

Woodridge foot bridge's fate gets brighter

By Don Grigas

Staff writer

By Tuesday, Dec. 12, Woodridge resident Mark Filipiak will know if the bridge his family built over a tributary of Prentiss Creek behind his home at 6417 Winston Drive will be allowed to remain intact or if it will be removed.

It's likely the bridge will be allowed to remain now that Filipiak and the Woodridge Park District have apparently agreed on conditions for the bridge to remain.

During a Nov. 14 Woodridge Park District Board meeting, trustees authorized staff to proceed with a license agreement, which will probably be voted on at the Dec. 12 meeting, said Mike Adams, director of the Woodridge Park District.

Filipiak and the Park District have been negotiating for several months over the bridge, which was built 35 years ago to provide access to a vegetable garden the Filipiak family cultivated on Commonwealth Edison property just east of the stream.

Until recently it looked like the bridge would be removed. But when the Park District lowered its requirement to insure the bridge to \$1 million from \$3 million, a major hurdle was cleared.

"The requirement to insure it for \$3 million, I thought, was excessive, and the annual premiums would have been too costly for us to afford," Filipiak said. "But when they dropped it to \$1 million, that was a big thing because the cost of the policy is just \$42 a year."

Adams said lowering the required level of liability insurance was triggered by the engineering certification Filipiak provided, citing the structure as safe.

"Our insurance provider said that if the engineering report certified the safety of the structure, they would recommend lowering the level of insurance from \$3 million to \$1 million," Adams said. "We went with their recommendation."

Filipiak will still have to provide an annual certification for the bridge, Adams said.

Another key to resolving the license agreement, Filipiak said, occurred when the Park District altered its initial requirement that Filipiak provide a commercial insurance policy.

Filipiak's insurance policy is a personal policy as part of his home owner's insurance.

"The bridge was never intended for commercial use, and it should be covered by a standard home owner's policy," Filipiak said.

The insurance policy took effect Nov. 13, Filipiak said.

"We wanted to make sure we proved to the Park District we were serious, so it already is in effect even though (ratification) won't happen until Dec. 12," Filipiak said.

Some details still need to be worked out, both parties said, but the agreement is expected to be approved by the board in December.

"We still need to review a few minor things, but we are satisfied that we have come to an apparent agreement that satisfies both the Park District and Mr. Filipiak," Adams said. "This was a step in the right direction."

Filipiak said he is cautiously optimistic the agreement will be approved in December.

"When I receive a draft of the license agreement in the near future, we will look at it again, and I am sure anything could potentially happen," Filipiak said. "But right now it looks pretty good, and I and my family couldn't be happier with the way Mike and the board resolved this."

"It will be wonderful to have this come to a close," Filipiak said.

In April 2006 the Park District notified residents in the area of the creek near Triangle Park that bridges would not be allowed to span the creek, which is under jurisdiction of the Park District.

Filipiak appealed to the Park District, which offered him the option of entering into a license agreement to retain the bridge.

Two other foot bridges constructed over the creek have been removed.

The bridge behind the Filipiak home is within a 100-year floodplain, and according to a DuPage County storm-water ordinance passed in the early 1990s, foot bridges are not allowed to span the creek.

But since the bridge was constructed about 20 years prior to the passage of the county ordinance, it was grandfathered in, Adams said.