

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
February 6, 2021

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 9:15 a.m. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Donnie Moore, Suzette Astley, Duane Eash, Mary Evans, Grace Chamberlain, Ed Sauter, Angie Bauman Power, Susan Hargus and Guy Booth. Also present was Hugh Lifson as a guest.

Upon motion duly seconded, The Minutes of the meeting of January 2, 2021 were approved.

There were no design review requests for the meeting.

Under old business, Grace Chamberlain indicated that she has had an opportunity to research the platform for the audio tour of the historic districts. Grace indicates that the tour can be put on audio files on our existing website, and the use of a podcast app could provide easy and free use of the audio tours. It was discovered that the present system was costing approximately \$24 per use. This will resolve the financial issue first identified by Deann Rexroat on behalf of Cornell. Grace Chamberlain and Ed Sauter will work together with Joe Jennison, the City, and Cornell to set up the new access for the audio files. It was pointed out that we will need to have new plaques put in place to identify the various buildings that are on the audio tour. Upon motion by Ed Sauter, seconded by Grace Chamberlain, the Commission will continue to investigate and transfer the audio tours to our website.

Leah indicates that the Linn County History Center is interested in holding the tours that were cancelled during the summer of 2020. They have asked if we would like to be included in the scheduled tours. Most of the organization work has been completed. We do have volunteers to lead the tours if they are rescheduled so would like to be included in the new schedule.

Leah indicated that CDG has responded to questions that arose in previous commission meetings. The answers provided by Rich Herman were read. It appears that there still is concern expressed by many downtown merchants as to what affect the new zoning regulations will have on the district. Guy Booth suggested that an open forum be organized so that the merchants can meet with the CDG members and with the City to have a better understanding of what the City can do to have better communication and rapport with the merchants who have felt left out in the decision to expand commercial zoning into the bypass area. Our concern is to protect the integrity of the District.

Under new business, Leah indicates that the CLG annual report is due. We will each need to report continuing education hours that have been completed. Leah also mentioned that the annual preservation summit conference will be virtual in 2021. This is a great opportunity to be able to attend the many different presentations, and can be done online at each person's convenience.

Sue Astley discussed the issue of the infrequent attendance of Peter Ault at Commission meetings. He has not been an active member, and it is felt that a new member representing the

downtown historic district should be identified. It was determined that Susan Hargus will send an email to Peter asking that he resign. If there is no response, Guy Booth suggested that at our next meeting, the Commission pass a motion to declare that position vacant, and forward a request to the City Council to open applications for that Commission position.

Joe Jennison has asked the Commission to consider guidelines for a mural that may be in the alley that is being reconstructed on the south side of the first block on 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW. The Commission feels that any murals or other artwork should have historic relevance, past or current, to the City of Mount Vernon. Sue Hargus feels the best expression would be leaving the brick walls in place as they are and that a mural not be considered. If there is a mural, the Commission should be able to determine the relevance of the proposed mural or paintings, should prohibit the artwork from being applied directly to the brick, and if artwork is placed, that it be on removable panels that are not damaging to the soft brick exteriors. This information will be forwarded to Joe Jennison. Any artwork that is attached to the buildings will need to be approved by HPC.

Grace Chamberlain indicates that our facebook presence has resulted in a person asking for history of the property that formerly had the Holiday House restaurant. Mary Evans has some information and will forward it to Grace so she can answer the inquiry.

Mary Evans gave an update on the archives room. This will be the back room in the City Hall. It will be carpeted, and shelving will be selected during the month of March. Mary also indicated that additional information is going on the website regarding Jasper Bloom and his stationary store. Information about Abbe Creek School and the numerous Lincoln Hwy photos that she discovered in the miscellaneous photo collection of the Commission will be on the website. Mary also indicates that she has had contact with Darcy Maulsby, a person who has written a number of books about Iowa and Iowa communities. Mary suggested that Darcy be contacted regarding the possibility of a book about Mount Vernon which could coincide with the 175-year anniversary of the town. Mary will follow up on this discussion with Darcy.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15. Leah will let notify the Commission if a mid-February meeting will be needed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary