

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
August 2, 2025

The Historic Preservation Commission met at the Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, August 2, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Commission members present were Mary Evans, Mike Guerber, Randy Brown, Edith Dawson, Sue Astley and Guy Booth. Nathan Countryman was present from the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Sun. Matt Margheim was present for a design review of his property.

Minutes of the meeting of July 23, 2025 were corrected to properly identify the composition of the shingles to be applied on the Brus house. Upon correction, the Minutes were approved.

The design review request that was presented by Matt Margheim for their property at 603 5th Ave NW, Mount Vernon, IA was considered. This house is in the Ash Park Historic District. The owners are repairing and rehabilitating the front porch of the house. There is enough rotted wood that there will be a new deck structure, including a new flooring. Margheims also would be putting in new balusters and rails, all of wood material. Their future plans are to put the original front columns back on the porch. Upon motion by Randy Brown, seconded by Mike Guerber, the Commission shall issue a certificate of appropriateness for the project.

Sue Astley talked about a potential seminar that members might like to attend at Fort Atkinson, Iowa. It is scheduled for Wednesday, September 17. This would be a possible meeting date for the Commission, so it was decided to postpone our mid-September meeting until September 18 if it is needed.

Sue also reported on progress on the design review guidelines, as well as her drafting of the procedures of the Commission in design review. This will help people who need to come before the Commission to understand what the Commission is looking for, and the procedures to get a certificate of approval.

Sue also indicated that she has received information from the State Historic Commission that indicates there is a requirement that we have an updated inventory of historic structures. Because a property is considered historic if it is more than 50 years old, the Commission should update records to include buildings that become 50 years old. The State Commission also encourages specific review of these properties. Our Commission has been fortunate to have a very thorough review based upon the report of Barbara Long. It was discussed that the 9th grade Mount Vernon History program should be highlighted and information about it be forwarded to the State. Every year, each of the 9th grade students are required to report on one aspect of Mount Vernon history. This frequently relates to historic structures. This generates the updating of historical records, and has been an effective program.

Finally, Sue reports that she has received a draft of the proposed Design Review Guidelines. She will make a draft copy available and wants Commission members to make recommendations or comments on the initial draft.

There were two design review items on the agenda. The first was for replacing an air conditioner at 616 8th Ave. NW. This residence is in the Cornell Historic District. The air conditioning unit was merely replacing one that had failed. There was no change in the exterior, except the old unit is replaced with a new unit. Upon motion by Mary Evans, seconded by Mike Guerber, a Certificate of No Material Effect was approved. Regarding the request for a new handrail at the Garner Residence, which is located in the Cornell Historic District, the Commission will request that there be more information provided before we review the application.

Mary Evans led a discussion on our interest in having a good understanding of the definition of historical significance as it relates to structures. We are fortunate to have the Barbara Long research document as it provides good information about structures. Commission members can use their own insights as to what significant means, but as a Commission, we will need to vote on whether a structure is historically significant in the event an application for demolition should be made for the structure. We are fortunate to have a good history of the community, a good mission statement, and strong individual interest in understanding what makes a structure historically significant.

Mary Evans gave a report on the cemetery commission work. There are people who enjoyed the seminar presented in July and will be active in helping repair and restore gravesites. Mary also mentioned that there is a national celebration scheduled for 2026 as the 250th anniversary of early American cemeteries. Mary indicates our commission has requested to be in charge of the Linn County celebration. She will be having articles about the history and significance of cemeteries.

Mike Guerber reported that there were no houses that changed ownership in any of the historic districts in the past month.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary