

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
February 7, 2026

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 8:30 a.. Commissioners present at City Hall were Duane Eash, Randy Brown, Mike Guerber, Sherry Brayton, Sue Astley, Donnie Moore, Mary Evans, Kim Benesh, Grace Chamberlain and Guy Booth. There were no guests or visitors.

There were no Minutes to approve from the meeting scheduled for January 3, 2026. A quorum was not present for the meeting, so no official business was conducted. The agenda for the meeting was distributed and the Commissioners were asked to review the agenda as the agenda items would be discussed at the next meeting.

There were no design review requests.

Under new business, Randy Brown reported that at the meeting of the Mount Vernon City Council on January 19, 2026, Sue Astley presented a summary of the process that had been undertaken to draft, prepare and finalize revised design guideline for the Mount Vernon Preservation Commission. The City Council has had a chance to review the guidelines and acknowledged that the new guidelines would be helpful for historic preservation and congratulated the Commission on the preparation of the new guidelines. To make the guidelines official, the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission needs to approve the document. Upon motion made by Sue Astley, seconded by Donnie Moore, the revised design review guidelines were unanimously approved.

Upon motion made by Duane Eash, seconded by Donnie Moore, the following resolution was passed: "Resolution. The Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission hereby expresses its appreciation to Suzette Astley for the exemplary leadership she has provided to Mount Vernon Historic Preservation during her term as chairperson of the Commission. We further recognize her contribution as a Commission member, both before and after her term as chairperson of MVHPC. Thank you Suzette Astley."

Sue Astley commented briefly on the work that was necessary to complete the guidelines and acknowledged the significant assistance of Randy Brown, Duane Eash and Edith Dawson. Sue reported that JMT, the company that helped prepare the guidelines, indicated our commission was the best commission they have ever worked with in developing new guidelines.

Randy reported that under new state law requirements, any new member joining the Commission is now required to complete an open meetings and open records training program. This is offered on the internet. It is suggested that other members of the Commission should consider attending the online seminar.

Under old business, Mary Evans reported that she had received historical information about the Mulherin House located on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW. The home is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Milligan. They had found an old insurance policy when they were redoing the attic of the house. It is from the 1950's. There is also information that when Highway 1 was being paved, then known as Dillon's Furrow, the engineer in charge rented a room in the house to oversee construction of the roadway.

Mary gave an update on a program that will be prepared for a cemetery walk. The Commission is working on organizing the walk for some time during the fall of 2026. There will be guided tours, written and spoken information about the cemetery and work on the planning for moving people about the cemetery. Mary also indicated that the large burr oak tree in the cemetery had been taken down. It was a minimum of 165 years old. Mary indicates that through the use of two consultants, there are ten grave markers that are leaning in a dangerous condition. The cost of repairing the gravesites will be around \$2,700. The Commission will work with the City to determine how funding for the repair work can be paid. There are also a number of older markers that need to be reset. As a result of a seminar last summer, there are now trained volunteers who will be able to reset these older stones without other costs to the City.

Mike Guerber said there has been a sale of a house that is located at 615 6<sup>th</sup> St NW, Mount Vernon. He will send information to the new owners regarding the historic district.

Sue Astley led a discussion on the budget for MVHPC. There is \$5,865 left in the budget. Sue suggested that a portion of this could be used for paying registration and attendance fees at the Preserve Iowa conference, which will be held in Ankeny, Iowa early this summer. This could cost between \$700 and \$800 if two people desire to go for two days of the conference. Sue also suggested we hire a company to scan the Campagna photograph collection. It may cost in the area of \$200. Sue would also like to see that we produce a newsletter at least twice a year. The cost of new software to help produce the newsletter would be approximately \$145. We would also have a cost for mailing the newsletter. Other projects that could be pursued relate to the Visitor's Center. There are portions of the center that could use repainting or repair. The question arose as to whether this was the City's responsibility, rather than paying for painting and repair from the HPC budget. The City will be approached to see what they feel their responsibility is for maintenance and repair on the Visitor's Center. If there is unspent money in this fiscal year's budget, it could be used for cemetery repair work. Sue Astley indicated that she has consulted with Rick and Trude Elliott regarding the future of the First Street Community Building. The Elliotts have established a non-profit corporation for ownership of the Center. Part of the history of the Elliotts' ownership of the building is their commitment to have the property be on the National Register of Historic Places. The building may need substantial repair and maintenance in the future. Being on the National Register will help the owner to obtain a State grant for assistance in these repairs. Sue is willing to contact Jennifer Pratt, the consultant who assisted in doing the applications for the registration of the brick houses to the National Register. She estimated the cost could be in the area of \$3,500. After discussion about the project, Duane Eash moved to commit up to \$3,500 from next year's budget to assist in placing the First Street Community Center on the National Register. The motion was seconded by Donnie Moore. The motion carried.

There was a discussion regarding the City's new sign ordinance. This ordinance is allowing sandwich board signs to be placed on the sidewalk in front of downtown buildings. There was concern that there may be difficulty in controlling the type of sign that is being placed. Also, it is not known how many business owners will be wanting to use that type of advertising. The change to the sign ordinance is still pending a final reading by the City Council.

The Commission welcomes Kim Benesh and Grace Chamberlain as new members of the Commission. Grace returns for a second time to the board. She is familiar with the archives at the Cornell Library. Kim brings a wealth of Mount Vernon history to the board.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary