

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
December 5, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, December 5, 2020. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Ed Sauter, Susan Hargus, Janet Budack, Suzette Astley, Mary Evans, Duane Eash, Donnie Moore, Grace Chamberlain, and Guy Booth. Hugh Lifson participated as a guest.

The Minutes of the meeting of November 18, 2020 were approved.

There were no design review requests for this meeting.

The first item of business was discussion of the project of working with Hahn Howard Post 480 of the American Legion regarding maintenance of the grave sites and markers at the Mount Vernon Cemetery. Kevin Woods sent an email to Guy Booth setting forth the interest that Post 480 has in working with HPC to establish a structure in which the Post, HPC, the City and interested people could be involved in maintaining grave sites. Post 480 of course is interested in maintaining grave sites of all veterans of the military service. This is in the initial stage of formation, but the discussion centered around what type of an organization needs to be formed to deal with identifying grave sites, identifying people who will be able to work on the project, identifying funding for repairs to grave sites, and determining what interest the City of Mount Vernon may have in participating in the project. Janet Budack has done some research on cemetery associations in the State of Iowa, and will provide contact information for that association. Leah Rogers indicates there are grave stone assessment businesses and she may be able to identify a company to be hired to do an assessment of the grave stones. The cost of this could be shared by the interested stakeholders. Janet indicated that the records of grave sites and ownership have been digitized by Thorson-Oak Hill and by Judy Lass and a group of people who reviewed all of the City records. Also, Donnie Moore and Duane Eash indicated they would like to be involved in helping plan the structure of this project. This could be very helpful for the long-term maintenance of the cemetery. Guy Booth will follow up with Chris Nosbisch at City Hall and with Kevin Woods and continue to report the progress in establishing structure for the project. Hugh Lifson mentioned a Mount Vernon resident by the name of Nelly Verne Walker, who is a sculptor. He would be interested in knowing if she was involved in preparing any of the grave stones.

Mary Evans indicated she had had contact with a person from Verona, Wisconsin, who sent an old post card with a picture of Mount Vernon. She indicated she had a good conversation visiting with another small town who has been active in historic preservation.

The Commission spent a good deal of time talking about concerns for the downtown commercial district and what is going to be happening with the new zoning ordinance passed by the City. It has been decided that we would like to meet with CDG to work with them to make sure that the downtown area remains positive and protected. There is concern about new retail area in the vicinity of the bypass that could erode the vitality of the downtown area. Various Commission members discussed questions that could be discussed between HPC and CDG so both commissions continue to work positively toward the preservation of this historic district.

Leah will prepare a summary of our discussion and the questions that should be reviewed with CDG. She will schedule a meeting that will be convenient for CDG.

Leah presented a copy of the budget request for the next fiscal year. The budget request will remain at \$6,250.00. Leah also provided an update on the Commission's activities for the past year, so the City Council knows the budgeted amount is well-used by the Commission.

Leah included with the agenda material the request from Angie Bauman Power to become a member of the Commission. Angie lives in the Ash Park Historic District. She is employed by Cornell College, so she could be the liaison between the Commission and the college. Suzette Astley has met with Angie and feels she would bring good talent to the Commission. Upon motion by Suzette, seconded by Janet Budack, the HPC recommends to the City Council the appointment of Ms. Power.

Leah mentioned that there is a webinar that has been highlighted by Paula Mohr. Mary Evans has participated in the webinar. Leah will re-send information so other members can look at it. Mary Evans noted that we do not have full representation of members who own property in the downtown historic district. She wondered if there is a possibility of having another person who has ownership in downtown property to be involved as an ad hoc member so we have more input, especially as we are dealing with the CDG about issues of protecting the district.

Grace Chamberlain asked questions about the availability of the new archive space at City Hall. Mary was able to give an update on the preparation of the new room for archives, which will be on the main floor of City Hall. Donnie Moore indicated that he is pleased with the web page, and especially the availability of the HPC's information now through Facebook. Grace has been very helpful in expanding our information into social media sources.

Leah indicates our next meeting will probably be December 16 at 5:30 p.m. She anticipates Cornell College will have a presentation for design review, or predesign review.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary