

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
March 7, 2026

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, March 7, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. 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 Minutes of the February 7, 2026 meeting were discussed. Two corrections are needed. The Minutes should indicate that Mary Evans gave a report that the cemetery commission is working on organizing a cemetery walk. Further, the Minutes should reflect that the person who is being contacted to do the consulting work for placing the First Street building on the National Register is Jennifer Price, not Jennifer Pratt. Finally, Mike Guerber indicates that the sale of the house at 615 6<sup>th</sup> St NW did not finalize, so it has not been sold. Subject to these amendments, the Minutes were approved.

Randy Brown indicated that Cornell College has sent a notice that the athletic department will be replacing the turf at the athletic complex. It is not known if an application for a certificate of appropriateness is necessary, as the City may not require any type of building permit. We can address this issue if it comes up this summer.

Grace Chamberlain gave a report on her investigation into making our archives more readily accessible to the public. It would be a good idea to contract to establish a collective management system (CMS) for the archives. There are different platforms that are available to house and display archival material. She indicates there are levels of sophistication and expense that should be considered. Grace suggested the platform should be inclusive of all archival material and readily available. The cost could range from an initial fee of \$2,000 plus \$1,000 per year to other systems that cost substantially less. Grace will put together a proposal as to what a reasonable, well-functioning CMS would cost, as well as the cost of maintaining and adding to the platform as need be.

It was suggested that once we have completed the work of identifying a good CMS, that we make a presentation to the City Council to ask for their support and contribution to the cost of maintaining and updating the HPC's archives as well as other City material and archives.

Randy led the Commission in a discussion of what HPC needs to do as outreach in the community. There have been different ways for HPC to educate the community on our purpose and responsibility. A number of good ideas were suggested by Commission members. This included a semi-annual newsletter, using the local newspaper for announcing events, working on specific projects dealing with areas of the history of the community, and reviving past events, such as the porch tour, brickhouse tour, and initiating tours of the historic districts. Numerous suggestions for this type of outreach were presented and will become a focus of future development.

Sue Astley gave an update regarding the hiring of Jennifer Price to work on the application for the First Street Community Building to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Sue identified a grant that may be helpful in covering a good portion of the

costs. Jennifer Price has given an estimate of the cost for her preparation of the application to be \$6,789. The portion from HPC will come out of next year's budget.

There was a discussion regarding the former audio tour of Ash Park and of the Commercial Historic Districts. The tours were based upon dialing a telephone number and listening to the tour on a cell phone. This system is being shut down, as Cornell College no longer wants to participate in the annual cost. It was also noted that there had been minimal usage of the program and that there is better technology for this type of tour.

Scott Cannon, who has assisted with the IT needs of the Commission, has been able to retrieve the audio history and Sue Astley has been able to get a release of the information so Scott Cannon can put it into a new system that will be available later in the year. It is anticipated that this system will be both audio and video, and would be available through a QR code message attached to each of the buildings. Duane Eash volunteered to remove the current signage on buildings so it will eliminate confusion as to how to join the historical tour that will be available via the QR Code. It was mentioned that once this is in place, it can be known state-wide as the Mount Vernon, Iowa History Tour and can be accessed by many more people.

Randy reminded commission members of the availability of the open meetings training program. Both Kim and Grace, as new members, have completed the training. Mary Evans has also taken it. Randy suggested it could be helpful if all members took the training program, which is available online and takes approximately an hour and a half to complete.

There was some discussion about grants that may be available for historic preservation, including information given at the Linn County Grant Seminar. Sue Astley has a good grasp of grant programs that are available, and that could be helpful to our Historic Preservation Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary