

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
July 5, 2025

The Historic Preservation Commission met at the Mount Vernon City Hall on July 5, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Commission members present were Randy Brown, Mary Evans, Mike Guerber, Sherry Brayton, Duane Eash, Sue Astley and Guy Booth. Also present was Nathan Countryman from the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Sun. Dawson.

Minutes of the meeting of June 18, 2025 were approved.

There are two design review applications that have been filed. However, one of the applications needs additional information, and the party that submitted the other application was not available to attend the meeting. Each of the applications will be considered at the next HPC meeting. Sue will contact the owners of the property at 603 5<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, which is in the Ash Park District to provide additional information regarding the specifications on the windows that will be replaced.

Under new business, Mary Evans led a discussion regarding the definition of historical significance, as it relates to structures in Mount Vernon. The question is “what makes a property historic?” We discussed a document prepared by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division. In particular, it indicates that to be considered historic, a property must have three essential attributes. This would be sufficient age, a relatively high degree of physical integrity, and finally, historic significance. Mary focused our discussion historical significance and what must be considered in the definition. It can be defined as 1) what individual may have been the architect/builder of the property, and what events or activities of the property shaped the City’s history; 2) by considering the distinctive physical characteristics of the building and its artistic value or craftsmanship; 3) how the structure would have the potential to yield information that is important to understanding the past through archeological, architectural or other physical analysis. Commission members all contributed thoughts as to how they individually relate to determining the significance of their relationship with Mount Vernon and it’s history. It is important to have guidelines to consider how and why a structure can be considered historically significant. This is a subjective analysis, but the Commission, at some point, may be called upon to make a judgment about historical significance if there is an application to demolish a certain structure. There is no hard and fast set of standards to be used, but there are a number of standards that can be considered together.

A question also arose as to whether an historical significant property only relates to the principal residence or building on the property, as opposed to any outbuildings that are on the property. The Commission will adopt the list of historically-significant buildings that were included in the research and report done by Barbara Long in 1988. Sue will send out Barbara Long’s report so we can be familiar with how she reached her definition of historic properties and the guidelines she used.

The Commission also had a discussion regarding what should and should not be included in signage on commercial/retail properties. The City zoning ordinance determines what is permitted for signage. Rather than entering into a discussion to better define signage, the Commission feels that we should wait until the design guideline material is completed, as there is

a section on signage. The other question that arose was who enforces the sign ordinance if it appears the signage is not consistent with the ordinance. This should be within the enforcement authority of the City of Mount Vernon. There also may be a question as to the definition of what is a porch.

There was discussion regarding an amendment to the demolition ordinance. There is some inconsistency in the language as it relates to whether porches are included in the ordinance. If they are not, demolition of porches should be required to have a demolition permit. Porches currently need to have a building permit when they are being repaired.

Further, regarding the demolition ordinance, the question has arisen, does this ordinance only relate to the primary structure on the real estate, or does it relate also to outbuildings such as carriage houses or detached garages? This issue should be clarified in the ordinance.

Sue Astley brought the Commission up to date on her thoughts on stepping down from the position of Chairperson. She has been the chairperson since 2019. A change of this leadership position can be helpful in ensuring that the Commission continues to evolve and be active, as new leadership may bring new issues and priorities to the Commission. Sue will give an outline as to what the regular responsibilities of the chairperson are, so all commissioners can consider whether they would like to accept the challenge of being the chairperson when Sue steps down some time early in 2026. Sue is eager to continue on the Commission and to take on projects that allow her more freedom than if she were chairperson.

Mary Evans gave a report on the archives. She has been working with the Crofter Family, pulling together the history and photographs for members of the family. Mary also indicated she has forwarded a number of photographs of Mount Vernon properties built during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that could be included in the design guidelines. She has not received a response from JMT as to what will be used.

Mary reported that Mr. Heider will be in Mount Vernon beginning July 12 to work on gravesites and conduct a seminar on the accepted methods of cleaning grave markers and grave sites. The seminar will be on Monday, July 14 in the morning at Mount Vernon City Hall. This seminar will give background as to cleaning and restoration methods that can be used. Mr. Heider will be working on a number of gravesites during the rest of the week. Any interested person is invited to come to the seminar, as well as to observe his work at the cemetery. It is requested that people who are wanting to participate should contact Mike Woods to register for the events.

Mike Guerber indicated there were no home sales in the historic districts. There have been other houses that are on the list of historic structures that have changed hands recently. We, as a Commission, discussed methods of keeping the community informed as to the purpose of the Historic Preservation Commission and how property owners can be aware of regulations regarding the upkeep and maintenance of the exterior of their buildings.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary