

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
September 3, 2022

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall, and via Zoom on Saturday, September 3, 2022. Commissioners present at City Hall were Janet Budack, Duane Eash, Suzette Astley, Wade Squiers, Michael Guerber, Donnie Moore and Guy Booth. Edith Dawson was present via Zoom.

The Minutes of the August 17, 2022 meeting were approved.

There are design review requests from Cornell College for this meeting. The material sent to the Commission included the possibility of four separate requests. However, Scott Ladwig, who attended via Zoom, indicates that the work regarding the West Science Center roof has been completed. Also, the information regarding Olin Hall is not ready to be pursued, so there is no need to have an application for a certificate of appropriateness at this time.

The two design review requests that are before the Commission are the roofing project for the Plattner House. Scott reviewed this in a pre-review on August 17. We have, by consensus, approved the plans of Cornell and a type of shingle that is being used. Upon motion by Duane Eash, seconded by Wade Squiers, a motion to approve the request as having no material effect was approved.

The second application is for the approval of the project at Garner House. This will be the repair work for windows and some water damage that has occurred in the tower section of the house. The repair work will replicate all other work that has been done in Garner House. The contractor is ready to begin work to complete the repairs. A motion to approve a certificate of appropriateness was made by Guy Booth, seconded by Duane Wash. The motion was approved.

Scott Ladwig gave an update on the work that is being done and needs to be done at King Chapel. There has been a metal structure put in place along the southwest corner of the building to stabilize and support that portion of the building. The work that needs to be done to correct the damage done by the derecho is still being analyzed. It is probable that a portion of the southwest and west wall will need to be removed and new support put into place before the stone walls will be rebuilt. There is also a question as to what needs to be done in the roof area of the building. There will need to be an investigation as to the strength and stability of many of the rafters that support the roof. This will be done by visual inspection. Because of the unique nature of the work that needs to be done, a nationwide search is under way to find the right contractor to undertake the project. Scott indicates there has been great cooperation with the insurance company for the college, as well as in dealing with FEMA. Scott will keep us informed as the repair and restoration project proceeds.

Suzette discussed the response we have had from the City of Mount Vernon regarding concerns of how the lattice structure of the Pocket Park was installed. As previously mentioned, much of the framework was drilled directly into the bricks of the building, as opposed to being placed in the mortar. Chris Nosbisch, the City Manager, has been very helpful in getting this matter out in the open so we all can do a better job in the future of making sure projects that

involve brick or masonry structures are done so there is minimal damage to the structures, and that the parties are familiar with the Secretary of Interior guidelines for work done on masonry buildings. There is also a question regarding whether the city needs a building permit, thus a certificate of appropriateness in projects that they undertake. Guy will visit with the City attorney to determine the appropriate process for projects that are undertaken by the City.

Suzette discussed the idea of having a review of the Ash Park District map. We want to have a better description of the boundaries of the district so we know which buildings are within the district. Also, there have been new structures placed in the district since it was first approved as a registered district. It would be helpful to include information regarding the addresses of each building, the date of construction, and photos of the buildings. To have a database that includes all of this can be expensive, so the request for proposal that Suzette will send out should indicate that a party that would like to be hired to do this work should give an indication of how this database can be produced, at what expense, and whether it is a database that can be easily updated as time goes by. Duane is familiar with a firm that has done this kind of work. He feels he can get a good understanding of the nature of the work and the cost of the work as we move ahead on the project of updating the Ash Park District map.

A question continues to arise as to the residential qualifications that a member of the commission must have. In particular, the issue arises as to whether the owner of a building, and of a business in the historic district is sufficient qualification, even if that person does not live within the City of Mount Vernon. The language in the ordinance that establishes the Commission is subject to different interpretations. We will continue to clarify if a business owner, who is not a resident, is eligible to serve as a commissioner, or only as a friend of the commission.

The final item under new business is the election of a vice chair for the commission. Ed Sauter had served in that capacity before his resignation from the commission. Upon motion made by Suzette, seconded by Janet, Duane Eash has been elected as the vice chairman of the commission.

Under old business, Janet Budack gave a brief summary of the report from Mary Evans regarding the Mount Vernon Cemetery. We are going to be scheduling a meeting with Jay Kacena of Marion, who is involved with the Marion Cemetery. We will be able to determine what type of entity could be established so that there can be a separate commission that works with the city in managing the cemetery, both in determining grave sites, the history of the cemetery, and the possibility of raising funds that are tax deductible to people who contribute. A meeting with Mr. Kacena will be held some time during September, so we can gather more information as to the procedure to set up an effective organization to assist the long-term care and maintenance of the cemetery.

There was also a report given as to the presentation of awards at the October 15 Historic Preservation Award Conference. A number of projects have been identified that will all be mentioned as award winners. There will also be specific awards given in the name of Richard Thomas, Ed Sauter, and Leah Rogers. The meeting will be held at the Buresh Center on October 15 at 10:00 a.m. Owners of the properties, contractors who worked on the property and others will be invited to attend.

It was mentioned that the walking tour scheduled for September 15 is still expected to occur. It will begin at 5:30 p.m. and will start at the Cornell campus and will then proceed to Bracket House, to the Albright/Ebersol house, and finally to the downtown historic district. The tour has been requested by the Cedar Rapids Historic Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m. Suzette will notify if there is a mid-month meeting that will be scheduled.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary