

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
May 11, 2024

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, May 11, 2024. Commissioners present at City Hall were Sherry Brayton, Mike Guerber, Duane Eash, Randy Brown, Donnie Moore, Wade Squiers, and Guy Booth. Also present was Edith Dawson. Guests present were Nathan Countryman of the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Sun and Scott Ladwig from Cornell College.

Minutes of the meeting of April 6, 2024 were approved.

The design review item on the agenda is requested by Cornell College. Scott Ladwig has submitted to the Commission a well thought-out description of renovation for the building known as the Platner House, which is at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The house incurred some damage in the derecho. The roof has been repaired. Otherwise, the house has not been occupied or used by the college. Cornell would like to do renovations which will allow the building to be used for ongoing purposes, especially, including a meeting place for college DEI activities and as a community gathering place.

Scott gave a review of his attempts to have all of the windows either repaired or replaced in their present wood frames. It is determined that the cost of re-doing the 49 windows would prevent the college from moving ahead in its renovation project. After a good deal of research, he has found a suitable and affordable alternative, which includes aluminum clad window frames, as well as windows that will be energy-efficient. The aluminum will be a cream color to match the current color scheme of the house. Scott indicates that the aluminum is paintable so future maintenance is part of the consideration. Also, Scott has found a company that can replace the 3 curved glass windows in the house. Overall, the proposal retains all of the significant historic features of the house windows and will provide energy efficient windows for the building. The project will take place over a six-month period and will be done by a company that is from Solon, Iowa. Upon motion by Guy Booth, seconded by Mary Evans, the Commission approved a certificate of appropriateness for the project.

Scott also gave an update on the work that will be undertaken on King Chapel. The Board of Trustees has approved a plan to initiate the stabilization of the building, and the initiation of a project. It is a very complicated project, as the supporting structures of the building need to be redone. As the supporting columns are redone, the possibility of a shifting of the structure needs to be monitored so that the improvement in one section will not cause a deterioration in others. Once the structural engineering is completed, Cornell will then make plans for the interior renovation and its future use.

Mary Evans reported on the five eras of development in the commercial district. This has come about as the City is looking at a streetscape project for the commercial district. An "uptown stroll" took place late in April so people could become familiar with the history of the downtown area, as well as become acquainted with plans for upgrading infrastructure and changes in the streetscape appearance. Mary handed out a survey that can be completed and turned into City Hall regarding the streetscape master plan. Guy and Mary both reported on a meeting that was held with Chris Nosbisch and Mayor Wieseler regarding our interest in the Mount Vernon Cemetery. The City appears willing to appoint a Commission to be in charge of

cemetery issues. The City does have a perpetual trust that is set up pursuant to the Iowa code to deal with the City-owned cemetery. It is believed that a Commission that is adopted by the City and Commissioners that are appointed by the City will be able to address ongoing issues, including maintenance of the cemetery, maintenance of gravesites, and future expansion of the cemetery. The Mount Vernon City Attorney will prepare an ordinance that establishes the Commission. This will be distinct from the Historic Preservation Commission, which will give a broader community-wide presence in dealing with the Mount Vernon Cemetery. Once the proposed ordinance is drafted, it will be reviewed by our Commission. Duane reported that he has been in touch with Jay Kacena, who has been instrumental in working on the City of Marion Cemetery and helping in the ongoing maintenance of their cemetery.

Sue Astley was unable to be at the meeting, but has provided a written report, which is being included with the Minutes. Mike Guerber indicated that there were no sales of structures in any of the historic districts during the past month.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary

Commissioners and Friend,

The MVHPC will be meeting this Saturday, May 11 at 8:30 AM in City Hall. Duane Eash will Chair.

Attached are the agenda, a letter from Scott Ladwig describing the basis of the two bids with a request that we accept the one using substitute materials, the cost estimate from Russell Construction, and the bid from Lite Windows. The last attachment is the COA application.

Because I will not be at the meeting, I am reporting here. Please let these comments be reflected in the minutes as my report to the Commission.

1. Randy and I have met once to consider the request for proposals (RFP) we drafted for new Design Guidelines and have so far identified 10 firms that have consulted in communities in Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri. We will meet again to finalize the RFP and consider further firms to send it to. The RFP is likely to be out in 2-3 weeks.
2. The masonry work on the Visitors Center is nearly complete. They have removed damaged mortar, re-mortared, and re-tuckpointed each joint to match the original tuck. They attempted many ways to remove the staining from the building but none worked. More rigorous methods risk damage to the masonry, so the black areas will remain.
3. I'm working with Public Works employee Jayne DeWitt on our contribution to the grant match - some landscaping around the building. The project is likely to be replacement of shrubs that currently touch the building on the north side. We will be meeting with Culver's on Wednesday to get an estimate.
4. All of the photos in the Horton Collection have been sorted, and those appropriate for the archive and website have been separated out for us to keep. Marcia Driscoll has identified the people in 44 of the photos, and Sara Gaarde has agreed to identify the 21 that remain unidentified.
5. I mistakenly failed to order the envelopes for the 1910 glass negatives. (I apparently didn't press the last button on the order.) They have now been ordered and seem to actually be on their way. I'll contact the relevant parties once they've arrived to set up a time to clean and house them.
6. Edith is willing to do some work for the Commission this summer, but the scope of the work is yet to be determined. (After I get back from a brief vacation.)

Have a good meeting!

Sue