

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
November 4, 2023

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, November 4, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present at City Hall were Mike Guerber, Wade Squiers, and Suzette Astley. Matt Ruff, Donnie Moore and Guy Booth were present via Zoom. Also present was Edith Dawson, and guests included Nathan Countryman from the Mount Vernon Sun.

Minutes of the meeting of the October 7, 2023 meeting were approved upon motion by Wade Squiers and seconded by Mike Guerber.

A design review request for certificate of appropriateness has been filed by John Frese of Molo Oil Company. The application is for a renovation of the canopy and pumps located at the convenience store at 1206 1st St SW, Mount Vernon, Iowa. This property is in the Cornell Historic District.

The application provided significant information regarding the proposed renovation of the canopy. It appears it will remain the same size. However, the facing of the canopy will be lighted whereas the current canopy is not lighted. There are lights under the canopy that illuminate the pump area, but no lighting on the actual facing of the canopy. The light bar on the canopy caused some concern regarding the brightness of the lighting and the length of time into the evening that the lights will be on. This building is located on a corner of the Cornell College campus and is in an otherwise residential area. It was suggested there should be additional information regarding the extent of lighting and the time the lighting will be on during a 24-hour period. Because no one was present on behalf of the applicant, it was determined that this additional information would be requested. Upon motion by Matt Ruff, seconded by Wade Squiers, the decision on the application for a certificate of appropriateness was tabled until we had additional information. Sue will direct a letter to the applicant for this information.

Under new business, we discussed the digitalization of the Sun/Hawkeye Record newspaper from its inception. There are several gaps where editions of the newspaper are not available. Sue has attempted to find out what it would cost to obtain these missing issues so we have a complete digital record of the newspaper. She indicates the City is willing to help fund this project so the newspaper record is completed. We will get more information from the City as this project progresses.

There was also a report that US Cellular is going to be placing a new antenna on top of the water tower. In the past, the placement of antenna on the water tower has not been an issue that has needed an approval from Historic Preservation. It is appreciated that the Commission has been notified of the work that will need to be done. This should not be visible to the public generally, and will have no material effect on the historic nature of the park. The water tower is located in the Cornell Historic District.

Sue announced that the Maurice Foundation has made another very generous gift to the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission in the amount of \$3,220. This gift will be used for specific preservation projects that will be determined by the Commission as we look ahead into the next fiscal year. It was suggested that notice of the receipt of this gift be given to

City Hall. In the past, any income to the Commission goes into the City's general fund, but the City has provided a line item indicating that these are funds that are designated for use by Historic Preservation. These funds should not be considered part of the annual budget request made by Historic Preservation. Sue indicates our request for the next fiscal year budget is due November 30.

There has been some discussion about how the Commission should review an application for new construction that occurs in a historic district. There are no specific guidelines that have been adopted, but Sue has received information from several communities that attempt to give assistance to persons who are building a new structure in a historic district. The purpose is to make the new structure as compatible as possible with the ambiance of the historic district. We will continue to review guidelines that other communities have adopted so we are able to present alternatives to builders when plans come before the Commission.

We have been notified in the past of a collection of glass negatives of historic Mount Vernon. These negatives are in Florida. The Commission desires to have them transported back to Mount Vernon so they can be placed in our archives. It was suggested that we check with the college to see if there is a Cornell Student who may be from Florida and will be returning to campus following Christmas break. That person may be able to provide the transportation. It was also suggested that we identify some Mount Vernon residents who spend time in Florida during the winter to see if they might have room available to transport the glass negatives back to Mount Vernon. They are fragile, and it may be difficult to pack them so they can safely be sent if it were by commercial transportation. Sue indicates that the negatives may take up the space of a regular size banker box. Guy volunteered to identify persons who may be traveling back from Florida and using their vehicle as transportation. Upon motion made by Wade Squiers, seconded by Mike Guerber, that the Commission provide up to \$1,500 to compensate a person who may provide transportation and delivery of the glass negatives. The motion carried.

There was discussion about providing training for Edith so she is able to assist with placing information on the HPC website. The company that has provided excellent service to the Commission in the past indicates they are willing to schedule the training for Edith.

Mike Guerber indicated that he is continuing to work on providing a brochure to new property owners in historic districts. This brochure gives background about Mount Vernon Historic Preservation, and encourages the property owner to communicate with Historic Preservation as they have thoughts of renovating or changing the property. He will continue to monitor the change of title on properties located in the historic districts.

The meeting concluded rather abruptly, as our computer access to the meeting was interrupted. Matt Ruff was able to determine that the battery powering the computer for the Zoom participants failed, and we were not able to reconnect to complete the meeting. Any items on the agenda that were not reached will be reset for the next historic preservation meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary