

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
August 7, 2021

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, August 7, 2021. Members present on Zoom were Suzette Astley, Leah Rogers, Mary Evans, Donnie Moore, Wade Squiers, Duane Eash, Janet Budack, Susan Hargus and Guy Booth. Scott Ladwig from Cornell College was also participating.

Suzette gave a report on the work being done, and anticipated being done for the Visitor's Center. The front window has now been replaced and has been returned to its original configuration. There is minimal items of trim work that still need to be completed. Suzette indicates that she has been researching other grants that may be available to complete the repairs that have been identified in the assessment that was done earlier in the year. It is estimated that all of the needed renovation could cost approximately \$107,000. It appears that one of the major grant programs is not available because of how the building is listed in the application that was originally made for the Cornell Historic District. It may be possible to amend the application to list the Visitor's Center as a contributing structure. To do this, we may need the help of Jennifer Price, who did the writing of the applications for the 11 houses that were placed on the national register. She estimates that the cost would be approximately \$2,000 for her work on amending the Cornell District paperwork. If the amendment can be completed, it will pay substantial dividends in qualifying the building for grants that could be available. The grants are matching grants, and the City of Mount Vernon has indicated a willingness to participate in providing the matching funds. The City contributed approximately \$7,000 toward the window renovation, with the remaining \$4,000 of expense being paid by a grant.

Upon motion by Leah, seconded by Janet, the Commission approved the expenditure of \$2,000 to engage Jennifer Price for the work necessary to have the Visitor's Center be recognized as a contributing structure in the Cornell Historic District.

Scott Ladwig from Cornell presented a request for certificates of appropriateness for three roofing projects. The roof at 219 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and the roof at 317 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW both need repair, but not total replacement. However, the roof on the Scott Alumni Center needs full replacement. All of the roofs will be completed so they match the previously-existing roofs. Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by Leah Rogers, a certificate of appropriateness was approved for each of the three projects.

Scott Ladwig reported further regarding the damage to King Chapel caused by the derecho. The building can not be inhabited and the college will be constructing a fence around the property. There is continuing investigation into damage to the building. Scott indicated that a significant windstorm could cause even further destruction. Cornell is working with their insurance carrier to determine what will be the best process for planning the repairs. At this time, it is estimated that the cost of repairs will be in excess of \$2,000,000.00. Scott also indicates that the organ needs to be removed from the building and he is looking for an appropriate storage facility for the organ. Scott was able to show pictures of the damage to the structural columns of the building. It will be a long-term project to correct all of the damage.

Suzette indicated that the work recently completed on the window of the Visitor's Center needs to have a motion to approve grant a certificate of appropriateness for the renovation. Upon motion made by Janet Budack and seconded by Duane Eash, the certificate of appropriateness was approved.

Suzette presented questions about the structure of future HPC meetings. She suggested we can continue with Zoom meetings, or we can look to a hybrid format. It was decided that the next monthly meeting on September 4 will be held so that persons who wish to attend in person may do so, or if a member would prefer to attend via Zoom, that format will also be available.

Suzette also brought up a question about advertising for the audio tours that are available for the historic districts. She has looked into the cost of advertising in the Gazette and in other eastern Iowa publications. It would be a good idea to draft a display ad that the commission can review. Mary Evans suggests that Grace Chamberlain and Ed Sauter have been working with Joe Jennison on how to better advertise the audio tours. Mary suggests tabling discussion on this issue until Grace and Ed and Joe are able to indicate what their recommendations will be. Mary said that the audio tours are available, both by cell phone and by clicking on to the Historic Preservation website.

Suzette also brought up the issue of the Commission setting priorities for the coming year. Priorities that can be considered would be to focus on the Mount Vernon cemetery, working on completing the renovation of the Visitor's Center, and working on community education, especially by means of regular communications with owners of properties in the historic districts. Also, Suzette indicates we should continue with planning for the Mount Vernon Sesquicentennial. The Commission feels these are all important priorities and that we should continue to focus on moving ahead in each area.

Suzette indicates that Angie Power-Baumann will be leaving the commission, as she and her husband have moved to Peoria, IL. Angie will continue to be employed by Cornell, but will be working remotely. Suzette indicates she does have names of a couple of people who may have interest. Suzette has been the commissioner in charge of membership. She indicates that she would like to pass this on now that she is chairperson of the Commission. Guy Booth volunteered to serve as the membership commissioner.

Mary Evans gave an update on upcoming activities. The walking tour that had been organized for Linn County History Center will be held August 24 at 6:00 p.m. Suzette, Guy, Ed, Janet and Donnie will all be participating in presenting information to the tour.

On September 11, there will be a community education program held at the Lester Buresh Center. The program will be about houses in the community that have been moved to new locations in the past. This would also include the move of the Visitor's Center. On October 9, there will be a community education seminar again at the Lester Buresh Center to talk about the Waln and Wolfe house. A relative of Elijah Waln, as well as members of the Wolfe family will be present to provide information about the house.

Finally, Mary indicates the shelving for the new archive room have been ordered. There seems to be some confusion as to when the shelving will be delivered. An invoice has not been received showing that payment has been completed.

Upon motion made and seconded, the Minutes of the last meeting of the Commission were approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary