

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
October 19, 2022

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall, and also available via Zoom on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. Commissioners present at City Hall were Janet Budack, Duane Eash, Mary Evans, Suzette Astley, and Guy Booth. Attending via Zoom was West.

The Minutes of the October 1, 2022 meeting were approved.

The first item of business is continued design review regarding the building owned by Sherry Brayton at 105 1st St NW. This building is in the Mount Vernon Downtown Commercial Historic District. The issue regarding this review concerns the installation of two windows in the upper level at the back of the building. At some time in the past, a previous owner had filled in a portion of the window opening with bricks and put in a smaller window. Ms. Brayton has requested approval of two windows that are even smaller that will require additional infill in the original window openings.

The Commission discussed the significance of this change. Clearly it is an exterior change and in the past, it was done in a manner that does not meet current historic preservation standards. The Commission feels it is difficult to penalize this new owner because of improper procedures over which she had no control in the past. The Commission felt that the bricks that were used to initially reduce the size of the window opening are not appropriate. Consequently, the Commission would like to see if those bricks can be removed and a uniform insert can be used to surround the proposed new windows. A great deal of discussion was had in trying to resolve how previous inappropriate renovations should be handled when a new request for renovation is being presented to the Commission.

Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by West, a certificate of no material effect was approved, along with a recommendation for the removal of the brick inserts and the use of a uniform insert so long as that is financially feasible for the owner. The motion carried. Suzette will discuss this request with Ms. Brayton.

Suzette has prepared information that is the first step in the review of our design guideline book. An example of a philosophy on what should be done in rehabilitating a building was provided by Suzette. This comes from the guidelines adopted by the Cedar Rapids Commission. Commission members felt the policy statements in this rule of thumb document are appropriate. We will discuss it further at the next Commission meeting to see if there are changes that should be made if it is to be adopted into our design guideline booklet. It was pointed out that this type of policy statement is helpful, both to residents who are rehabilitating an historic structure, as well as a guideline for the Commission to assist building owners in their plans for rehabilitation of their building.

Mary Evans, Janet Budack and Guy Booth presented information regarding the ongoing interest in preserving the Mount Vernon Cemetery. Mary has prepared an extensive history of the cemetery which includes the names of many people who helped found the city and the college who are buried in the cemetery. Her history also recites the historic significance of the

people who are buried there, as well as the significance of the cemetery itself. Mary is interested in using this history as part of an application to have the cemetery listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although it is difficult to place a cemetery on the National Register, Mary feels there are good reasons why it could possibly be approved. She will continue to pursue this aspect of the cemetery project.

Janet Budack reported on a meeting held with Chris Nosbisch, as representative of the City, Jay Kacena, a person who is instrumental in the volunteer assistance at the Marion Cemetery, and Guy Booth, Janet Budack and Mary Evans. It was good to have these different people get together to discuss what could be done to assist the City in the care and maintenance of the cemetery. Guy Booth reported that he has prepared a draft of Articles of Incorporation for a nonprofit corporation to be known as Friends of the Mount Vernon Cemetery. The City seems to feel this is a good approach. The Bylaws will designate a city representative, an American Legion representative, and a Historic Preservation Commission representative on the Board of Directors. The City will review these proposed documents to assist in getting them completed so they can be filed and the project can move forward. Janet indicated that as the project begins, Jay Kacena will help establish a program for training volunteers who will work on cemetery projects. Finally, Janet wanted to acknowledge the substantial work done by Judy Lass in assembling information regarding the cemetery. Her research will become part of the Historic Preservation archives.

Dealing further with the archives, Mary Evans reports that The Sun newspaper has provided two large boxes of old photos that will become part of the archives. There is the daunting task of going through all of the photos to identify as many people in the photographs as possible. Mary will need to call on long-term Mount Vernon residents to help identify people in the photographs. Mary also indicated that Bob Horton had a substantial photo collection of Mount Vernon History. These were in the possession of Dick Fordyce. Once again, these photos need to be reviewed and people in places identified.

Other questions regarding archives have come from the Police Dept. They would like to do a large mural and would like to have historic moments from the police department depicted on the mural. Finally, Ingleside Literary Group has asked for information about the history of their club.

Mary reported that the walking tour that was sponsored by the Cedar Rapids Historic Commission was a success. Twenty-four visitors from other places joined the walk and enjoyed the presentations. Mary indicates there were very positive comments about the tour.

The final discussion at the meeting related to the Historic Preservation Commission award program conducted on October 15. Numerous properties in Mount Vernon were recognized for the renovation work that was done. Also, contractors who were hired to do the work were identified. Finally, Leah Rogers was recognized for her substantial contribution to the Commission since shortly after its founding. Dick Thomas, Ed Sauter and Guy Booth were recognized as founding members of the Commission.

Suzette brought up the topic of changing the time of our future meetings. Some people are having a difficult time being available on Saturday mornings. Suzette suggested that meetings start at 8:30 a.m. for our Saturday meeting, instead of 9:15. Further, she indicates that some members would prefer to have the mid-month meetings on Wednesdays be at 7:00 p.m.

rather than 5:30 p.m. Suzette will poll all of the Commission members to see what will work best for future meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary