

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
April 14, 2021

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Wednesday, April 14, 2021. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Susan Hargus, Grace Chamberlain, Mary Evans, Donnie Moore, Suzette Astley, Duane Eash, Janet Budack and Guy Booth. Also in attendance was Wade Squiers, who will become a member upon approval by the City Council. Guests at the meeting included Joe Jennison from CDG/Main Street – Director, and Danielle Chargo, who is a member of the design committee for the Hilltop Park proposal.

Upon motion by Suzette Astley, seconded by Donnie Moore, the Minutes of the April 3, 2021 meeting were approved.

This meeting is hosting a pre-review presentation by the organizations that are working on the Pocket Park, which will be in the south alley in downtown Mount Vernon. It has been called the Hilltop Park. The alley in the middle of the block is being redone so it will be a public walkway, seating area, display area, but will not be open to vehicular traffic. The park will have overhead string lighting, and will have artwork displayed. The pre-review is being held to introduce the proposed sculpture that will be in place on the east wall of the alley. The Mount Vernon Area Arts Council solicited proposals from a number of artists. 33 proposals were submitted. The MVAAC and the committee formed to work on the Pocket Park selected Tim Adams of Webster City, Iowa to prepare and install a multi-piece artwork on the wall. The sculpture will be in a number of pieces and is reminiscent of the cubism art movement, and also reminiscent of Picasso. This era of art is consistent with the age of the buildings on either side of the alley. The piece is designed to be interpretive, and open to diverse ideas on culture within the community.

Discussion included the method of installing the artwork, without damaging the brick buildings. Also, the size of the work was discussed and included the observation that the sculpture will use the brick wall as a back drop, without diminishing the beauty of the brick structure. The artwork has been commissioned by, and paid for by the MVAAC. Additional expenses for the construction of the Pocket Park has come from the City of Mount Vernon and from the work of CDG and the Main Street Program. There were no objections to the artwork selected, so the MVAAC and the Hilltop Park Committee will continue with the plans to bring the new park to fruition. It was determined that a final request must be made for the installation, as a building permit may be required and formal approval issued by MVHPC.

Under old business, Leah gave a report on the meeting regarding the cemetery assessment. RIP, Ltd, represented by its owner, John Heider, toured the cemetery to begin the assessment process. His initial work was mostly in the northern portion of the cemetery where he identified numerous grave markers that needed some restoration. Leah Rogers, Donnie Moore and Duane Each and Mary Evans were present to help with the assessment. Donnie and Duane, and Leah's company continued further assessment of the cemetery and have identified all veterans' graves, as well as graves that are in need of restoration. All who participated were struck by the amount of repair work that may be needed in the cemetery. Mr. Heider will be submitting his written assessment which will give the Commission a more accurate description

of work that needs to be done, and a way to assess the costs of doing the repair work. As soon as the assessment report is submitted, a meeting first with the American Legion Post, and then with other interested parties should be arranged so plans for ongoing restoration and maintenance of the cemetery can be established. Leah indicates that RIP, Ltd does present restoration workshops. This may be a good project for our Commission to undertake. Leah also indicates that there are some grants that could be available for restoration work. Finally, Mary Evans and Janet Budack indicate they are interested in taking on a project to have the cemetery be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Both are experienced in doing this research and will be of great assistance in putting together the application for seeking registration.

Mary Evans reported that she has indicated to the Linn County History Commission that we want to have the walking tour in Mount Vernon that has been scheduled for June 22. Mary has not heard back from the Commission as yet, but feels that we will be hosting the tour. Barb Shepley will be available to help provide costumes for the persons from our Commission who will be involved in helping direct the tour. Several members of the Commission have volunteered to serve as historical personages for the tour.

Mary also indicates that the Community Room at the Buresh Community Center has been reserved for two presentations regarding historic Mount Vernon property. On September 11, from 8:30 to 11:00 there will be a program regarding houses that may have been moved in the City as the City expanded or needed additional space. On October 9 at 8:30 a.m., there will be a presentation on the Waln/Wolfe house. These were programs that were to have been presented but were cancelled because of the Covid shutdown.

Mary gave additional reports indicating that our annual budget is holding even and we have a balance of approximately \$2,500. Leah announced that we should all be reviewing the programs at the Preservation Summit and register for the classes that are of interest. Each of the members should pay the registration fee personally, but the Commission members will be reimbursed from the commission budget.

Mary indicates there is nothing new to report on the preparation of the new archive room. She hopes this will be completed before too long. Mary also indicated that there has been good traffic on our website. She also highlighted the feature in the Cedar Rapids Gazette of the restoration/renovation of the house at 411 2nd St SW. This has been known as the Rockrohr House. It gave a nice summary of work that has been done on the house.

Suzette indicated that she has continued to work to straighten out the terms for commissioners. She indicates that the term of service for Guy, Wade and Donnie will all expire in 2022. This will help balance the expiration of terms on a three year rotating basis. Suzette will send a sheet showing the expiration date of each of the commissioners with these new terms included.

Because of our previous discussion regarding the cemetery, there was also a question asked as to what happened to the Thorson study and computer software program that was developed. No one seems to know the location of the software. It was suggested that we contact the Thorson Company to see if they can supply us a new Final Report and a copy of the software that was developed to allow the City to enter data regarding the cemetery and burial lots

digitally. It is hoped that we can replace this lost software and to have this system work effectively for the location of gravesites.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for May 1, 2021, and will be held via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary