

Legacy Prairie & Woodland Update: January 2026

By, Peter Antonie

In our December 2025, update, we reported the council had decided that the Cushman house should be demolished. Following that decision, the Legacy Fund committee recommended keeping the well and septic system and demolishing the garage on the Cushman property, which the council approved at their December 21st meeting.



This is the farmhouse with the siding still intact. The siding under the porch was painted wooden siding. The rest of the siding contained asbestos and needed to be removed prior to demolition.

The Legacy Fund committee contracted with Advanced Health & Safety LLC to remove the siding on the house that contained asbestos and trim around the windows that had been painted with lead paint.



The demolition took place just before Christmas



The debris from the house above, and the garage, below, were loaded into dumpsters and removed. The basement of the house was filled in and leveled.



A “Clean Slate:” Demolishing the house and garage, along with clearing brush and taking down unwanted trees, gets us to a “clean slate” state so that the site can be seeded with prairie grasses and flowers while we gather input from the congregation for what the best use for the property is in the future.



The view of the cleared property coming up Church Road from highway 78. Note the large Oak tree that is now a focal point.

The woods, in the background on the left, have been cleared exposing evidence of remnant Oak-Savannah. In addition, we will mark where the remains of the foundation of the wooden church that was built in the late-1880's are in those woods.



The view down into the Vermont Creek wetland from on top of the property. The trail that crosses the picture from left to right is a portion of the lower prairie trail. You can see an intersection with a narrower trail in the middle of the picture. That narrower trail connects to the boardwalk in the wetland and ends at the creek.

Here is a fuller explanation of the recommendations to retain the existing well and septic system on the property.

Retain the Well: The Legacy Fund committee recommended retaining the existing well. It was drilled no more than 30 years ago and is in good shape. If the well was abandoned (filling the well with cement or bentonite), drilling a new well in the future would be a significant expense

We checked with a plumber, and he advised that we can just pour Chlorine bleach or beads down the well and it will remain fine until we have a use for it. We capped off the pipe that leads from the well to the house.

Retain the Septic System: The septic system was installed less than 25 years ago, which is recent enough that it is up to today's codes and is worth keeping. It is a good septic size since it was designed for a 5-bedroom house

The septic tanks were pumped right after purchasing the property, and we capped off the pipe that led from the house to the septic system so that no ground water gets into the system and will, therefore, be usable in the future if we need it.

Property Taxes, Zoning, and Building Sites: The 2025 property taxes on the new property were about \$4,200. As the buyer, we paid the taxes but received a credit against the purchase cost at closing. For 2026, we will request a new assessment from the Town of Vermont and possible rezoning now that the house and garage are gone. It is likely that the 2026 taxes will be reduced to about \$2,200

The 2025 property taxes on the existing Prairie & Woodland were about \$2,250. So it is likely that the 2026 property taxes for all of the property will be about \$4,500 which will be paid using Legacy Funds, not Operating funds from the general church budget.

When we purchased the 115-acre farm in 2022 it came with 3 building sites; Potential Development Rights (PDRs). The new property is an existing building site and retains its status with the purchase. So, the Legacy Prairie & Woodland now has 4 building sites (PDRs)

Future updates and questions: We know there is a great deal of interest in the Prairie & Woodland and we will continue to provide regular updates. To contact the Legacy Fund Committee (LFC) with questions or suggestions, email the church or speak with an LFC member: Peter Antonie, Greg Herrling, Larry Ziemer, Leonard Schaub, Karsten Haugen, Jim Herrling, or Gary Olsen.