

Little Chute board OKs \$500,000 for windmill

By J.E. Espino

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LITTLE CHUTE — The long sighs, constant posture shifts and eye-rolling over nearly two hours of public participation won no arguments for Trustee Brian Joosten against colleagues backing plans to commit \$500,000 to the windmill project.

The Village Board's 6-1 vote Wednesday in favor of the measure, brings the Little Chute Windmill Inc. closer to its \$2.5 million fundraising goal, though funds would not be transferred until the start of construction sometime in 2009.

The windmill committee would need to sell its property in the 100 block of Main Street and relocate 1,500 feet away in Island Park.

"Tax money should be used for police, fire. It shouldn't be used for a private organization like that," Joosten said. "These people failed their constituents. You put that on a referendum, I guarantee you it fails."

Officials contend, however, their decision was based on what was most economical. The village needs to replace a lift bridge, which has been inoperable since 1984. Without the bridge, they say, the public does not have access to the park and the Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District cannot get to its metering station. Relocating that station could cost the village upward of \$500,000.

"It's more of an investment than a contribution," said Village President Chuck Fischer of the grant.

Replacement with a vehicular bridge costs \$5 million to \$6 million for which federal dollars may be available in the 2009 cycle given the ties the village has laid out to state Department of Transportation officials about the windmill project at the park.

Meanwhile, the village would foot almost the entire bill for a pedestrian bridge at \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

Joosten argued the village did not need either and could have settled with a fixed structure at about \$350,000.

Work to secure federal funding began in the summer when Village Administrator Chuck Kell suggested pursuing talks with lawmakers about the development proposals at the park.

U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen visits Island Park on Monday. Specifics about the nature of the visit were not disclosed.