

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
January 6, 2024

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, January 6, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present at City Hall were Randy Brown, Duane Eash, Mike Guerber, Suzette Astley, Mary Evans, Donnie Moore and Guy Booth. Matt Ruff was present via Zoom.

Minutes of the meeting of the December 2, 2023 meeting were approved.

New member Randy Brown was introduced. He discussed his interest in historic preservation and his desire to be on the Commission. Mary Evans returns to the Commission and will bring her considerable historic preservation experience back to the Commission. Welcome to both of the new members.

There were no design review requests for this meeting.

Discussion regarding the development of the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness continues. At our last meeting, it was determined that gutters and downspouts should be added to the application and this was discussed further. It is important to have this as part of the COA application, as a building permit is required and this will come before the Commission by necessity. Upon motion made by Guy Booth, seconded by Mike Guerber, the application shall include the gutters and downspouts as part of the COA application. The motion carried.

Sue gave an update on the approach to requests for new construction in historic districts. This is a difficult issue, as the Commission wants to be available to help people who are planning new construction so it is compatible with the historic district. This does not mean a structure has to appear as though it were built 100 years ago, but there are suggestions that can be made to help people plan new construction in use of materials, setbacks, and other ways to have the new construction be compatible. We discussed how we can be involved in consulting for people who do new construction, and how the owners of the proposed construction can be notified of our availability for the consulting. This discussion will continue. Matt Ruff was able to give us good perspective as to how the county building department can assist in providing information for building permits that affect any of the historic districts. There will be ongoing discussion to help people design new buildings that will be in the historic district. Perhaps the ultimate question is does HPC have the right to deny a building permit if the City has not specifically approved guidelines for new construction in historic districts? We will continue to work on this broad issue.

Two concerns were expressed. Evidently there are neon signs that have appeared in storefront windows in the downtown historic district. Neither of the owners of the buildings or businesses have sought approval of the signs. It appears neon signs cannot be used in storefront windows. The question arises as to who is responsible for enforcement of signage that does not meet the zoning ordinances. Sue is going to check with the City to see what their position is on enforcement.

Mention was made of the restoration work being done on the Cooper house on Palisades Rd. This may be an improvement project that should be recognized by the Commission.

Under old business, Sue states that there is a company in Cedar Rapids that will be able to digitize the glass negatives that were donated by the Burkhart family. These are the negatives that came from Florida. There was also discussion of the payment of the cost for digitizing the newspaper editions. The City undertook this project. Evidently they have used \$1,600 of the Historic Preservation Commission budget to help pay for digitizing all of the editions of the newspaper. There is also a question about how we collect and preserve some Civil War records that have been located in Colorado. Basically, the HPC is not responsible for these documents, but they may be meaningful and there should be a decision as to who is going to be responsible for archiving and preserving the documents.

There was further discussion about funding for the design guidelines that need to be redone. It is understood that the City would be willing to contribute up to \$16,000 for the project. We are at the point where a request for proposal could be submitted to companies that would be interested in helping produce the new guidelines. Upon motion by Mary Evans, seconded by Mike Guerber, the Commission shall proceed on the project for new guidelines and issue a request for proposal from interested companies. The motion carried.

Mike Guerber indicated that there were no houses in historic districts that were sold during the past month. The last house that did sell was the Stine property on 6th Avenue NW. Mike will continue to report any sales of properties so new owners can be advised of the historic preservation issues that benefit the homeowner, and also indicate their responsibilities.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary