

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
November 7, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, November 7, 2020. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Ed Sauter, Susan Hargus, Janet Budack, Suzette Astley, Mary Evans, Grace Chamberlain, Donald Moore, Duane Eash, and Guy Booth. Guests included Hugh Lifson, Scott Ladwig and Carrie Morgan.

The Minutes of the meeting of October 14, 2020 were approved.

There are two design review requests on the agenda for the meeting. Both are from Cornell College. The first is a roofing permit for a house located at 519 1st St. NW in Mount Vernon. The new roof will be architectural shingles and will be similar to the roof that has been in place. The roof was damaged in the derecho storm of August 10. Upon motion by Ed Sauter, seconded by Mary Evans, a certificate of no material effect was approved.

The second request relates to the installation of radon mitigation in the geology building on the Cornell campus. Because of the increased level of radon, the college is installing a radon mitigation system. The sole concern of the Commission is the location of the exterior pipe and how it could blend in better with the building. It was questioned if the exhaust pipe could be located within the building. However, it was determined this would be fairly expensive to run the exhaust pipe within the building. Upon motion made by Ed Sauter and seconded by Mary Evans, a certificate for no material effect was approved, subject to the college painting the exhaust pipe so that it blends into the color of the exterior of the geology building. The motion passed.

Scott Ladwig gave an update on the work that is being done on the campus to resolve the damage caused by the derecho. Most of the trees that have been damaged have been removed. King Chapel is still being studied by structural engineers to determine what will need to be done to ensure the integrity of the building. It is possible that substantial work will need to be done and the costs of the project could be large.

There was also roof damage on the Plattner House. This structure has a very unique shingle design, and the college is attempting to find a company that can replicate the original shingles. The college has a couple of leads where shingles may be available. It is hoped that the expense of this project could be funded, either through a specific alumni program, or there may be funds available through the Bruhn grant. Leah will continue to assist Cornell in identifying the process for applying for the grant.

There was also damage done to the roof on the athletic center and gym. Most of the damage has now been repaired. There was also an update on the addition to the sports complex. The project is in the final design stage and it is hoped this will begin construction in 2021. Hugh Lifson expressed thoughts regarding the graphic pictures that have been part of the gymnasium building that was constructed in the late 1950's. He expressed hope that these can be preserved and perhaps added in some way to better recognize women's athletics.

There was general discussion regarding the recent city council meeting that approved re-zoning for the Hwy 30 bypass area. Members of the Commission that were present for the meeting gave a report. Overall, the members in attendance, as well as a number of business owners were very disappointed in the council moving ahead with a re-zoning plan that does not give a clear definition as to how the area could be developed so it is most compatible with the city. The HPC is especially concerned because the broadening of zoning to allow retail in the bypass area could have a damaging effect on the downtown historic district. It was suggested that we invite members of the CDG to meet with our commission to get a better understanding of what, if any, limitations there will be on the types of businesses that can locate in the expanded highway commercial area on Hwy 30.

Mary Evans gave an update on the website. She has been able to put together information on the history of the Mount Vernon Bank, the history of the post office in Mount Vernon, and the history of the Mount Vernon Lions Club. This will all be available online. The study that had been completed in the past year on the genealogy of the historic district's businesses will also be available.

Guy Booth indicated that he is continuing to visit with Kevin Woods regarding what could be available coordinating with the American Legion Post to have a program to maintain and repair grave markers at the cemetery. He will continue to gather information and invite Kevin to participate in the meeting. Mary Evans indicated that she has located a map of the cemetery that will be helpful in identifying grave sites. Leah also mentioned that the Thorson study that was completed a couple of years ago may be helpful.

Donald Moore gave a summary of a conference he has recently attended called the Pass Forward Conference. He indicated there were many good ideas offered and he thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the conference.

Leah announced that Caroline Kelly has sent her letter of resignation to the Commission. Caroline has been a wonderful contributor to the work of the Commission, especially in organizing the brick house tours in the past. We will miss her contributions to the Commission, but hope she will continue to be a resource person in the future.

Mary Evans wanted to highlight some restoration activity going on in the community. Sara Fried is working on a house at 418 4th Street SW that is saving a house that was in disrepair. Another house located at the corner of 2nd Avenue and 3rd Street has recently been purchased and will be undergoing renovation. This continues a trend of people working to restore the older housing stock of the city. Neither of these properties are in designated historic districts.

The next potential meeting is scheduled for November 18 at 5:30 p.m. If there is a need to address any issues that arise within the next 10 days.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary