

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
January 4, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, January 4, 2020 at the Mount Vernon Visitors Center. Members present were Mary Evans, Grace Chamberlain, Machele Pelkey, Suzette Astley, Leah Rogers, Peter Ault, Caroline Kelly and Guy Booth. There were no guests present.

There Minutes of the meetings of November 13, 2019 and December 7, 2019 were approved.

The Commission reviewed the final request from Cornell College for approval of the new windows in Old Sem and in College Hall. This has been presented previously and has had initial approval by the Historic Preservation Commission. Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by Peter Ault, a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be issued.

Leah Rogers reviewed the contract for work on the HPC website that will be done by Scott Cannon of Market Street Technologies, Inc. Mary Evans described the work that will be done, and that it can come either from this year's budget or next year's budget, depending on when the work is completed. Upon motion made by Sue Hargus, seconded by Machele Pelkey, the motion to have Market Street Technologies, Inc. continue the update of the website was approved.

Leah Rogers indicates that the budget for the next fiscal year which we reviewed at the December, 2019 meeting is being forwarded to City Hall. Upon motion made by Suzette Astley, seconded by Mary Evans, the proposed budget is approved by HPC.

Leah Rogers indicates she is beginning to work on the Annual Report to be submitted to the state historic preservation office. All members of the Commission should forward to Leah any continuing education classes or seminars that they attended during the year.

Machele Pelkey presented additional information about the proposed walking tour that is being organized by the Linn County History Center. The History Center has invited our Commission to assist in setting up a walking tour in Mount Vernon. They have suggested the date of June 23, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Machele has suggested that the tour could start on the Cornell Campus with parking in the lot below the library. The tour would start at King Chapel and include other buildings on the campus, as well as then walking into the downtown Historic District. It was mentioned that on Tuesday evenings, the community band will be playing in the park next to the Visitor's Center, so that could be included in the tour. Machele will work with the Linn County History Center to put together the tour and to determine what materials will be available to hand out.

Leah indicates that Cornell will dedicate the bells and the refurbished clock tower on January 16, 2020 at 11:45 a.m.

Machele followed up on previous conversations regarding the establishment of an outreach committee. Both Grace Chamberlain and Janet Budack have volunteered to work with the Committee. Initially, the Committee will have a presentation on the second Saturday of each month from 9:30 to 10:30 at City Hall. Machele has the first three events scheduled. On March 14, the Waln House, which has been the Wolfe residence for a number of years, will be presented. On April 11, there will be a presentation regarding houses that have come from kits such as Sears catalog, or houses that have been moved. On May 9, the Robinson house will be discussed and there will be information about its present restoration. Machele has asked the Commission to consider other buildings or topics that can be presented. These topics will have the homeowners and others talk about the history of the property.

Grace Chamberlain has previously discussed the social media project to provide information on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Grace has previously given the Commission information about the various social media platforms. At this meeting, she gathered information that would be necessary for setting up the Facebook page. Her discussion generated a good deal of comment and information during the meeting as to how the Facebook page will be able to promote events and programs, and to help people who are interested in researching the history of Mount Vernon. Upon motion made by Machele Pelkey, seconded by Mary Evans, the social media project is approved.

Mary Evans indicated that there has been a great deal of interest in the HPC website. She also identified a problem that is developing. If a person desires to share photographs with the Commission, we will need to have the photographs so they can be scanned into the computer. Consequently, we should have a document that shows the receipt and the return of photographs that come into the Commission's possession. Also, if a person is offering photos or artifacts to the Commission, we should have a procedure that allows us to either accept or not accept the proffered information. The Commission does not have adequate space to accept all offers of historic artifacts, but we may be able to assist in finding the appropriate organization to accept the material. While talking about photographs, Grace thought it might be interesting to have a weekly "throwback Thursday" where certain old photographs are displayed. The display would change weekly. She feels the Instagram platform may be best suited for this presentation. It was also suggested that we could have a regularly posted quiz on architectural features in the community. Commission members had a number of good suggestions as to how Facebook and Instagram can substantially increase the amount of historical information about Mount Vernon that is available to the public.

Suzette Astley gave an update on the assessment study of the Visitor's Center that is being completed by Doug Steinmetz. He feels it will be completed by March, 2020.

Leah announced that Congress has passed the National Historic Preservation Funding legislation and that it has been approved by the President. There had been concern that this funding proposal would not be accepted, so there is great relief in the historic preservation community.

The state historic preservation office is encouraging local commissions to plan ahead for the historic preservation month which is annually during the month of May.

Mary Evans took a few moments to express her appreciation and admiration for the work that Machele, Grace, Leah and others on the Commission are doing to strengthen the mission of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2020 at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary