

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
December 3, 2022

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall, and also via Zoom on Saturday, December 3, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present at City Hall were Suzette Astley, Mike Guerber, Duane Eash, Wade Squiers, Donnie Moore, Matt Ruff, Sherry Brayton and Guy Booth. Attending via Zoom were J. West and Janet Budack. Others present were Nathan Countryman, Sherene Player, Eric Gutschmidt and Emily Jones. The Minutes of the November 5, 2022 meeting were approved.

There are several design review items on the agenda. The first is from Emily Jones, who resides at 608 5th Ave. NW. This property is in the Ash Park District. The request is review of an application to allow the installation of solar panels on the roof of a detached garage. The Commission has approved solar panels on previous applications. In this application, the panels will not be on the residence, but on the garage and accessory building. The Commission has requested that the solar panels have a black grid for installation if this is available through the contractor. Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by West, the Commission has approved a Certificate of No Material Effect.

Sherene Player, who resides at 711 6th Ave. NW, Also in the Ash Park District, presented plans for work on the front porch of their home. She indicates new railings, balusters and columns will be placed on the porch. At this time, there are no railings or balusters. Further, the columns on the porch are not original, and also, in earlier replacements, have not been matched. The Players will be using a non-wood product for both the columns and the railings and balusters. The columns are paintable. The Commission expressed the desire to have additional information. The porch railings should be of a sufficient size that they are similar to railings on other homes in the historic district. Matt Ruff indicated that the height of the railing does not need to meet the building code standard because this is on a historically significant home. Sherene can prepare their application for building permit to meet the height standards that will be appropriate. Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by Duane Eash, a certificate of appropriateness is approved, subject to the players submitting a final diagram showing the size of the railings and balusters.

The final design review issue is basically a pre-review matter. Eric Gutschmidt, who is a contractor and developer, is interested in purchasing a vacant lot in the 600 block of 5th Avenue NW. There are funds available to assist in the construction of affordable housing. Eric is working with the City of Mount Vernon, as well as with Linn County to plan for a duplex that meets all guidelines for affordable housing. There are substantial funds available from a government program to assist the contractor. The City of Mount Vernon has asked that the Commission approve a certificate of appropriateness as it may be necessary as part of the paperwork for the City to submit for approval of the funds from the available government program. Eric gave an excellent presentation as to how these programs work and how they benefit the community. The Commission is very supportive of what he would like to do. However, the initial diagram of the building would not appear to meet the standards for the historic district. To meet the standards could result in added expenses that would not fit within the available funds for the project. Our Commission would be giving a certificate of appropriateness or a certificate of no material effect without having any final site plans or

building plans being submitted, and it is felt this would violate the procedures we are required to follow pursuant, not only to our HPC ordinance, but also the Secretary of Interior guidelines. For this reason, a motion to deny the request for a certificate from HPC was made by Duane Eash, seconded by Mike Guerber. The motion was approved. Suzette will respond to the City and let the City know we are fully supportive of the use of that property for affordable housing, but are unable to approve it because there are not specific enough plans to assure that the design of the building meets the design standards of HPC and the Secretary of Interior. We encourage Eric to continue to be involved in looking at affordable housing projects in Mount Vernon, and we will work with the City to help move a project forward.

Under new business, Mary Evans has submitted her resignation from the Commission. Mary has been a valuable member of the Commission serving as our local historian and serving as the person who maintains and adds to our website. Her work has been a tremendous benefit to the Commission. We wish her well in the future.

We also welcome two new members to the Commission. Sherry Brayton is the owner of a building in the downtown commercial district and has done a great job of maintaining her historic building. Matt Ruff is new to the Commission. His background will be especially helpful to the Commission, as he is employed as a building inspector for Linn County.

We have had a brief discussion regarding the demolition ordinance. We will be facing our first application for a demolition permit in the coming months. Suzette is helping us move forward so all of the Commissioners are familiar with the ordinance and the procedure that is required when an application is submitted to demolish a building. We will discuss this further at the January meeting. All buildings that are in the historic districts would be subject to the ordinance, but also the commission will need to prepare an inventory of all other buildings in the Community that would be subject to the demolition ordinance.

Sue reported that our initial request to see if the Mount Vernon Cemetery may be eligible for a placement on the National Register has been answered. It appears we do not meet the guidelines. We also talked about our attempt to have a separate entity to assist in the maintenance of the cemetery. Guy will follow up with the City Attorney to see what decisions have been made. Sue also indicates that the City may be able to provide up to \$10,000 in the next fiscal year to be used in a matching grant for continuing work on the Visitor's Center.

At a previous meeting, we have discussed the rule of thumb principles that apply to historic districts. This would be an informational document that should be available to all people who own property in the historic districts. Janet Budack has suggested a couple of revisions to the initial draft, and both have been approved by the Commission. Upon motion by Duane Eash, seconded by Janet Budack, the Commission has accepted the final draft of the rule of thumb principals to be part of our governing documents. It will be published on the website and we can determine if the document should be made available to all owners of the property in the historic districts.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary