



Discussion To Consider Acquisition of Wicklund Property in Waterford Township

Physical Development Committee Meeting
November 19, 2024

Tom Lewanski, Natural Resource Manager
Al Singer, Real Estate Manager

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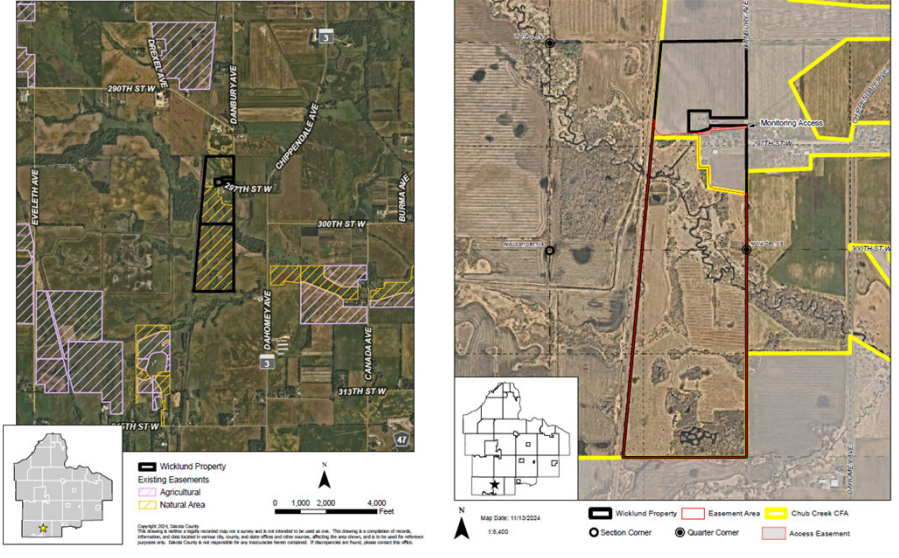
Today's Presentation



1. Wicklund Property Description
2. Conservation Easement
3. County Park Conservation Areas
4. Current Acquisition Project
5. Considerations
6. Questions and Direction

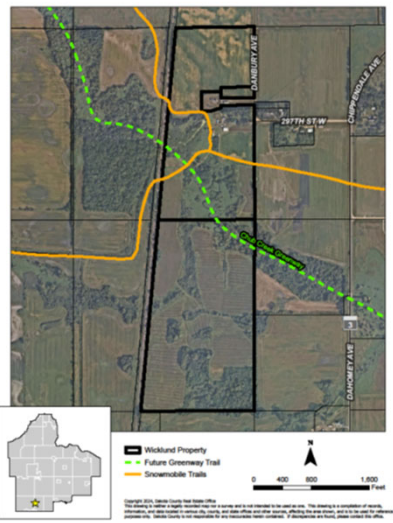
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Wicklund Property Description



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Wicklund Property Description



The 2008 Park System Plan identified the Wicklund property for a portion of the future **Chub Creek Greenway**.

Two state **snowmobile trails** are located on the Wicklund property.

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Wicklund Property Description



Natural Resources

- 4,100 feet of Chub Creek
- Two State-listed rare plant species and four species on the DNR's watchlist discovered, to date
- Important seed source for restoration efforts in County parks
- Landowner has already made significant restoration improvements



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Conservation Easement



- County began working with the Wicklunds in 2009 to protect a portion of their property
- County acquired a 122.43-acre permanent natural area conservation easement in 2021
 - Appraised easement value: \$470,000
 - Acquisition cost: \$339,412 (71%)
 - State Outdoor Heritage funds provided 73% of acquisition cost

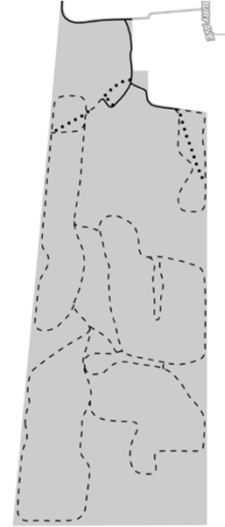
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Conservation Easement



Paths and Trails Language

- Existing roads, paths, and trails may be maintained or improved but may not be widened or relocated without prior written approval of County.
- New paths or trails may be established on the Protected Property for non-motorized, recreational uses only in accordance with a revised NRMP.



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Conservation Easement



- The County and owner continue restoration activities through a natural resource management agreement that includes \$58,262 of landowner contribution and \$83,050 of 75%OH /25% County funds.
- The Wicklunds want to sell a portion of their property to the County.



Jerry Wicklund overseeding after prescribed burn

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County Park Conservation Areas



- In 2015 the former Cemstone property in Empire Township was available for protection but only through fee title acquisition.
- County was interested in protecting a potential future greenway trail corridor along Vermillion River that would not be possible if entire property was acquired by the DNR.
- Acquisition of 61.7 acres approved by Resolution No.15-239



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County Park Conservation Areas



- County Park defined as “those parks, park reserves, trails, and other areas within the County of Dakota under the control of the Board of Commissioners and designated by them as being part of the County Park System” (Park Ordinance No.107)
- County Attorney’s Office advised that parks and recreational area use immunities apply to property intended or permitted to be used as a park, as an open area for recreational purposes, or for the provision of recreational services, for claims resulting from the use of the property or services.
- Former Cemstone property designated as first County Park Conservation Area (CPCA) with a variance to allow hunting (Resolution No.15-534).
- Except for one flood-prone property, nine additional CPCA’s totaling 270.5 acres have now been acquired for future greenways.

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Current Fee Title Acquisition Project



- Fee title acquisition of 123.5 acres
 - entire easement, plus small area for access drive and parking
- Estimated assessed value \$606,000 (with easement):
- Appraised value: \$617,000
- Selling price: \$425,000
- Estimated closing costs: \$3,500
- Future CRP payments: -\$63,305
- Net acquisition cost: **\$365,195**



Total Acquisition Cost

\$335,412 (easement) + \$365,195 =
\$700,607 or \$5,674/acre

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Considerations



Benefits

- Protects previous natural resource investments due to the risk that a future owner will not be as likely to manage these high-quality resources. This risk applies to all easements.
- Provides public access with relatively low “start-up” costs e.g., gate, signage, access drive, and small parking lot
- Provides assurance of not requiring approval from a future landowner and having to pay for a future greenway trail easement
- Acquired at below market cost and not likely to be less expensive

Costs

- County funds used for this acquisition could be used for other land protection projects.
- There will be operational costs and possible future improvement costs.

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Considerations



Other

- Property currently protected from development, but public access is dependent on landowner agreement
- Establishes precedent for purchasing properties with existing easements. Easement terms will still apply.
- Future greenway trail requires approval from Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council - regardless of ownership.
- If a paved trail is constructed, it could create precedent for other private landowners seeking County approval for a paved improvement within a natural area easement.
- Owner requests that the County allow future special hunts for veterans and youth.

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Questions and Direction



- Should the County expend up to \$428,500 to acquire the 124.5-acre Wicklund property as a new County Park Conservation Area?
- If yes, could Spring turkey hunting for veterans and youth within the property be allowed if organized and coordinated by a non-County organization?

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