

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
July 1, 2023

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, July 1, 2023. Commissioners present at City Hall were Suzette Astley, Janet Budack, Wade Squiers, Michael Guerber, Duane Eash, Donnie Moore, and Guy Booth. Also present was Edith Dawson. No one participated via Zoom.

Minutes of the meeting of June 14, 2023 were approved.

Sue announced that the Visitor's Center grant for tuck pointing and cleaning at the Visitor's Center has been approved. The grant is from the Historic Resource Society. The grant is in the amount of \$11,000. The City of Mount Vernon will match the grant with an additional \$10,000. Part of the improvements will be in replacing shrubs or adding other vegetation. The Commission will consult with the city garden and landscape people to best determine what landscape vegetation will be compatible with the Memorial Park plantings.

Sue gave a report on an issue that arose on property listed at 312 1<sup>st</sup> St SW in Mount Vernon. This is property owned by the Methodist Church and was specifically about repairs being made to the education wing of the church. The education wing was added to the church in early 1970's. The addition is not within the boundaries of the Cornell Historic District. Because of some confusion from the county building department, the work was stopped temporarily until it could be determined if a certificate of appropriateness was required. After Sue consulted with the City, as well as the county, it was determined that a certificate of appropriateness was not needed, and the work continued. It is noted that the repair and renovation being made to the wall of the building is appropriate and would have received a certificate of appropriateness if so needed.

Additional work being done at the church includes a limestone bench area and patio in the front of the church. This raises the issue of whether this type of construction needs presentation to Historic Preservation. There is some confusion as to what can be considered landscaping and what should be considered "hard scaping." The Commission will continue to study this issue so that a good definition of our jurisdiction over this type of renovation will fit within the design guideline booklet. Sue reported that she has become aware of the house located at 521 Palisades not being included in historically significant buildings in the community. This is the West property, which is a large Victorian brick house adjacent to the Mount Vernon School District property. There is sufficient land that goes with the house that there is a proposal to subdivide the land so there is a parcel for the house and a parcel that does not contain any structure. An inquiry had been made as to whether Historic Preservation needs to consider approval of the subdivision. It appears that process is not within the jurisdiction of Historic Preservation.

Duane Eash gave a good report on his experience at the Iowa Summit Conference held in Sioux City. He felt it was a very positive program and he attended a number of sessions of interest. He was concerned, however, that one session was related to how to have buildings demolished, rather than how they could be renovated and saved. He expressed this concern to some of the organizers. Next year's conference will be held in Mount Pleasant, so the sessions may be more available to our members. Guy Booth and Janet Budack gave an update on the Mount Vernon Cemetery project. A letter has been written to the City Attorney requesting

information about the availability of a perpetual trust that the City either has established or can establish. If there is a perpetual trust, it can be administered independently of the City general fund budget and may be a positive way to accomplish the goals regarding maintenance of the cemetery while still being within the City structure for insurance coverage. We are awaiting a reply from the City Attorney to see if a perpetual trust has been established.

Discussion was held regarding the installation of several windows on the Weddington house on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW. A building permit was issued for replacement of several windows, but an application for a certificate of appropriateness was never made. Only after the windows had been installed did the City become aware of the need for the certificate. Because the project has been completed, there is not a good avenue for making any change. The windows that were installed appear to be appropriate.

Following the City Council's decision to overrule the Commission's decision of denial of a certificate for the Amundson property, the City finally issued a certificate of appropriateness. The certificate language contains information that, in the opinion of HPC, was not accurate. Our Commission would like to respond to the language used by the City in the certificate that it issued, pointing out the inaccuracy. Sue has prepared a letter asking that the City correct the language on the certificate, or at a minimum, attach the letter from HPC indicating what appear to be discrepancies in the reasons for denial of the initial application by Amundson.

Sue has prepared a document entitled Materials Standards. This is an ongoing attempt to deal with the issue of use of vinyl in renovation or restoration of historic properties. By setting forth a written statement as to when non-original material is used in renovation, the Commission hopes to better educate property owners as to reasons that original historic-type material is preferred on renovation projects. We will continue to review the draft of the materials standards statement and will share our proposals with the City. This has been a difficult issue to resolve, as there are differing views as to what is appropriate when materials such as vinyl materials are selected over materials that are preferred, as set forth in the Secretary of Interior Standards. We will continue to review this statement at our future meetings.

Because the first meeting of September falls on Labor Day weekend, the Commission has decided to hold a regular HPC meeting on August 30, rather than September 2. Sue will determine if we need a mid-July meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary