

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
June 16, 2021

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Wednesday, June 16, 2021. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Mary Evans, Donnie Moore, Susan Hargus, Wade Squiers, Duane Eash, Angie Bauman Power, Suzette Astley, Janet Budack, and Guy Booth. Also present was Scott Ladwig, Construction Manager for Cornell College.

Upon motion, the Minutes of the meeting of May 12, 2021 were approved.

Scott Ladwig gave an update on projects at Cornell. He indicates that the renovation at College Hall is on schedule. The substantial portion of the work relates to the mechanical issues in the building. There is also painting and trim work that is being done as the mechanical system is worked on.

The major portion of Scott's comments related to the derecho damage to King Chapel. It was discovered that the roof damage and ceilings of the chapel were damaged. This was quite apparent. However, once engineers looked into the damage, it was discovered that four primary roof trusses were cracked and fractured in a number of places. Because of the potential weakness, and because of the threat of any future storms causing catastrophic damage, the building has been closed to occupancy. Additional appraisal of damage is being done. There is concern that the limestone support columns may have shifted, which could further threaten the stability of the building. Scott indicates the repair of the building will be a major project and will take substantial time. During the repair period, the organ will need to be removed from the building. To compound problems, the company that is familiar with the organ and would be able to do the removal was substantially damaged by a fire in their premises. Scott will keep the commission informed as to what types of repair will be needed.

Finally, Scott indicated that the assessment of Platner House is nearing completion. The building is not occupied at this time, but the college hopes to have a plan in place to renovate the structure and return it to active use on the campus. Scott was asked about the status of Harlan House. Scott said there have been no plans made for that building at this time. It may appear in the future long-term plans for the infrastructure of the campus.

Mary Evans gave the report on several areas that she has been monitoring. First, the archive room at City Hall is nearing the point when our archives can be moved into the new facility. Mary has measured the room to determine the amount of shelving that will accommodate the archives. The amount of shelving will be substantial, and will be in the area of \$3,000 in costs. The City will be paying for the shelving from the general budget, not from the Historic Preservation Commission budget.

Mary gave an update on the walking tour scheduled for June 22. Linn County Historic Preservation is including this tour as part of their program of historic tours in Linn County. The tour will begin at 6:00 p.m. at Cornell. Suzette Astley will be the presenter representing the first female professor at the college. Her presentation will identify the original buildings at the time that the professor began teaching. From the main campus, the tour will proceed to Bracket

House. Marcia Driscoll and Cathy Stoner, who are related to the Bracket family, will give a history of Bracket House, which is now used as a bed and breakfast facility by the college.

From Bracket House, the tour will move toward downtown with the next stop being at the Albright Brick House. This is the building owned by Guy and Ann Booth. Guy will adopt the persona of Dr. Ebersole, the medical doctor who lived in the house and conducted his medical practice there for a number of years in the mid-20th century. This will tie the builder of the house, William and Henry Albright to the same construction that was done on the Cornell campus using bricks that were made by Albright in the brick factory in Mount Vernon.

The tour will then proceed into the downtown commercial district. The group will divide in half, and Ed Sauter and Janet Budack will be the presenters. Also, Donnie Moore will be present in period costume to talk about the building that now houses Coldwell Banker Real Estate. When the tour is completed in the downtown area, the tour will go back to the Visitor's Center, which is adjacent to Memorial Park. At 7:30, the City Municipal Band has a concert, so people who participated in the tour can either stay for the concert, or can then leave to return to their homes.

Next, Mary discussed plans for marking the 175th anniversary of the community. There are a number of ideas, including the preparation of a play about the settling of Mount Vernon. It is hoped the celebration can tie in with Heritage Days early in July, 2022.

Mary also said either the website, or she personally had been receiving inquiries. A person who has recently moved to Mount Vernon had an inquiry about porch renovation and appropriate colors for painting the house. Leah pointed out that videos of the painting seminar and the porch renovation seminar that we have conducted are available online at the HPC website, so people can review this information to answer questions.

Suzette indicated that the Linn County grant that was applied for for renovation of the front window of the Visitors Center has been successful. The application was for a grant of \$5,000. Linn County approved a grant in the amount of \$4,000. Suzette has talked with the City administrator to make sure the City is prepared to spend at least \$1,000 toward the renovation project. It seems likely that the City will make that contribution. The work that is necessary on the renovation needs to be completed by March, 2022. Leah indicates there is a possibility an extension can be received if it is difficult to hire a contractor because of the backlog of work caused by the derecho.

A more personal concern was shared by Leah. She has recently been diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. The Commission is very concerned about the diagnosis and all wish Leah the best in her fight against cancer. Leah feels that there are new treatments and she is optimistic that an aggressive approach to treatment at this time will result in remission and a good life expectancy. Leah will contribute when she can to the Commission. Obviously, all other commissioners are going to need to provide assistance in the areas that Leah has directed. All of the commissioners joined in their concern that Leah will be successful and that the fight against cancer will leave her a strong and healthy person.

The last item of new business addressed by Leah was a request by Randy Cooper to learn more about the Wesley West house that he owns. It is on the National Register of Historic

Places. Guy Booth, Janet Budack and Ed Sauter met with the Mount Vernon Community School District, as the District would be interested in buying the property if it becomes available. Both the School District and the Coopers were seeking information as to what they can and can not do with a building that is of such historical significance in the community. No decisions have been made at this time.

The next meeting would normally be scheduled for Saturday, July 3. We will see if there is a design review request that needs to be heard at that time. The Commission will investigate who might take the responsibility for preparing the agenda and getting proper notice of the time and place of the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary