

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
April 29, 2023

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, April 29, 2023. Commissioners present at City Hall were Janet Budack, Sherry Brayton, Mike Guerber, Suzette Astley, Matt Ruff, Duane Eash, Wade Squiers, Edith Dawson, and Guy Booth. There were no guests present for the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting of April 12, 2023 were approved.

There were no design review matters to be voted upon. However, Suzette reported that she approved a Certificate of no Material Effect for a tuckpointing project on the building at 104 1<sup>st</sup> St SW, Mount Vernon. This is in the commercial historic district. The company that is doing the tuckpointing, Technical Specialty Systems, did not need a building permit for the tuckpointing project, but the information regarding the project was forwarded to the Commission. The Commission views the request for this type of work as being similar to the request for a roofing project. If it is determined by the chairperson that there is no material effect, this is an instance where the full Commission does not need to meet before the certificate is approved. The question arose, however, regarding the need for some review to be sure that the tuckpointing is using an appropriate mortar in type and color to be compatible with the original mortar of the building. Only in the event that the chairperson would be unsure of the color and material, or of the ability of the applicant to not cause damage to the building, would this matter need to come before the full Commission. Improper tuckpointing can have a harmful effect on a masonry building.

Suzette reported on the recent City Council meetings that addressed the application for certificate of appropriateness made by Shane Amundsen. The application was denied at the April 12, 2023 meeting of HPC. This matter was on the agenda for the Mount Vernon City Council meeting of April 17, 2023. Both Suzette and Guy attended the meeting and discussed the reasons for the denial and for the responsibilities of both the Commission when an application is made, and the responsibility of the applicant. The City Council decided to proceed with a hearing on an appeal by Mr. Amundsen to the denial of the permit. Technically, Mr. Amundsen had not filed a written notice of appeal by the time of the City Council meeting. Upon motion made and seconded in the City Council, the hearing was held, and at the conclusion of the hearing, the council voted 3 to 1 to affirm the Commission's denial of the certificate of appropriateness. Suzette is reaching out to both the City Administrator and to Mr. Amundsen to continue to work on the request for replacement windows made by Mr. Amundsen.

Suzette reported that the historic garden presentation went well. The seminar was videotaped so it will be available on our website. On May 20, Duane Eash will be presenting a seminar on painting old houses. This will be held at the Buresh Center at 10:00 a.m.

Under old business, Suzette presented additional information about the proposed work on the Visitor's Center. The basic project is for masonry preservation. Suzette has determined that a request for a grant in the amount of \$21,030 will cover the costs of the project. The City of Mount Vernon is willing to donate \$10,000 and the Commission will also provide in-kind contributions. Suzette will get the grant completed and submitted and it will hopefully be approved.

A discussion was held regarding a wish list for the design guidelines. Sue has done a substantial amount of research into how the guidelines should be updated. She has reviewed guidelines from several historic preservation Commissions that have done this recently. The Commission previously agreed to hire a company to work on the guidelines. Sue will prepare a request for proposal and will get it sent out to companies that may be interested in the project. We will be paying for this project from the HPC budget, but there also may be assistance from City Council.

The next item of business was reconsideration of the materials statement. It is important to work on this statement as we are approaching the revision of the design guidelines. Sue has prepared a materials statement that sets forth standards that are within the Secretary of Interior's guidelines. Also, based upon her research, she has recommendations regarding retention and repair of historical materials and architectural features.

The one issue that still generates concern is to how we can address, within the standards and guidelines, a request for use of vinyl materials as replacement material. The Commission is committed to its obligation to have the exterior of historic buildings retain the appearance that complies with the historic structure of a building. The Commission needs to have a statement that can set out our guidelines and support the reasons for the guidelines. There are examples from other historic preservation commissions, both in the State of Iowa and elsewhere. Guy mentioned that he supports Sue's premise that vinyl is not considered a similar historic material. The real issue comes down to under what circumstances, and what material will be acceptable in the historic districts. Guy indicated he would be willing to look at additional language that could be considered and will prepare a document that more specifically addresses the issue of the appropriate times when vinyl may be an acceptable substitute material. He will get this prepared within the next several weeks.

Duane Eash indicates that he is looking forward to having the subcommittee on window materials get started. Wade has as much current information as anyone as he deals with construction materials on a regular basis as an architect.

Under old business, Edith brought to our attention that the section of our website that identifies current commissioners is not up to date. We will get this corrected.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary