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(54) **LED LIGHT WITH THERMOELECTRIC GENERATOR**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

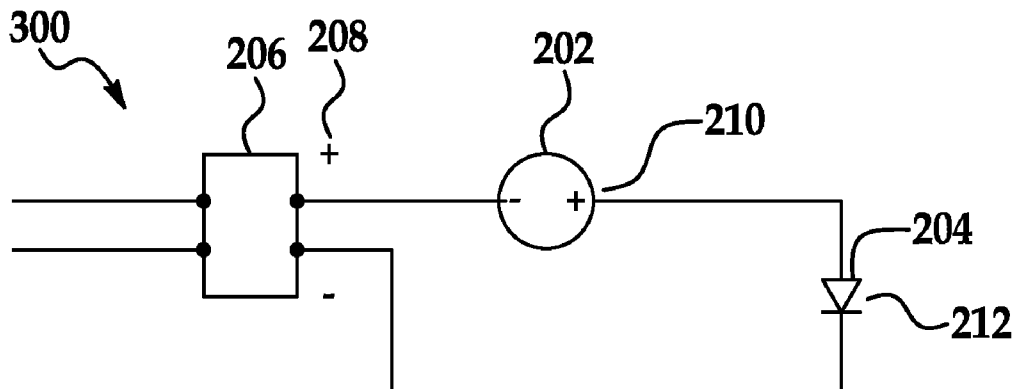
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An LED based light and a method of providing power to the LED are disclosed. The LED based light includes at least one LED and at least one thermoelectric generator having a first side and a second side. The first side is thermally coupled to the at least one LED such that heat generated by the at least one LED is conducted to the at least one thermoelectric generator, producing a temperature differential between the first side and second side. The at least one thermoelectric generator is configured to produce electrical energy from the temperature differential.

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/317,841, filed on Mar. 26, 2010.



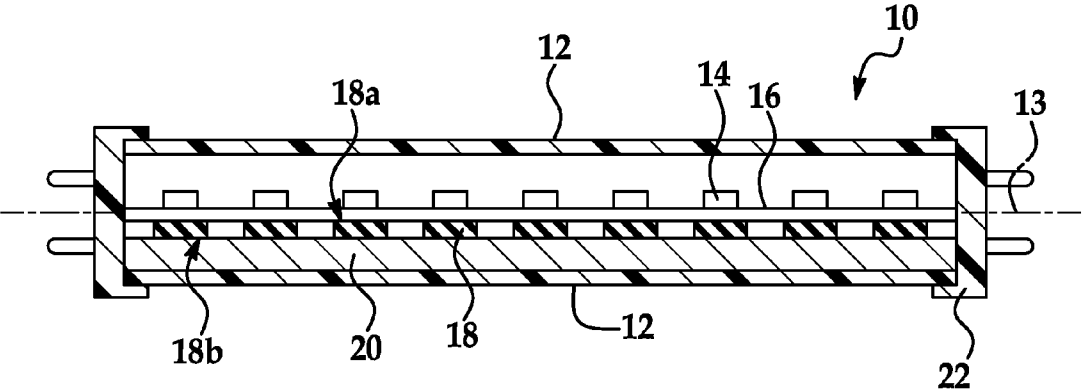


FIG. 1

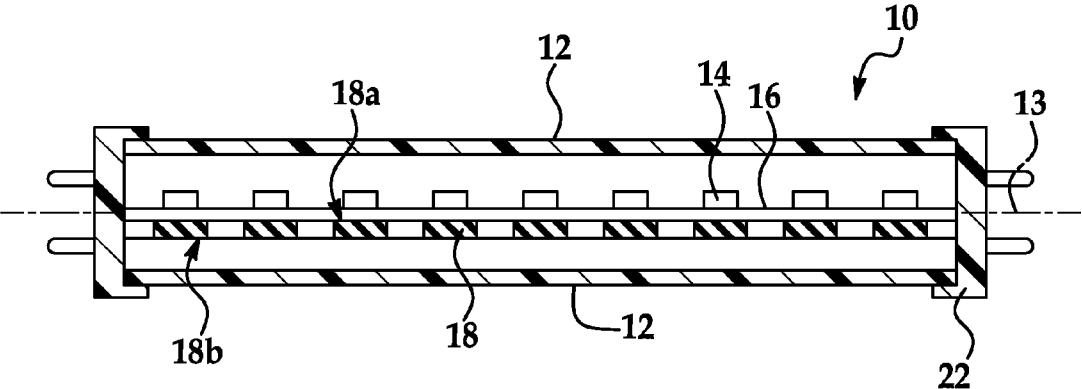


FIG. 2

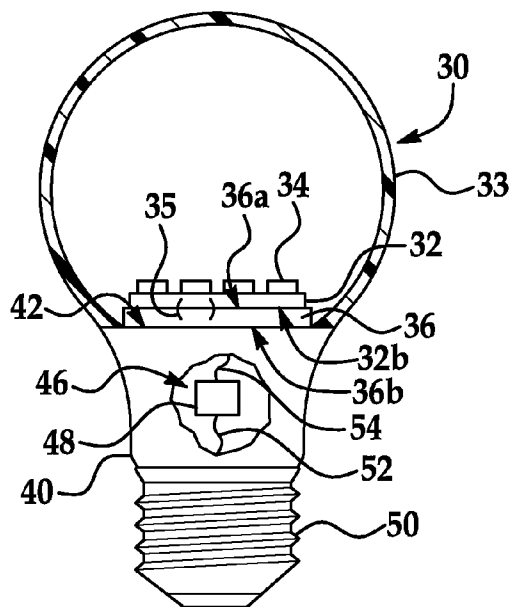


FIG. 3

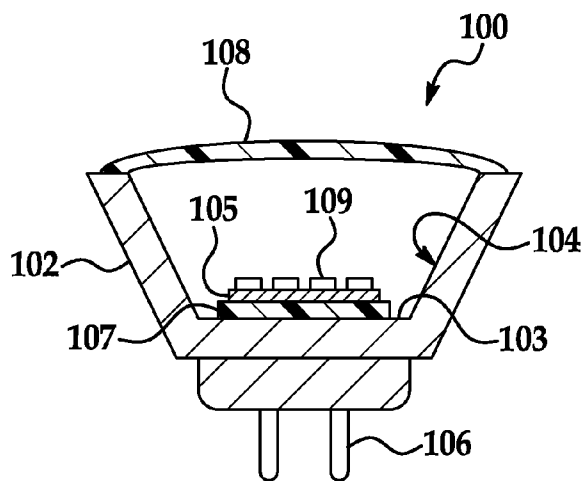


FIG. 4

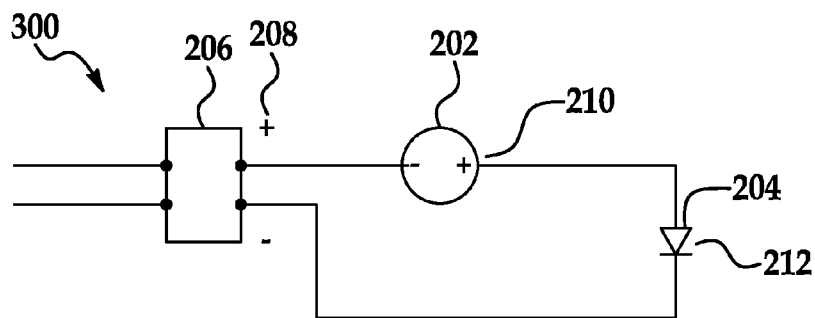


FIG. 5

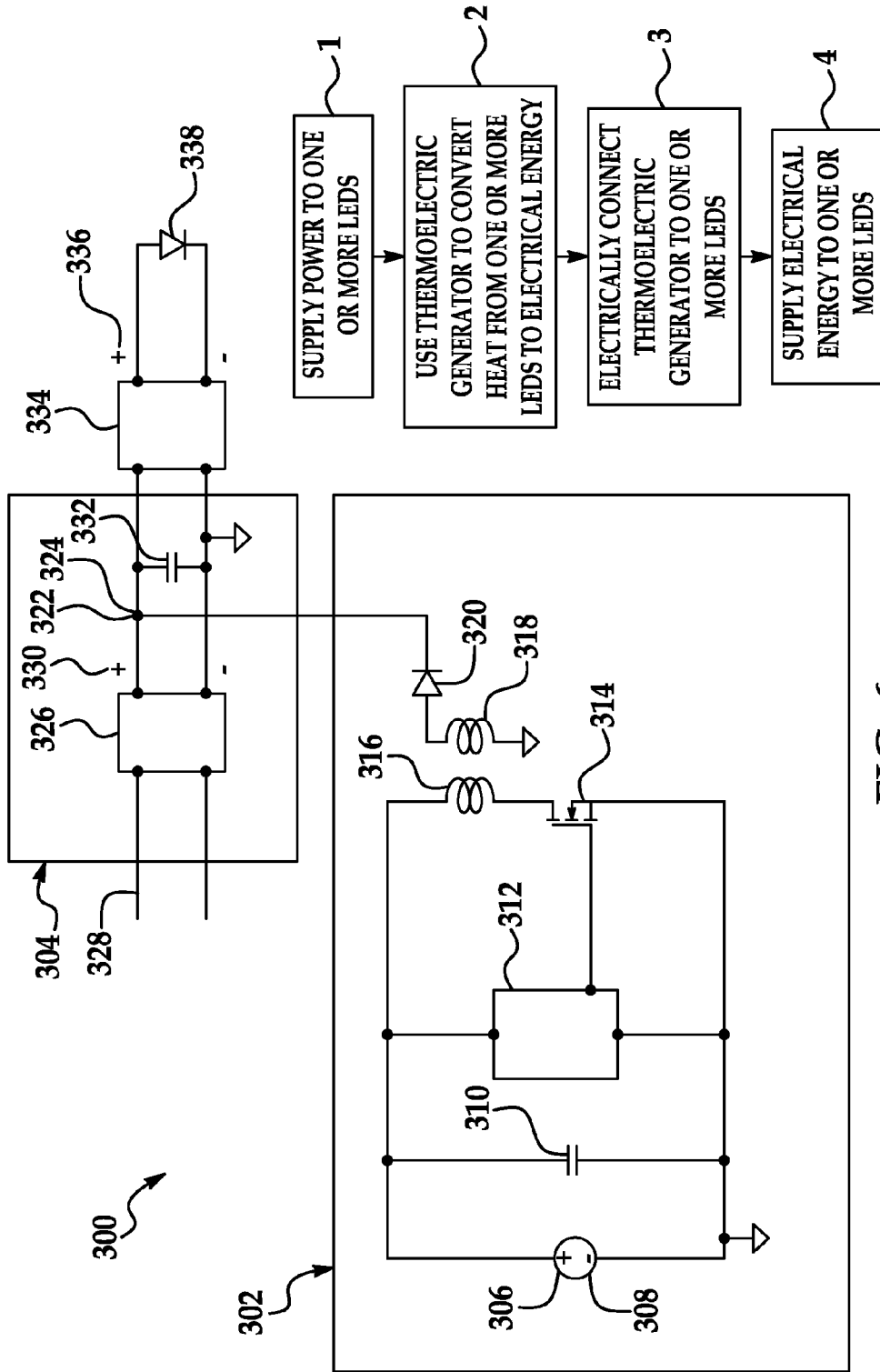


FIG. 6

FIG. 7

LED LIGHT WITH THERMOELECTRIC GENERATOR

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/317,841, filed Mar. 26, 2010, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The invention relates to a light emitting diode (LED) based light, for example, an LED-based light tube usable in a fluorescent light fixture in place of a conventional fluorescent tube or an LED-based light bulb usable in an Edison-type fixture in place of a conventional incandescent bulb.

BACKGROUND

[0003] LED-based lights, also referred to as LED lights, have many advantages over other types of lights including incandescent lights and fluorescent lights. As examples, LED lights typically have a higher efficiency and longer lifespan than other types of lights. LEDs also typically do not present the same risks associated with hazardous materials found in mercury-containing fluorescent lights.

[0004] One factor limiting the performance of LED lights is the ability of the LED lights to dissipate heat produced by their respective LEDs, which can become damaged if overheated. To this end, LED lights each typically include some structure for dissipating heat, such as one or more of a high surface area heat sink constructed from a highly thermally conductive material, an internal fan for improving convective heat transfer, or some other structure. Ideally, according to known theories for dealing with heat produced by LEDs in LED lights, the structure for dissipating heat would dissipate all the heat produced by the LEDs of a respective LED light.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0005] Contrary to the known approach of trying to dissipate all heat produced by LEDs of an LED light, such heat can be “recycled” to increase the efficiency of the LEDs. For example, the LED light can include a thermoelectric generator (“TEG”), such as a generator utilizing the Seebeck effect. The TEG can be positioned in a path of heat originating at one or more of the LEDs, and the TEG can use heat produced by the LEDs to produce electrical energy that is fed back to the LEDs. In one disclosed example, an LED light includes multiple LEDs mounted on a printed circuit board. The LED light also includes multiple discrete TEGs and a heatsink, and the TEGs are positioned between the printed circuit board and the heat sink such that the TEGs are overlaid by the LEDs. The TEGs are in electric communication with the LEDs, and the TEGs are operable to produce an electrical energy in response to heat produced by the LEDs. The LEDs are operable to produce light at least in part in response to the electrical energy produced by the TEGs. In another example, a single TEG can be positioned between the circuit board and heat sink. As a result of using TEGs to turn heat produced by the LEDs into electrical energy that can in turn be used to power the LEDs, the efficiency of the LED light can be improved compared to an LED light that does not recycle heat into electrical energy.

[0006] One aspect of an LED based light disclosed herein comprises at least one LED and at least one thermoelectric

generator having a first side and a second side. The first side is thermally coupled to the at least one LED such that heat generated by the at least one LED is conducted to the at least one thermoelectric generator, producing a temperature differential between the first side and second side. The at least one thermoelectric generator is configured to produce electrical energy from the temperature differential.

[0007] Another aspect of an LED based light disclosed herein is for use in a conventional lighting fixture and comprises a circuit board, at least one LED mounted on the circuit board and configured to receive electrical energy from a power source, and at least one thermoelectric generator configured to generate an electrical energy in response to heat received from the at least one LED. A power converter circuit is connected to the power source and configured to electrically connect the least one thermoelectric generator to the least one LED and to power the at least one LED with the electrical energy provided by the at least one thermoelectric generator.

[0008] Also disclosed herein at methods of powering an LED of an LED-based light. One method comprises supplying power provided by a power source to at least one LED and converting heat generated by the at least one LED to electrical energy with at least one thermoelectric generator in thermally conductive relation with the at least one LED. The at least one thermoelectric generator is electrically connected to the least one LED, and the electrical energy is supplied to the at least one LED from the electrically connected thermoelectric generator to supplement the power supplied by the power source.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The description herein makes reference to the accompanying drawings wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, and wherein:

[0010] FIG. 1 is a cross section of an example of an LED-based light tube for use in a fluorescent light fixture taken along a plane including a longitudinal axis of the LED-based light tube;

[0011] FIG. 2 is a cross section of another aspect of the LED-based light tube of FIG. 1;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a side view of an example of an LED-based light bulb having an Edison-type screw thread, including a cutaway showing a cavity defined by a base of the light bulb;

[0013] FIG. 4 is a cross section of an example of an LED-based light bulb including a reflector and pin-type connectors;

[0014] FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram of one exemplary power converter circuit usable in any of the LED-based lights of FIGS. 1-4;

[0015] FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram of another exemplary power converter circuit usable in any of the LED-based lights of FIGS. 1-4; and

[0016] FIG. 7 is a flow diagram of a method of supplying power to at least one LED in any of the LED-based lights of FIGS. 1-4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] An example of an LED-based light tube 10 configured as a replacement for a fluorescent tube in a fluorescent fixture is shown in FIG. 1. The light tube 10 includes a housing 12, multiple LEDs 14 mounted on a circuit board 16 disposed in the housing 12, multiple thermoelectric generators (“TEGs”) 18 and two bi-pin end caps 22. The light tube

10 can also include other components, such as electrical components in a circuit between the end caps **22** and the circuit board **16**, which are described in more detail below.

[0018] The housing **12** shown in FIG. 1 can include a light transmitting cylindrical tube defining a longitudinal axis **13**. The housing **12** can be made from polycarbonate, acrylic, glass or another light transmitting material (i.e., the housing **12** can be transparent or translucent). For example, a translucent housing **12** can be made from a composite, such as polycarbonate with particles of a light refracting material interspersed in the polycarbonate. While the illustrated housing **12** is cylindrical, the housing **12** can alternatively have a square, triangular, polygonal, or other cross sectional shape. Similarly, while the illustrated housing **12** is linear, the housing **12** can have an alternative shape, e.g., a U-shape or a circular shape. Additionally, the housing **12** need not be a single piece as shown in FIG. 1. Instead, the housing **12** can be formed by attaching multiple individual parts, not all of which need be light transmitting. For example, the housing **12** can include a lower portion and a lens attached to the lower portion to cover the LEDs **14**. The housing **12** can be manufactured to include light diffusing or refracting properties, such as by surface roughening or applying a diffusing film to the housing **12**. The housing **12** can have a length such that the light tube **10** is approximately 48" long, and the housing **12** can have a 0.625", 1.0", or 1.5" diameter for engagement with common fluorescent fixtures.

[0019] The LEDs **14** can be surface-mount devices of a type available from Nichia, though other types of LEDs can alternatively be used. For example, although surface-mounted LEDs **14** are shown, one or more organic LEDs can be used in place of or in addition thereto. Each LED **14** can include a single diode or multiple diodes, such as a package of diodes producing light that appears to an ordinary observer as coming from a single source. The LEDs **14** can be mounted on and electrically connected to the circuit board **16** using, for example, solder or another type of connection. The LEDs **14** can emit white light. However, LEDs that emit blue light, ultra-violet light or other wavelengths of light can be used in place of white light emitting LEDs **14**.

[0020] The number of LEDs **14** can be a function of the desired power of the light tube **10** and the power of the LEDs **14**. For a 48" light, such as the light tube **10**, the number of LEDs **14** can vary from about five to four hundred such that the light tube **10** outputs approximately 500 to 3,000 lumens. However, a different number of LEDs **14** can alternatively be used, and the light tube **10** can output another amount of lumens. The LEDs **14** can be evenly spaced along the circuit board **16** such that light tube **10** appears to produce an even distribution of light as judged by an ordinary observer. The spacing of the LEDs **14** can be determined based on, for example, the light distribution of each LED **14** and the number of LEDs **14**.

[0021] The circuit board **16** as illustrated in FIG. 1 is an elongate printed circuit board. Multiple circuit board sections can be joined by bridge connectors to create the circuit board **16**. The circuit board **16** as shown in FIG. 1 is slidably engaged with longitudinally extending slots formed in the housing **12**, though the circuit board **16** can alternatively be clipped, adhered, snap- or friction-fit, screwed or otherwise connected to the housing **12** or another structure such as a heat sink or end caps **22**. Also, other types of circuit boards may be used, such as a metal core circuit board. Or, instead of a circuit board **16**, other types of electrical connections (e.g., wires)

can be used to electrically connect the LEDs **14** to a power source. The circuit board **16** can electrically connect the LEDs **14** in a circuit, and other components such as the TEGs **18** and bi-pin end caps **22** can also be electrically connected to the circuit board **16**.

[0022] The bi-pin end caps **22** can each be of the type including a plastic cap carrying two pins. One of the end caps **22** can be attached at each longitudinal end of the housing **12** for physically and electrically connecting the light tube **10** to a fluorescent fixture. The end caps **22** can be electrically connected to the circuit board **16** to provide power to the circuit board **16** and in turn to the LEDs **14**. Each end cap **22** can include two pins, though two of the total four pins can be "dummy pins" that do not provide an electrical connection. Alternatively, other types of electrical connectors can be used, such as an end cap carrying a single pin. Also, while the end caps **22** are shown as including cup-shaped bodies, the end caps **22** can have a different configuration (e.g., the end caps **22** can be shaped to be press fit into the housing **12**). An electric circuit can be included within the housing **12** and in an electric path between at least one of the end caps **22** and the circuit board **16** for modifying the electric power received from the fluorescent fixture.

[0023] The TEGs can be configured to produce electrical energy using heat produced by the LEDs. For example, the TEGs **18** can be thermoelectric generators of the type including a plurality of thermocouples utilizing the Seebeck effect to convert temperature differences within the TEGs **18** produced by the heat to electric voltage. The TEGs **18** can be electrically connected in a series and can be electrically connected to the circuit board **16**. For example, wires can extend from the TEGs **18** and can be soldered or otherwise electrically connected to each other to electrically connect the TEGs **18** in a series, and wires can also electrically connect the TEGs **18** to the circuit board **16** or another type of LED power source. The TEGs **18** can be electrically connected to the circuit board **16** in series with an electrical connection between one or more of the end caps **22** and the circuit board **16**. As a result, electrical energy produced by the TEGs **18** can be communicated to the LEDs **14** via the circuit board **16** for use in producing light. The TEGs **18** can alternatively be electrically connected to the LEDs **14** in series with an electrical connection between one or more of the end caps **22** and the LEDs **14**.

[0024] The TEGs **18** are operable to produce electrical energy in response to a heat differential across their thickness. When arranged as shown in FIG. 1, a first side **18a** of each TEG **18** is thermally coupled to the circuit board **16** and thus to the associated LED **14**, while a second, opposing side **18b** of each TEG **18** is open to the atmosphere which acts as a heat sink or dissipater. "Thermally coupled" as used herein refers to being able to absorb heat from. "Open to the atmosphere" as used herein refers to having at least one side through which heat can dissipate directly to the surrounding ambient fluid, typically air, inside the housing **12**. This arrangement allows heat produced by the LEDs **14** during operation and conducted to the TEGs **18**, as well as the heat lost from the TEGs **18** to the atmosphere, to create a temperature differential across the thickness of the TEGs **18**. That is, the side **18a** of the TEGs **18** thermally coupled to the circuit board **16** can have a higher temperature than the opposing side **18b** of the TEGs **18** open to the atmosphere. The TEGs **18** can produce electrical energy, such as electrical voltage, from this heat differential. Since the TEGs **18** are electrically connected to

the LEDs 14, the electrical energy produced by the TEGs 18 can be used to at least partially power the LEDs 14. The TEGs 18 can provide electrical energy to supplement the power received by the light tube 10 from a fluorescent fixture via the end caps 22, or from an alternative power source, such as a battery. The TEGs 18 can thus increase the efficiency of the light tube 10.

[0025] The LED-based light tube 10 shown in FIG. 1 can further comprise a heat sink 20 positioned in the LED-based light tube 10' of FIG. 2. While the housing 12 is shown as extending circumferentially around the heat sink 20, the housing 12 can alternatively allow at least a portion of the heat sink 20 to be exposed to an ambient environment about the light tube 10'. For example, the housing 12 can have a semi-cylindrical cross-section having longitudinal edges engaged with the heat sink 20. The TEGs 18 can be physically attached to the circuit board 16 and/or the heat sink 20 using, as an example, thermally conductive tape. If the circuit board 16, TEGs 18 and heat sink 20 are attached in another manner (e.g., such by being physically pressed or clamped together by bolts, a tight-tolerance fit, or clamps) thermal paste can be included at junctions between the TEGs 18 and the circuit board 16 and heat sink 20, respectively.

[0026] The TEGs 18 can be disposed along heat transfer paths originating at the respective LEDs 14 and extending to the ambient environment. For example, the circuit board 16 can draw heat away from the LEDs 14 and transfer that heat to the heat sink 20, in which case multiple heat transfer paths extend from respective LEDs 14 toward the heat sink 20. Each discrete TEG 18 can be thermally coupled to a side of the circuit board 16 opposite the LEDs 14 at a position along one of the heat transfer paths as shown in FIG. 2. For example, if the LEDs 14 are longitudinally spaced along a length of the circuit board 16, the TEGs 18 can be spaced at equal intervals as the LEDs 14 and in alignment with the LEDs 14. Alternatively, a single TEG 18 that extends the length of the circuit board 16 and is overlaid by all the LEDs 14 can be used, or multiple TEGs 18 that are each overlaid by multiple LEDs 14 can be used. The TEGs 18 can have a thickness on the range of a few millimeters or smaller (e.g., less than 3 millimeters). The relative thinness of the TEGs 18 can aid heat transfer from the TEGs 18 to the heat sink 20.

[0027] As noted, the TEGs 18 are operable to produce electrical energy in response to a heat differential across their thickness. When arranged as shown in FIG. 2, a first side 18a of each TEG 18 is thermally coupled to the circuit board 16 and thus to the associated LED 14, while a second, opposing side 18b of each TEG 18 is thermally coupled to the heat sink 20. This arrangement allows heat produced by the LEDs 14 during operation and conducted to the TEGs 18, as well as the heat extracted from the TEGs 18 by the heat sink 20, to create a temperature differential across the thickness of the TEGs 18. That is, the side 18a of the TEGs 18 thermally coupled to the circuit board 16 can have a higher temperature than the opposing side 18b of the TEGs 18 thermally coupled to the heat sink 20. The TEGs 18 can produce electrical energy, such as electrical voltage, from this heat differential. Since the TEGs 18 are electrically connected to the LEDs 14, the electrical energy produced by the TEGs 18 can be used to at least partially power the LEDs 14. For example, the TEGs 18 can provide electrical energy to supplement the power received by the light tube 10' from a fluorescent fixture via the end caps 22, or from an alternative power source, such as a battery. The TEGs 18 can thus increase the efficiency of the light tube 10'.

[0028] The heat sink 20 can be constructed from a highly thermally conductive material, such as aluminum, another highly thermally conductive metal, or a highly thermally conductive polymer of the type available from Cool Polymers, Inc. of Warwick, R.I. The shape of the heat sink 20 can provide a large surface area, such as by the inclusion of fins, pins, or other surface area increasing structures for increasing the ability of the heat sink 20 to dissipate heat. The heat sink 20 can be thermally coupled to the TEGs 18 and can dissipate heat originating at the LEDs 14 and reaching the heat sink 20 via heat paths passing through the TEGs 18. The heat sink 20 can conduct heat from the side 18b of the TEGs 18 opposite the circuit board 16, thereby aiding in the temperature difference across the thickness of the TEGs 18 and providing regulation of the temperature of the LEDs 14. Also, while not shown in FIG. 2, the heat sink 20 can include raised portions in contact with the circuit board 16 between the spaced TEGs 18 and at other locations between the circuit board 16 and heat sink 20 not occupied by the TEGs 18 to increase heat transfer between the circuit board 16 and the heat sink 20.

[0029] While the light tubes 10, 10' shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 are examples of an LED-based light to replace a fluorescent tube in a fluorescent fixture, other types of LED-based lights can also include TEGs. For example, FIG. 3 shows an example of an LED-based light bulb 30 to replace incandescent lights. The LED-based light bulb 30 has a circuit board 32 having multiple LEDs 34 mounted thereon in electrical connection with the circuit board 32. A lens or cover 33 formed of polycarbonate or another light transmitting material can enclose the circuit board 32, and the cover 33 can include light modifying structures (e.g., diffusing film, surface roughening, etc.). A TEG 36 is thermally coupled to the circuit board 32. As shown, a first side 36a of the TEG 36 is in contact with a side 32b of the circuit board 32 opposite the LEDs 34. The TEG 36 can be electrically connected to the circuit board 32. For example, a pair of wires 35 can electrically connect the TEG 36 to the circuit board 32, though alternative structures for electrically connecting the circuit board 32 and TEG 36 can be used.

[0030] A highly thermally conductive base 40 can act as a heat sink for dissipating heat produced by the LEDs 34. The base 40 can include a platform 42 on which the TEG 36 can be supported and thermally coupled thereto. For example, a second side 36b of the TEG 36 opposite the first side 36a can contact the platform 42. Thermal paste can be included at the junctions on either side of the TEG 36 to improve heat flow. The base 40 can define a cavity 46 for storing electronics 48, such as power conversion electronics (e.g., a rectifier, a filtering capacitor, and/or DC to DC conversion circuitry). The electronics 48 can be electrically coupled to an Edison-type screw thread 50 that is compatible with standard Edison-type fixtures. For example, wires 52 can electrically couple the electronics 48 to the screw thread 50. The electronics 48 can modify current received from a socket via the screw thread 50. The electronics 48 can be electrically coupled to the circuit board 32 via wires 54, and the wires 54 can pass through an aperture (not shown) defined by the platform 42 of the base 40.

[0031] In operation, the LEDs 34 can receive power from a standard Edison-type fixture via the screw thread 50, electronics 48 and circuit board 32. As the LEDs 34 operate, they produce heat. The TEG 36 is in a path along which heat travels from the circuit board 32 to the base 40, and the base 40 can dissipate heat received from the circuit board 32 and the TEG

36 to the ambient environment. A temperature differential can form across the TEG **36**, with the side **36a** being hotter than the side **36b**. The TEG **36** can produce electrical energy from this heat differential, and the TEG **36** can communicate this electrical energy back to the circuit board **32** via the wires **35**. The circuit board **32** in turn can power the LEDs **34** using both electrical energy received from the TEG **36** and power received from the thread **50**. In an alternative example, the TEG **36** can be electrically connected to the electronics **48** instead of the circuit board **32**, and electrical energy produced by the TEG **36** can be routed to the circuit board **32** via the electronics **48**.

[0032] Yet another example of a type of LED-based light including TEGs is shown in FIG. 4. An LED-based flood light bulb **100** includes a base **102** defining a reflector surface **104**, such as a mirrored finish or other highly reflective surface, surrounding and angled relative to a platform **103**. A circuit board **105** and a TEG **107** can be mounted on the platform **103** using, for example, thermoelectric tape. A plurality of LEDs **109** can be mounted on and electrically coupled to the circuit board **105**. The circuit board **105** can additionally be electrically coupled to the TEG **107** and an electrical connector **106** of the bulb **100**, which is shown as a pair of pins but can have an alternative configuration. The circuit board **105** can be electrically coupled to the electrical connector **106** via, as an example, power conversion electronics (not shown) for converting power from a type received from a fixture to a type suitable for the LEDs **109**. A light transmitting cover or lens **108** can span the reflective surface **104** to enclose the circuit board **105**, TEG **107** and LEDs **109**.

[0033] In operation, the LEDs **109** can receive power from a fixture in which the bulb **100** is installed via the connector **106** and circuit board **105**. The LEDs **109** can produce light that travels directly out the cover **108** or indirectly out the cover **108** after being reflected by the reflector **104**. During operation, the LEDs **109** produce heat, and the heat can pass through the circuit board **105** to the TEG **107**. Some of the heat can continue to the base **102**, which can dissipate heat to an ambient environment about the bulb **100**. The TEG **107** can produce electrical energy from the heat differential produced across it between the circuit board **105** and base **102**. The TEG **107** can communicate the electrical energy to the circuit board **105**, which can supply the electrical energy to the LEDs **109**, thereby increasing the efficiency of the bulb **100** compared to a conventional bulb.

[0034] An example of a power converter circuit **200** is shown in FIG. 5 that can be utilized as power conversion electronics or as a component of the power conversion electronics. By utilizing the circuit **200**, the overall power consumption of an LED-based light can be reduced because the electrical energy produced by the TEG **202** can be used to supplement the power supplied to the LED **204** from an external power source. Although LED **204** is shown as a single LED, LED **204** could alternatively be a plurality of LEDs electrically connected to each other.

[0035] The circuit **200** includes a power converter **206** electrically connected to a power source and configured to produce a voltage **208**, which can be applied to power the LED **204**. In addition, the circuit **200** includes a TEG **202** configured to produce electrical energy in the form of a voltage **210** in response to heat produced by the LED **204**. If the TEG **202** is selected to provide approximately the same amount of current as the current rating of the LED **204**, the TEG **202** and the power converter **206** can be combined in series to provide

a voltage **212** sufficient to power the LED **204**. In this configuration, the voltage **212** required by the LED **204** can be supplied by both the power converter **206** and the TEG **202**. Because the voltage **212** required by the LED **204** is a relatively fixed value, the voltage **210** produced by the TEG **202** serves to reduce the voltage **208** that must be provided by the power converter **206** in order to power the LED **204**. Thus, voltage **208** that must be provided by the power converter **206** is equal to the voltage **212** required by the LED **204** minus the voltage **210** produced by the TEG **202**. Further reduction in the voltage **208** that must be produced by power converter **206** could be realized by modifying the circuit **200** to include a plurality of TEGs **202** in a series aiding arrangement. In this arrangement, the voltage **208** that must be provided by the power converter **206** is equal to the voltage **212** required by the LED **204** minus the sum of the voltages **210** produced by the plurality of TEGs **202**.

[0036] The circuit **200** has the advantage of simplicity compared to other possible circuit topologies. In addition, the TEG **202** is maintained at approximately the same potential as the LED **204**, which may be advantageous for safety reasons, if for example, the power converter **206** is of the low voltage isolated output type and the LED **204** is accessible to a user.

[0037] Another example of a power converter circuit **300** that can be utilized as power conversion electronics or as a component of power conversion electronics is shown in FIG. 6. The circuit **300** includes a TEG conversion circuit **302** and an LED power input circuit **304**. The TEG conversion circuit **302** conditions the electrical energy produced by the TEG **306**, here illustrated as a voltage **308**, to a form appropriate for use in the LED power input circuit **304**. The TEG conversion circuit **302** uses a flyback mode switching power supply circuit to condition a relatively low voltage **308** produced by the TEG **306** to a higher voltage. In the illustrated TEG conversion circuit **302**, a capacitor **310**, such as a filtering capacitor, is connected across the output of the TEG **306**. A controller **312** is further connected across the output of the TEG **306** and capacitor **310**, and controls the operation of a switch **314**, which is illustrated as a FET switch. The switch **314** is connected to split inductors **316** and **318**. The inductor **318** is connected to diode **320**, which is connected to LED power input circuit **304** to provide a conditioned voltage **322** to an internal node **324**. Although a flyback mode switching power supply circuit is illustrated, it is to be understood that other known circuit topologies are available and may be utilized to condition the electrical energy produced by the TEG **306** to a form appropriate for utilization in the LED power input circuit **304**.

[0038] In operation, the TEG conversion circuit **302** operates to supply the conditioned voltage **322** to an internal node **324** of the LED power input circuit **304**. The LED power input circuit **304** includes a rectifier **326** configured to convert an AC line voltage **328** to a rectified input voltage **330**. The conditioned voltage **322** is supplied to the internal node **324** connected to the rectified input voltage **330**. A capacitor **332**, such as a filtering capacitor, is connected across the rectified input voltage **330** and the conditioned voltage **322**. An LED power converter **334** is connected across the capacitor **332**, and is configured to produce a voltage **336**, which can be applied to power an LED **338**. The LED power converter **334** can be any known converter commonly used in LED circuits, including those using buck, buck-boost or flyback. Although LED **338** is shown as a single LED, LED **338** could alterna-

tively be a plurality of LEDs electrically connected to each other. In the illustrated circuit **300**, the overall power consumption of an LED-based light can be reduced by utilizing the electrical energy produced by the TEG **306** to supplement the electrical energy, here an AC line voltage **328**, that must be supplied to the LED input circuit **304** in order to power the LED **338**.

[0039] Power converter circuit **200** and power converter circuit **300** can each be utilized in any LED-based light disclosed herein, including the LED-based light tubes **10**, **10'** shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, the LED-based bulb **30** shown in FIG. **2** and the LED-based flood light bulb **100** shown in FIG. **3**.

[0040] Methods of providing power to an LED in an LED based light are also disclosed herein. The methods can be used with any of the LED based lights disclosed herein. One method shown in FIG. **7** comprises supplying power provided by a power source to the one or more LEDs in step **1**. Heat generated as a byproduct by the one or more LEDs is converted to electrical energy by at least one thermoelectric generator in step **2**. The thermoelectric generator is in thermally conductive relation with the one or more LEDs. The thermoelectric generator is also electrically connected to the one or more LEDs, as shown in step **3**. In step **4**, the electrical energy is supplied to the one or more LEDs from the electrically connected thermoelectric generator to supplement the power supplied by the power source to the one or more LEDs.

[0041] The heat is recycled back to the LEDs in the form of energy. This electrical energy can be, for example, in the form of voltage. The method can include providing a power conversion circuit configured to condition the voltage prior to supplying the voltage to the one or more LEDs. Conditioning can be, as a non-limiting example, converting the voltage from a lower voltage to a higher voltage.

[0042] The above-described examples have been described in order to allow easy understanding of the invention and do not limit the invention. On the contrary, the invention is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements, whose scope is to be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent structure as is permitted under the law.

We claim:

1. An LED based light comprising:
at least one LED; and
at least one thermoelectric generator having a first side and a second side, wherein the first side is thermally coupled to the at least one LED such that heat generated by the at least one LED is conducted to the at least one thermoelectric generator, producing a temperature differential between the first side and second side, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator is configured to produce electrical energy from the temperature differential.
2. The LED based light of claim **1**, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator has an electrical connection to the at least one LED, wherein the electrical energy produced by the at least one thermoelectric generator is provided to the at least one LED.
3. The LED based light of claim **2**, wherein the electrical energy produced by the at least one thermoelectric generator is voltage.
4. The LED based light of claim **2**, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator is electrically connected in series with the at least one LED.

5. The LED based light of claim **1**, wherein the at least one LED is a plurality of LEDs and the at least one thermoelectric generator is a plurality of thermoelectric generators, each of the plurality of LEDs being thermally coupled to a respective one of the plurality of thermoelectric generators.

6. The LED based light of claim **1**, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator is a plurality of thermoelectric generators electrically connected to each other in series.

7. The LED based light of claim **1** further comprising:

a heat sink adjacent to the second side of the at least one thermoelectric generator and configured to increase the temperature differential between the first side and the second side.

8. The LED based light of claim **7**, wherein the heat sink is disposed in thermally conductive relation to the second side of the at least one thermoelectric generator.

9. The LED based light of claim **8**, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator is disposed in thermally conductive relation to the at least one LED, and the at least one thermoelectric generator is disposed between the at least one LED and the heat sink.

10. An LED based light for use in a conventional lighting fixture comprising:

a circuit board;

at least one LED mounted on the circuit board and configured to receive electrical energy from a power source;

at least one thermoelectric generator configured to generate an electrical energy in response to heat received from the at least one LED; and

a power converter circuit connected to the power source and configured to electrically connect the least one thermoelectric generator to the least one LED and to power the at least one LED with the electrical energy provided by the at least one thermoelectric generator.

11. The LED based light of claim **10**, wherein the at least one thermoelectric generator includes a first side and a second side and is configured to produce an electrical energy from a temperature differential between the first side and the second side, wherein the electrical energy produced is a voltage.

12. The LED based light of claim **10**, wherein the at least one LED is a plurality of LEDs and the at least one thermoelectric generator is a plurality of thermoelectric generators, each of the plurality of thermoelectric generators in thermally conductive relation with a respective LED.

13. The LED based light of claim **11** further comprising:

a heat sink in thermally conductive relation with one of the first side and the second side of the at least one thermoelectric generator, wherein the at least one LED is in thermally conductive relation with an other of the first side and the second side, the heat sink configured to increase the temperature differential between the first side and the second side.

14. The LED based light of claim **10** further comprising:

a housing including a light transmitting portion, the circuit board being disposed within the housing.

15. The LED based light of claim **14**, wherein the housing extends along a longitudinal axis of the light and includes a first end opposing a second end, the first and second ends each including a bi-pin end cap configured for at least physical engagement with a conventional fluorescent light fixture.

16. The LED based light of claim **15**, wherein the housing has one of a cylindrical cross section or a semi-cylindrical cross section.

- 17.** The LED based light of claim **13** further comprising:
a base defining a mounting platform for mounting the circuit board;
a light transmitting cover adjacent to the base and enclosing the at least one LED; and
a connector configured for at least physical engagement with a conventional incandescent light fixture.
- 18.** The LED based light of claim **17** wherein the base includes the heat sink.
- 19.** The LED based light of claim **10**, wherein the power converter circuit comprises a thermoelectric generator conversion circuit and an LED power input circuit, wherein the electrical energy from the at least one thermoelectric generator is converted in the thermoelectric generator conversion circuit and provided to the LED power input circuit to power the at least one LED.
- 20.** A method of providing power to an LED in an LED based light comprising:
supplying power provided by a power source to at least one LED;
- converting heat generated by the at least one LED to electrical energy with at least one thermoelectric generator in thermally conductive relation with the at least one LED;
electrically connecting the at least one thermoelectric generator to the at least one LED; and
supplying the electrical energy to the at least one LED from the electrically connected at least one thermoelectric generator to supplement the power supplied by the power source.
- 21.** The method of claim **20**, wherein the electrical energy is a voltage and the at least one thermoelectric generator is a plurality of thermoelectric generators, the method further comprising:
electrically connecting the plurality of thermoelectric generators in series.
- 22.** The method of claim **20**, wherein the electrical energy is voltage, the method further comprising:
providing a power conversion circuit configured to condition the voltage prior to supplying the voltage to the at least one LED.

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