

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
July 2, 2022

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall, and via Zoom on Saturday, June 2, 2022. Commissioners present at City Hall were Suzette Astley, Mary Evans, Donnie Moore, Janet Budack, Michael Guerber and Guy Booth. Leah Rogers was present via Zoom. Also present were Jim Evans and Jayne DeWitt.

The Minutes of the June 15, 2022 meeting were reviewed. A correction to the Minutes should state that the Cornell Historic District Amendment has been approved by SNRC. It was not approved by the Summit Conference. Subject to the correction, the Minutes were approved.

The first design review request is presented for a retaining wall to be built at the Visitor's Center. This is located at 213 1st St NW and is in the Cornell Historic District. The retaining wall is needed to guide water away from the building. Jayne DeWitt presented photos and information regarding the wall. It will certainly fit in well with the Visitor's Center. It will be constructed by City workers. Upon motion by Mike, seconded by Mary, the Commissioners approved a certificate of no material effect for the project.

The second design review relates to the placement of an 18" x 18" sign at the entrance to the Pocket Park. This sign recognizes the people who were instrumental in designing, contributing to, and completing the Pocket Park. The sign will need to be affixed to the wall of the candy store. Care must be taken that the fasteners shall only be placed in the mortar, and not in the bricks. Upon motion by Janet and seconded by Mike, the Commissioners approved a certificate of no material effect for the placement of the sign.

Suzette reports that there are grants available to have a consultant be hired to explore if the Mount Vernon Cemetery might qualify as an historic place. Suzette, Janet and Mary have been discussing ways to make sure the cemetery and its history is well preserved. Janet stated that there is a state association for preservation of cemeteries that has a lot of information and expertise. It is decided to have a committee meet to put together a list of steps that should be taken to work toward the preservation of the historical nature of the cemetery. Janet, Mary and Guy will meet later in July to determine what needs to be done as we work ahead on this project.

Suzette presented to the Commission thoughts on having the recognition ceremony for historic preservation projects in Mount Vernon. In particular, she also wanted to have awards named after some of our commissioners. This includes Reverend Dick Thomas, Ed Sauter, Leah Rogers and Guy Booth. All have been active contributors to the Commission over the years. Sue suggests that we all spend some time in the next month identifying the renovation projects that should be recognized. We can then determine which properties should receive awards that have been named after the commissioners that Suzette identified. It was suggested that we have a reception for the awards ceremony. Janet thinks a good time for the presentation would be in September or October.

In addition to the discussion we had regarding the placement of a sign in the Pocket Park, we also had a discussion regarding the lack of follow-through when the Pocket Park was constructed. First, there never was a Certificate of Appropriateness requested or issued.

Secondly, after inspection of the artwork and framing that is in the park, it was discovered there are a number of instances where artwork and structure was attached directly into the bricks, and not into mortar. This is not acceptable under standards for maintaining and protecting brick structures. There is a real question as to how this potential damage can be remediated. The City is considering a second Pocket Park across the street. It will need to have specific guidelines for construction of the park and not allow the project to damage the bricks on the buildings on each side of the alley.

There was discussion regarding the design guideline booklet that Ed Sauter had put together early on in the life of the Commission. Suzette has been looking into a grant that would allow us to digitize the booklets so it is more readily available. If this is to be done, this would also be a good time to expand the guidelines and include additional detail regarding what is appropriate on historic buildings. Upon motion by Guy, seconded by Donnie, Sue will prepare and submit a grant proposal to digitize the design guideline booklet.

Under old business, Cornell responded to our inquiry about the different color of brick that is used for the athletic complex. The architect for the project indicates that the Commission was notified ahead of time that there would be a distinct color difference. This is purposeful because the college wanted to set the new addition apart from the older portion of the complex. The architect also feels that the color of the brick matches some of the color that is in the addition to the Commons.

It is reported previously The Sun newspaper is going to be turning over to the Commission a number of their photographs. This will be delayed as they have had some personnel changes in the office, but they should be available later in the year. Mary talked about arrangements for the Heritage Days parade, the Commission will be represented in a couple of cars. It will be good exposure for the Commission to be part of the parade.

Mary told about a couple of interesting inquiries in the past month. A person from Oklahoma has sent a photo of a house in town that he is curious about. Also, someone had called wondering if there is any information or signage in Mount Vernon that identifies Dillon's Furrow. This was the original trail/road between Dubuque and Iowa City. No one can recall that there is any sign that marks the furrow. Finally, Christina and Lee Millikan had asked about information on the brick house they recently purchased on 1st Ave SW. Mary was able to pull together some very interesting information about the house and how it was used in the past. It is gratifying to know that our Commission is able use are archives to answer inquiries and share historic information.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for August 6 unless we need a mid-month design review meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary