

MINUTES
OF THE
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
August 1, 2026

The Historic Preservation Commission met at the Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, August 1, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. Commission members present were Sue Astley, Kim Benesh, Sherry Brayton, Randy Brown, Duane Eash, Mary Evans, Mike Guerber, Donnie Moore, and Grace Chamberlain Rowray. Not attending were Guy Booth, Edith Dawson, and Danielle Kumley. Laura Nogaj was present for a design review of their property in the Ash Park Historic District, Leigh Bradbury was in attendance from the City of Mount Vernon, and Nathan Countryman was in attendance from the Sun newspaper.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by commission Chair Randy Brown.

Minutes of the meeting of July 8, 2026 were approved upon motion by Duane Eash, seconded by Donnie Moore.

Design Reviews:

The first topic of business was a review of the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the replacement of fencing at the property of Matt Margheim located at 603 5th Ave NW, Mount Vernon, IA, in the Ash Park Historic District. The application showed that the new fencing would replace the existing wood fencing in the same location, and would be made out of wood in the same design as the existing fencing. After no further discussion, a motion to approve the granting of a Certificate of No Material Effect was made by Mike Guerber and seconded by Mary Evans. The motion was approved by voice vote of the commission.

The second design review was for replacement of roof shingles and gutters at the property of Thomas and Laura Nogaj located at 615 6th St NW, Mount Vernon, IA, also in the Ash Park Historic District. Sue Astley made a motion to separate the approvals of the roof and gutters. The commission Chair deferred the motion until the property owner completed her presentation and it was not revisited. Laura first presented information on the shingles to be used and the two possible color selections. The current roof consists of asphalt shingles and the commission had no further questions. Laura then showed information on the replacement gutters, part of which will be a larger size to prevent the overflow occurring with the current gutters. Sue Astley asked for time to discuss the water drainage from the property. The request was denied by the Chair, with concurrence

from Duane Eash, as the topic was outside of the commission's scope. A motion to approve the granting of a Certificate of No Material Effect was made by Donnie Moore and seconded by Duane Eash. The motion was approved by voice vote of the commission.

New Business:

Chair Randy Brown brought up two items, the first being a property at 214 2nd St SE containing a garage that may in the future come before the commission as a demolition request. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), with the application showing the garage as a "non-contributing" structure but still "historically significant." This property was brought up at this meeting to allow the commissioners to do any necessary research in order to make a decision should a demolition request come before the commission.

Randy Brown also informed the commission that T-Mobile is exploring a structure to be placed over a new generator and retaining pool that will be placed in Memorial Park in the Cornell College Historic District. He informed the commissioners that he had provided T-Mobile with information from the Mount Vernon Historical Preservation Design Guidelines to help them design an appropriate structure. No action was necessary at this time but this will likely come before the commission for approval in the near future.

The final item of new business was a request from Professor Michael Feinberg at Cornell College. Randy Brown told the commissioners that he had been contacted by Feinberg regarding a course the professor will be teaching this Fall related to historic preservation, and he may request input from the commission.

Old Business:

Archives/Cemetery Commission:

Grace Chamberlain Rowray had no new updates on the archive digitization project. Grace Chamberlain Rowray, Kim Benesh, and Mary Evans will start on the archives this month. Since no action was taken over the summer regarding having a professional archivist assist, Grace Chamberlain Rowray will find out if it is possible to have the identified professional assist next summer. Grace Chamberlain Rowray recommended we set a rate and include it in our budget for the year. Mary Evans informed the commission that the Sun newspaper found another box of photographs for the archive. Mary Evans also said that the Cemetery Commission will speak at the Lester Buresh Center on October 29.

Home Sales:

Mike Guerber had no updates on home sales in the Historic Districts.

History Tour Plaques:

Duane Eash plans to soon begin attaching the new plaques to the downtown businesses.

Other Topics:

Randy Brown brought up the idea of having a brief “learning session” following the adjournment of the official monthly commission meeting. This would be a pre-selected topic on some aspect of Mount Vernon history presented by a commissioner. Grace Chamberlain Rowray agreed to give a first presentation on the Carnegie Library at Cornell.

Leigh Bradbury discussed the plaque placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in the 1930s to commemorate the old Military Road (now Highway 1). This highway will be rebuilt in the next couple of years and the plaque may be in the path of construction. Leigh stated that Chris Nosbisch recommended that the commission send a letter to the Iowa DOT about preserving the plaque. Randy Brown will work this with Chris Nosbisch.

Mary Evans conveyed the fact that the owners of the First Street Community Center had not yet come before the commission regarding the application to place the building on the NRHP. The commission agreed that the first step is for the owners to come to the commission after they have set up their non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to present their proposal. After that, the commission can vote to allocate funding for the drafting of the NRHP application.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Prepared by Randy Brown, August 1, 2026