Facilities Services Newsletter

Biomass Plant Achieves Milestone

The biomass plant successfully passed final emissions testing in November. Our emissions control systems have been managing particulate matter far below required levels from the start, however carbon monoxide emissions proved difficult to regulate. We have continually analyzed data and made adjustments to this complex system since start-up. Recognizing that we are the first gasification plant of its size in the state, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VDEC) has been very cooperative as we worked toward this goal. We expect to receive formal confirmation of our test results from the VDEC in December.

“There has been a huge learning curve,” says Facilities Services Director Norm Cushman. This was to be expected in navigating the waters of this relatively new technology. During initial start-up of our plant, Assistant Director of Facilities Mike Moser visited a similar facility in Wisconsin. The advice from the Wisconsin plant manager: not to expect optimal operation during the first year. This proved to be true, but persistence and months of fine tuning have paid off. Congratulations to Mike and his tired but determined crew of heating plant operators!

What’s Next for Biomass?

The next planned phase of the Biomass Project involves a detailed sustainability study of our current fuel supply and the overall impact of operation on the College’s carbon footprint. The data collected for the sustainability study will be used to make future supply decisions.

At the end of “the loop,” we have already found a low impact solution for use of the ash by-product produced by the plant. The ash is trucked to a local farm in Sudbury, Vermont for use as a soil amendment.

Tree Removals Planned for December Break

Routine inspections have revealed several campus trees to be in hazardous condition. Facilities Services will take advantage of the frozen ground and minimal campus traffic during December break to remove them. Almost all of these trees are located in the Main Quad. Their removal will reveal a much different, yet improved, viewscape.

Two rows of Norway spruces exist in the Main Quad: one along the west side of the outdoor ice rink (the northernmost being the holiday tree), and the second along Old Chapel Road. These spruces helped delineate the edges of a football/hockey field early in the 20th century. Several are ailing, and must be removed before becoming too dangerous. One has suffered a lightning strike, one is rotting from the top down as a result of storm damage, and a couple are suffering from root related issues. Not all of the spruces will be removed. In the western row, the holiday tree will remain, as well as a large and noble spruce closer to McCullough and its neighbor to the south, as those two are relying on each other for support from wind. An Austrian pine near Hepburn suffers from blight, so it must be removed to prevent it infecting nearby pines. A blue spruce on the north side of Stewart has reached the end of its life.
All of this work aligns with the Campus Master Plan. At present, the center row of spruces creates a wall, an unnatural break in the center of what should be a more open quad. In the Master Plan, the Main Quad is called the “core of the Middlebury College campus.” It then states, “The tree pattern in particular obscures the perception of space. Thinning the existing trees by selective removal, and clearing vistas by limbing-up trees, will greatly enhance the space.” With removal of these trees a vista across the quad will open, affording better views up the hill towards Mead Chapel, and the quad will function better for events and ceremonies such as Commencement.

Facilities Services has a vigorous replanting program, as is necessary in an active urban forest such as our campus. In the last three growing seasons, at least three trees have been planted for every one removed, using the Master Plan as a guide for variety and locations of new plantings. All planting work is done by our landscaping staff with trees grown locally.

For more information on this project, including photos of the trees to be removed and some historical pictures from the Middlebury College Digital Archives, please visit Tim Parson’s blog, The Middlebury Landscape @ http://blogs.middlebury.edu/middland/.

**Bike Racks & Storage - Please use designated areas only!**

Locking bikes to trees, handrails, light posts, or *anything* other than a bike rack is not OK. Bikes locked in inappropriate places can impede egress from buildings (a safety issue), cause damage to trees and facilities, and complicate cleaning, maintenance, and mowing. Handrails must be completely accessible at all times, especially when conditions are slippery. Snow removal is very difficult when bikes are in the way, and inevitably bikes get damaged in the process.

*Avoid a fine!* Familiarize yourself with campus bike storage policies: [http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/residential/j_storage.htm](http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/residential/j_storage.htm). Periodically Facilities Services, in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety, removes bikes that are locked in undesignated areas. In most instances locks will be damaged beyond repair and the cost of repair or replacement will be the responsibility of the bike owner, *in addition to* the associated fine.

Please help us by storing your bike appropriately. You can also let us know of bike racks that are either underutilized or over utilized so that we may relocate them to better suit demand. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

**Bike Rack for Vehicle Renters**

A bike rack has been placed in the CFA parking lot for the convenience of vehicle renters. The bike rack can be found at the southeast corner of the parking lot near the rental fleet.

**Why are We Spending Money on That?**

Amid concerns about our economic stability, colleagues are questioning why we continue with particular tasks and projects. Yes, we are spending money on certain maintenance items – to avoid falling into a deferred maintenance situation. Deferred maintenance means to postpone repairs in order to save money in the short term. Postponing repairs too long can result in further deterioration of assets and facilities, and higher costs to repair in the long run. Some maintenance items may also take priority because of health and safety implications.
As an institution that operates year round, it would be very difficult to recover from a deferred maintenance position. There are few opportunities during the year when we can perform major maintenance (like flooring replacements) without disruption to dorm residents, classes, or employees. Some jobs simply cannot be accomplished while a building is occupied. So, the more our maintenance backlog grows, the more difficult it would be to recover our present quality of infrastructure.

**Projects:**

**Axinn** – A security system will be installed in the Film Media editing suites to control access to equipment.

**Bread Loaf** – While our mountain campus has been spared from winter weather thus far we have accomplished numerous maintenance and improvement projects:
- Fire hydrants & water system gate valves have been replaced.
- Installed foundation perimeter drains around Burdick, Earthworm, Treman, & Maple.
- Repaired Treman foundation.
- Upgraded electrical systems so that an emergency generator will operate boilers & kitchen equipment.
- Replaced roofs on Brandy Brook and the east side of The Barn.
- Repaired several chimneys.
- Rebuilt basement support columns in The Inn.

**Emma Willard** – The public spaces are being updated with paint, light fixtures, and window treatments. The Admissions Office also plans to display student project posters. The goal is to provide prospective students with a first impression that better reflects, Vermont, the College, and what Midd students are doing.

**Gifford** – Upgrade of the fire alarm system & installation of a carbon monoxide detection system has begun.

**McCullough** – Carpet will be replaced in The Grille office during December break.

**Proctor** – Work will be performed on the exhaust hoods and dish room ventilation in Proctor.

**Service Building** – Carpet was recently replaced in the hallways of the Controller’s offices. Replacement of eight office carpets is scheduled for December break.

**Sunderland** – A handicap accessible bathroom will be constructed off the main lobby, and improvements made to the main entrance to make it ADA compliant. Insulation will be added in the attic to prevent the recurrence of ice dams on the roof.

**Worth Mountain Lift** – The lift installation is complete! Start-up and load testing began last week; if successful, the lift will be inspected by the State of Vermont for approval to operate.

Questions about content may be directed to hoyenski@middlebury.edu.

Find past issues of the Facilities Services newsletter at: http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/fs/about/newsletters.htm