structure is located within a tree-line adjacent to Hidden Creek's maintenance building, rendering it non-invasive or distracting.

"We were sensitive to the aesthetics," Angelini said. "During the winter, you could see it through the trees. You're not going to be able to see it in the spring and fall."

Out of sight, but certainly not out of mind. Hidden Creek's solar system can accrue \$367,000 per year (that value can change) with SRECs (Solar Renewable Energy Certificates), which represent the environmental attributes of a solar facility. Furthermore, Hidden Creek can sell SRECs to increase the economic value of a solar investment and to assist with financing solar technology.

To acknowledge and promote Hidden Creek's new energy system, the New Jersey Golf Course Owners Association conducted a solar seminar at the club last month. Goddard hopes clubs throughout the region and beyond will consider pursuing solar projects.

"The golf course industry, in general, has an obligation to be good stewards of the environment. That's really what we're all about," he said. "We've created this beautiful asset that enhances nature and the environment. By doing the solar system, we're taking that one step further. By decreasing our carbon footprint, it's furthering the idea of conservation and going green for the environment. There are a lot of different benefits that go along with solar."

Hidden Creek is excited to include solar energy on its already-impressive list of credentials.

"Our biggest plusses here from the club are going to be savings not only to the club, but to the operational expense that help keep our membership dues down," General Manager Jim Mancill said. "I think it goes hand-in-hand with Mark Weld, our superintendent – his vision and what's he done for the golf course from an environmental standpoint. It is going to be a nice addition for us and make sense in the long-term."