

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
February 3, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, February 1, 2020 at the Mount Vernon Visitors Center. Members present were Hugh Lifson, Grace Chamberlain, Ed Sauter, Leah Rogers, Guy Booth, Suzette Astley, Machele Pelkey and Caroline Kelly. Guests present were James Hoeger from Eagle Point Solar and Cari Morgan from Cornell College. Upon motion made and seconded, the Minutes of the January 4, 2020 meeting were approved.

A design review request has been made by Sarah Fitzgerald for installation of solar panels on her residence at 808 Summit Ave. SW. This house is in the Cornell College historic district. James Hoeger from Eagle Point Solar presented the plan for installation of solar panels on the house. The house has a metal roof. The panels will be installed on the roof and will be on the same slope as the roof. All of the panels will be on the south-facing roof, which means the panels will not be visible from the street side of the property. The rear of the property is bordered by trees and does not have another residence or street from which the panels will be visible. There will be approximately 16 solar panels that will be placed on the roof. Ed Sauter moved that the application be approved as having no material effect. The motion was seconded by Hugh Lifson and the motion passed unanimously.

Cari Morgan asked to have a discussion with the commission regarding additional projects at Cornell College. The Board of Trustees is considering a plan for renovation of College Hall. One suggestion in the renovation planning is to have an addition on the building. If the addition were to be on the north side of the building, it would impact an historic fountain that has been on the campus since at least 1912. The fountain has not functioned as a fountain in many years, and a sun dial has been placed on the fountain. However, this is a very historic artifact for the Cornell campus. It was suggested that if it is to be moved, it should remain as close to its original site as possible, and perhaps move toward the east where it is still visible from Bracket House. The family that had the fountain installed was connected with Bracket House, so the fountain should remain within the perspective of views from Bracket House. Cari indicates that it is unlikely that there will be an addition made to College Hall, but there will be renovation. Hugh Lifson opined that the architect chosen for the project should be especially aware of the design of the north side of College Hall so the integrity of the building design and architectural features will be retained.

Leah indicated that there have been a number of responses to her email asking for input to identify 1,000 places where women made history. The responses to the Commission relate to places and events in Mount Vernon where women have made history. This is a project that is being promoted by the National Trust and encourages local recognition of the impact of women in history and especially, local history. Leah indicates that we should pull together the responses that have been made and attempt to highlight one or two of the most significant contributions. There was no decision on who might be best suited to pull this information together.

Leah stated that we are still having difficulty with the process of applications for a certificate of appropriateness. After she had reviewed the application, she indicates there should be some updating of the document. Everyone on the commission agrees, and suggestions were

made as to what would be the best process for obtaining and giving more accurate information on the forms. It was suggested that both the owner and the city staff person who is assisting with the application sign the document. It is important that the document indicate that the owner should be present at the meeting that considers the application for a certificate of appropriateness. Leah will continue to work on the language of the application and review it with the City.

A brief update on the website indicates that Scott Cannon is continuing to work on it and it continues to improve. It is hoped that the work will be completed over the next four or five months and will run into the next fiscal year.

Machele discussed the walking tour that is being sponsored by Linn County Historic Commission. It will take place June 23 at 6:00 p.m. Machele has put together a brief description of the tour for people who will be seeing a notice of this in the brochure that is being published by the Linn County Historic Commission.

Machele also showed the draft of a postcard that will publicize the Mount Vernon stories events. The postcard has historic photos on it and an excellent written description of the events. This will be helpful to publicize the events and will be a good hand out at the events.

Grace Chamberlain gave an exciting update on the Facebook site. She has it up and running and is working to get specific pictures on the site. In particular, she wants to highlight each of the Mount Vernon story events. She also suggested doing a "mystery Monday" by publishing a photo that people can attempt to identify and to add any information they have about the picture. Grace and Machele discussed the best way to get pictures from the archives on to Facebook so there is better access to the photos in the commission's archive.

Leah indicated that we have received a billing for the work that Mr. Steinmets is doing to evaluate the needed renovation of the Visitor's Center. We are paying a portion of the total bill. Part of the funds come from a grant, part from the City, and our amount is \$1,800. Ed Sauter moved, and Hugh Lifson seconded the motion to approve payment of the bill. The motion was approved.

Suzette Astley gave an interesting presentation about working with the Mount Vernon Housing Commission to pay for improvements necessary on housing in Mount Vernon. Currently, the City has had grants available to families whose household income is less than 80% of the median income of the community. These grants are to help preserve and maintain existing homes. The maximum amount of the grant is \$5,000 and is a forgivable grant over a five-year period. Suzette has visited both with Chris Carlson of the Housing Commission and with Chris Nosbisch, City Administrator. The City feels that in two years there will be TIF money available to work on a broader program of projects to repair/rehabilitate housing in Mount Vernon. This could go for masonry work, siding, columns, and window repair. A grant program could be established to have funds available to finance a portion of these projects. The Affordable Housing Committee and the City both feel this would be a valuable program for the City to sponsor. It was decided that the Commission should send a statement of support to the City and to the Housing Commission so we have ongoing involvement in the development of this program.

We had a conversation regarding the future renovation of the Visitor's Center. It was suggested that if the Visitor's Center was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, that there may be grants available to help cover the costs of the needed renovations. This would be helpful to the City, as the burden of renovating and maintaining the building would not fall entirely on the City budget. Leah will give some thought to what would be the best way to initiate the process for having the building placed on the National Historic Register.

Under an item of new business, Hugh Lifson indicates that he has learned that Taliessen West is closing its facility and its school of architecture. This long-standing extension of Frank Lloyd Wright is located in Scottsdale, AZ.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40. The next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary