

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
August 1, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, August 1, 2020 at 9:15 a.m. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Ed Sauter, Janet Budack, Suzette Astley, Hugh Lifson, Mary Evans and Guy Booth. Also in attendance were Tiffany Zarifkar and Jim Evans.

The Minutes of the meetings of July 4, 2020 and July 15, upon motion, were approved. Hugh Lifson re-stated his long-standing concern about the usage of the word “signage.” He prefers to use the word “sign.” While signage is a commonly used word at this time, Hugh does prefer the usage of the more archaic term, and urges the Commission to resist the more popular vernacular of “signage.”

A pre-review agenda item concerns a carriage house repair request at 712 6th Ave. NW. This house is in the Ash Park District. Issac Weddington had asked for this consultation. He did not appear at the meeting, so the pre-review has been tabled until he is able to be available to present information.

A consultation was requested by Tiffany Zarifkar regarding property she has purchased at 104 2nd Ave. NW, Mount Vernon. This property is adjacent to, but not included in the commercial historic district. Tiffany was interested in sharing ideas on what she may be doing to the building. The building is a relatively modern building, and was not qualified to be in the district when the district was approved. Issues raised included the concern about the mural on the west wall of her building. It had been painted within the past two years, and she is indicating there is noticeable deterioration of the paint, especially in the area of the building that has a brick exterior. Also, she indicates the design of the mural, which is very modern/abstract, does not fit well with her intended use of the building, but she recognizes that the mural is significant and is popular with many people. She does not intend to alter the mural, but she was interested in getting information as to who would have expertise in knowing how to prevent further disintegration of the mural. Tiffany was given the names of several people who could help with background of the building, as well as methods of helping preserve the paint.

Tiffany also gave a pictorial review of the exterior of the building. She will be repainting a portion of the building. In particular, she desires to replace the double doors that are the main entrance to the building off 2nd Ave. She would like to soften the approach to the building by putting up a metal black awning, and placing wooden panels on either side of the front doors. The main floor of the building will be used for her office as a child therapist. Tiffany also had questions about making the building ADA accessible, and perhaps altering the curb height in front of the building. She was advised to discuss this matter with the City Administrator. The Commission appreciates that Tiffany has reached out to discuss changes to the exterior of the building so that the building is compatible with the historic district.

Mary Evans gave an update on the website. She indicates when our consultant returns from vacation, a major update will be put in place. Mary will send an update to all commission members announcing when the new website is available. To celebrate the ongoing Zoom

meetings, Leah took a photo of the Zoom participants which will be on the website. Mary is very excited about the improvements that will be seen on the website.

Suzette Astley gave an update on her efforts of identifying and applying for an emergency grant to allow us to assess the damage to the archives caused by the water leak at City Hall. We are looking for a person who can identify the amount of damage, what would be a recommended method of repair, and what the costs of this project would be. Hopefully a grant can be identified so this professional advice can be obtained. There is also a concern about the ongoing mildew problem in the area. The City has not as yet provided a dehumidifier for the room, and the growth of mildew could be an additional problem for the archives.

Guy Booth indicated that he has spoken with Kevin Woods from the American Legion Post. The American Legion may have an interest in becoming involved in the project that had been recommended by Machele Pelkey and Janet Budack to work on grave maintenance issues in the cemetery. Because the City does not own the individual grave plots, they feel they are unable to make repairs, or to incur expenses for the repairs without permission of the owners of the gravesite. The American Legion Post may have funds available that will cover maintenance costs of graves of all veterans, and they may have the personnel to help identify and work on non-military graves. Guy will contact the City Administrator so the City has some input as to how a committee could be organized to deal with all of the maintenance issues at the cemetery. Once the City has some input, Guy will contact Kevin and Mike Woods and Guy, Janet and Mary can get together with the American Legion representatives to work on a proposal for dealing with the cemetery.

Under old business, in addition to the work Suzette is doing regarding the emergency grant, she indicates that she continues to review possible funding sources through other types of grants. This is an unpredictable time for grants. Most grants require some matching money. Because of the impact of the Covid epidemic, most governmental agencies have had a reduction of funds available in their normal budget, let alone having funds available for new expenditures. Suzette will continue to monitor the situation.

Machele Pelkey has submitted her letter of resignation from the Commission. The resignation has been accepted, and Suzette will work on identifying a person to apply for the position. Suzette is aware of two people who may be interested. The Commission members all want to acknowledge the substantial contribution that Machele has made to the Commission during the time she has been serving. Her energy, her ability to identify projects that advance the Commission's mission, and her enthusiasm for historic preservation have inspired all of our Commissioners. Her work is greatly appreciated. It is hoped that Machele will be available to volunteer on projects from time to time. Machele indicates that the template for the newsletter is available if anyone on the Commission would like to volunteer to continue the newsletter preparation.

Under new business, Hugh Lifson announced that Linn County Historic Commission will be putting together a program that presents the history of entertainment in Linn County. He did not know when this production will be ready, but he is excited about bringing together information about how people have entertained and have been entertained in Linn County historically.

Hugh also shared his concerns about the removal and/or destruction of many statues and other pieces of art that depict unfavorable parts of our history. He recently wrote a letter to the Gazette, and has encouraged all members of the Commission to review his letter as he set out salient points about the need to preserve history, even if it is not politically correct history at this time. This is a concern, not only for the United States, but for many historic sites around the world.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 12, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. Cornell College will have a pre-review request for additional work that is being done on campus buildings.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary