

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
April 5, 2025

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, April 5, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present were Mary Evans, Duane Eash, Randy Brown, Sue Astley, Sherry Brayton, Mike Guerber, Donnie Moore and Wade Squiers. Nathan Countryman from the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Sun was also present.

Minutes of the March 1, 2025 meeting were approved. Further, Minutes of the March 26, 2025 meeting were approved. The March 26, 2025 meeting was held at the Lester Buresh Center with the representatives of JMT.

There are two design review items on the agenda. The first is from Thomas and Colleen Reding for repair and replacement of the awning on their building at 113 1st St NW. The building houses their antique business. A portion of the awning needed to be replaced. The replacement will be fabric and the material will replicate the fabric that has deteriorated. The existing frame for the awning will be used. Upon motion by Wade Squiers, seconded by Mike Guerber, the application for a certificate of appropriateness was approved.

The second design review request came from CKR Artisans, LLC, the owners of the new art gallery in the building. This is a request for additional signage to identify the business. This includes the lettering saying Art and Framing to be placed on the window of the gallery. In addition, the gallery desires to have a shingle-type sign protruding from the front of the building identifying Abbe Creek Gallery. The application for these signs has been approved by the City of Mount Vernon. Both the lettering that will go on the front window and the new sign to be hanging at the front of the building fit within the existing signage on other buildings in the downtown historic district. Upon motion by Wade Squiers, seconded by Donnie Moore, a certificate of appropriateness was approved.

Sue led a discussion regarding how we have prepared an inventory of buildings that are not in the historic districts that are considered to be of historic significance. This came to Sue's attention as she discovered that a property located at 213 1st Ave. SW, which is a residence, and not in a historic district, was incorrectly described as being located at 213 1st Ave NE. As the Commission discussed the procedure to change the address in our records regarding historically-significant buildings, Randy and Duane both had questions as to how do we define an historically significant structure, and are we only concerned with residences, or are outbuildings/accessory buildings also considered to be historically significant? This discussion focused on the residence of Jim Moore. This is a historic structure, as it was one of the first buildings in Mount Vernon. However, there has been a great deal of modification to the structure. Modification itself should not be the sole determination whether the building is historically significant.

A decision as to a definition of what modifications can remove a property from being historically significant, also, what criteria is used in the determination of historical significance that would bring the property into the jurisdiction of the Commission, if the building/structure is not in an historic district. Commissioners felt this is a topic that needs to be explored over a period of time so the Commission is able to give significant guidance when the question arises as to the historic nature of a structure. We will continue to work on this definition.

The final question that related to this discussion was how would a person who owns property that is not in an historic district, but has been identified as historically significant. It may be helpful for the Commission to review buildings that are already considered historically significant, even though they are not in an historic district. The Commission wants people to understand the significance of buildings and why the Commission has jurisdiction as it relates to demolition of any historic structure.

Under old business, it was reported that Scott Cannon is determined there needs to be permission from Cornell College to use information that has been gathered by a student class at Cornell. This may be the information that could not be used without the permission of the entity that created the survey and the subsequent report of information. Sue has been in conversation with the professor who is in charge of the project, and after discussions, Sue indicates the college and the professor are willing to allow the Historic Preservation Commission to use the information as we continue to work on the project for walking tours of the historic districts.

The Commission spent a few minutes reflecting on the meeting with JMT on March 26. Members indicated they were pleased with the dialogue between the Commission and JMT. The Commission is impressed with the expertise and professionalism of JMT and their willingness to be open to suggestions from the Commission. We will have at least one Zoom meeting with JMT before we have a final meeting to complete the review and preparation of the new design guideline booklet. Two issues that came up was whether JMT needs to provide any guideline for streetscapes. It was decided that this does not need to be part of the guidelines. There also was a question regarding guidance for the placement and attachment of artwork in the historic districts. First, the Commission is not responsible for selecting the type of artwork. However, the Commission is concerned that any artwork or other material that is attached to buildings in the districts be attached in such a way as to not harm the structure.

Mary Evans gave an update on the cemetery. The City has removed the tubing type fencing and has done a significant amount of tree trimming and clean up. Mary also reports that John Heider will conduct a workshop on gravestone preservation while he is in town. He will be working on a number of gravesites where the markers need repair. The cost of this repair has been covered by the American Legion and by the Masons.

Mike Guerber indicates there has been a change of ownership of the house in the Ash Park Historic District.

Sue reported that we will have a mid-month meeting on April 16. A representative from Cornell and from their engineering firm will report on the renovation and repair of King Chapel. We also may have a Zoom conference with the project manager from JMT. Consequently, the meeting may last longer than our normal mid-month meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary