

Approval granted for Little Chute lift bridge

Project tied to development along the Fox River

By **J.E. Espino**

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LITTLE CHUTE — Lawmakers today announced that federal money will be used to replace a lift bridge that has not functioned for more than 20 years.

Village officials have been working with U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen's office since summer in hopes of securing federal dollars for the inoperable Mill Street bridge, which they say limits public access to Island Park.

The cost to build a vehicular bridge is estimated at \$6.5 million, most of which they anticipate could be covered through federal and state grants in 2009.

Kagen, D-Appleton, and state Rep. Tom Nelson, D-Kaukauna, were scheduled to meet with community leaders at 10:30 a.m. at the Village Hall.

Officials have been at odds about how to replace the bridge for years, but they began to give matters a fresh look this year with the possible relocation of the planned \$2.5 million windmill and visitor center to the site.

Island Park is made up of 5.8 acres and runs along the Fox River. The Fox River Navigation System Authority is restoring the Little Chute lock.

The three projects tied together at the park have piqued the interest of local lawmakers and organizations, who see potential for tourism and economic development.

"This is a critical and timely investment of our hard-earned tax dollars, for it will stimulate local construction, add tourism dollars to local businesses, and at the same time guarantee the success of two other essential heritage projects — the reconstruction of the Fox locks and our newest Dutch treat — the Little Chute windmill," Kagen said in a statement released Sunday.

Construction for the bridge would begin in 2009 and the windmill in 2010 if the windmill committee accepts \$500,000 from the village, sells its property on Main Street for about \$300,000 and raises an extra \$100,000.

Opponents of the village's contribution contend tax dollars should not be used on private entities, though leaders say the money the committee will receive represents savings to the village.

Based on the scope of the project at Island Park, the village could receive up to

\$5.2 million in federal and state dollars. Little Chute and Outagamie County would each contribute \$650,000.

All in all, the village is committing \$1.15 million.

Without the windmill project, it is unlikely the village would receive funding as early as 2009.

If community leaders would choose a pedestrian bridge at \$1 million to \$2 million, the village would have to absorb most of the cost.

Village Administrator Chuck Kell said inaccessibility to the park could result in the relocation of the Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District's metering station at a cost to users of \$500,000 or more.