

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
September 5, 2026

The Historic Preservation Commission met at Mount Vernon City Hall on Saturday, September 5, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners present at City Hall were Sherry Brayton, Kim Benesh, Mary Evans, Danielle Kumley, Duane Eash, Grace Chamberlain, Sue Astley, Randy Brown, Guy Booth, and Mike Guerber. Guests present were Rick Elliott, Mike Smith, Tom Wolfe, Joe Wolfe, Kelly Wolfe, Leigh Bradbury and Nathan Countryman.

Upon motion by Duane Eash, seconded by Grace Chamberlain, the Minutes of the August 1, 2026 meeting were approved.

There are no design review requests scheduled for this meeting.

Under new business, there was a presentation made on behalf of First Street Community Center. Rick and Trude Elliott are the owners of the building at 222 First Street NE in Mount Vernon. The building has been a community center since 2010. The building has been donated to First Street Community Development Center, Inc, a new non-profit corporation and will continue to serve many of the needs of the community. Because of its historic nature, plans are being made to file an application for inclusion of the building on the National Register of Historic Places. Rick Elliott presented information about the project. HPC has previously agreed to assist in financing the application for inclusion on the National Register. Sue Astley has been working on the proposal to move this project forward. The Commission will need to invite at least three companies to submit a request for proposal for developing the application. Thus far, one company has expressed interest. Sue will distribute the request for a proposal to other companies so we know we have a competitive bid. Leigh Bradbury indicated that we will need to receive approval from the Mount Vernon City Council to use HPC funds in financing the application for the First Street building. The next City Council meeting is September 9, 2026, and it is hoped that there will be enough information available for the City to ok the use of HPC funds for part of the application costs. Sue also reported that there are additional forms that will be needed, which include a proper documentation form. Sue and Randy indicate they will pull information together for this form. We will have an update on the status of this project at our next meeting.

Members of the Wolfe family attended the meeting to give background information regarding their intentions for the work that needs to be done on the Wolfe house. This is one of the historic brick houses that have been added to the National Register of Historic Places. It is unique, as it has one of the early brick homes that is on approximately 7 acres of land within the city limits. Tom Wolfe described work that needs to be done on the property. He looks forward to working with the Commission in identifying the methods for restoring the house. He mentioned in particular issues such as updating windows, doing tuck pointing, and repairing a porch structure of the house. Sue Astley was able to give good information about what types of grants or tax incentives that may be available to the Wolfe family and the circumstances under which they may qualify for financial help. In particular, Sue suggested that creating a preservation plan would be helpful and that the use of a preservationist to do the plan will enhance the credibility of any request for funding. The Wolfe family has invited the Commission to visit their home so we have a full understanding of the importance of the building and of the work that needs to be done. Tom Wolfe mentioned that the house may have been part

of the underground railroad during the 1850's. That rumor has been present for many years. Mary Evans indicated that Dick Thomas had studied this rumor and had determined that the house was not part of the underground railroad. There are no known buildings in Mount Vernon that would have been in that system.

The Commission appreciates the desire of the Wolfe family to restore and retain this important structure.

An agenda item for the meeting consisted of a review of the fiscal year budget for 2027. Randy explained the items on the budget sheet and asked for suggestions as to how to make it understandable to anyone who reviewed it. Randy will continue to design the budget sheet so it accurately represents how the Commission is using its budgeted funds.

Mary Evans had Randy show a video that documents the murals and artwork that are present in the Mount Vernon Community. It is a wonderful video that was produced by Christine Milliken. The video is on the HPC website and has already been reviewed and appreciated by a number of organizations.

Mary also has indicated that Cornell College has a course that focuses on King Chapel and its history. The class is identifying a number of new facts about this historic building. Finally, Mary reported that she has received 12 letters that have been donated that give historic information about the community. She also reports that she continues to add photos to the website so there is a more thorough understanding of the history of Mount Vernon.

Mike Guerber reported that there have been several historically significant houses that have changed hands. This includes the house at 201 7th Ave NW, the house at 402 3rd Ave SW and the house at 419 2nd St SW. The house at 419 2nd St SW, commonly known as the Prall house, had been owned by Cornell. The new owners are eager to proceed with its restoration.

Duane Eash reports that the plaques for the history tours are installed, except for one plaque that needs more work to determine what will be the best site on the building. He hopes to have this completed in the very near future.

No further business being addressed, the meeting adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary