

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
March 7, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, March 7, 2020 at the Mount Vernon Visitors Center. Members present were Hugh Lifson, Mary Evans, Janet Budack, Machele Pelkey, Hugh Lifson, Leah Rogers and Guy Booth. A guest was Donnie Moore, a resident of Mount Vernon who has a strong interest in historic preservation. Upon motion made and seconded, the Minutes of the February 3, 2020 meeting were approved.

There were no design review requests, nor pre-review requests.

Under new business, Hugh Lifson gave a report on his research into the derivation of Neo Truscon Design, and whether the Visitor's Center building can be defined as Neo Truscon. Hugh was surprised to find very little literature about that architectural design. Hugh's suggestion that Neo Truscon best describes the architectural design of the building is unchallenged. Hugh also indicated that he is not aware of any activities that are being planned for Pi Day.

Leah Rogers indicated that the Annual Report is complete and ready to be filed. She also indicated that there has been a change in staffing at SHPO, and there is real concern about the lack of support for the mission of SHPO. Leah also discussed the need for input to prevent the change of the tax credit provisions available for historic preservation. The legislature is considering a bill to remove owner-occupied residential properties from the tax credit program.

Ed Sauter moved that Mount Vernon HPC pass a resolution opposing the legislation that would eliminate owner-occupied residences from being eligible for the tax credit. Janet Budack seconded the motion. The resolution passed unanimously. Leah will forward the resolution to the appropriate parties in Des Moines.

Leah stated that the tax credit program is now being administered by the Iowa Economic Development office, and there may not be personnel in that office that have an appreciation for the need of credits for historic preservation.

Leah reported on behalf of Suzette Astley that discussions continue with the Mount Vernon Housing Commission and with the City Administrator to plan for future funding of assistance in updating and preserving historic properties in Mount Vernon.

Under other new business, Hugh Lifson expressed concern that there have been further threats to the preservation of murals that may not be politically correct. Hugh follows information regarding these murals.

Under old business, Machele gave an update on the walking tour that is scheduled by the History Center. The walking tour in Mount Vernon will be June 23 starting at 6:30 p.m. The tour will start at King Chapel and proceed east through the campus. It will then follow 1st St SW in to the downtown section. Ed Sauter and Guy Booth volunteered to assist as guides for the walking tour for the portion of the tour when it is in the downtown commercial district.

Machele also reported that the presentation regarding the Wolfe/Waln house will be held March 14 at City Hall. The program will run from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Machele, Mary Evans and Janet Budack have put together the information and a power point display for the presentation. Members of the Wolfe family will relate stories regarding the property.

Mary reported that there is a new collection of photographs from the Bracket family. She had an early photograph of the founding fathers of Mount Vernon. It will be interesting to see if we can identify the four men who are shown in the photograph. Mary also indicates that it will be helpful if we can work on house genealogy the way we have already done work on the business genealogy.

Leah Rogers indicates that Suzette has continued to work with Doug Steinmetz regarding the Visitor's Center. She has found the possibility of grants for assisting in the repair work that is needed. There is also a question as to whether the building can be placed on the National Historic Register. The issue seems to be whether a building that has been moved from its original location will qualify for the historic register.

Grace Chamberlain submitted a written report regarding the response to our Facebook site. Donnie Moore, the guest today, has been on the site and it has sparked his interest in the work of the Commission. Grace also indicates she has done some research on the Spear Fountain on the campus. Machele suggested that for future programs regarding historic preservation, we could consider using the community room at the Wellness Center. There is a built-in projector, so it will be easy to present programs. Also, there is sufficient parking, and easy access to the center.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2020, unless an interim meeting is needed, which would occur on March 18 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary