

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Saturday, November 2, 2013

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, November 2, 2013 at 9:15 a.m. Commission members present included Leah Rogers, Sue Hargas, Hugh Lifson, Dick Thomas, Ashley Anthony, Ed Sauter, Janet Budack, Mary Iber and Guy Booth.

Minutes of the October 12, 2013 meeting were approved pursuant to motion by Ed Sauter and seconded by Janet Budack.

In design review, the commission has received a letter from the City asking for feedback on the proposed demolition of the small city-owned building which is located on the west end of the parking lot on the south side of 1st Street West. The building was built in the 1920's. It has been used for a number of businesses over the years. The City has indicated that there has been a major leak in the roof, which has caused the growth of mold in the building. For this reason, the City had to terminate the lease of the business that was in the building. The City has indicated that costs of repair may exceed \$30,000. The value of the building is substantially less. In reviewing this request, the commission looked at the various factors that have been suggested for the pending demolition ordinance. After reviewing these factors, it was determined that this building does not have historical significance. It is not within the commercial historical district. Upon motion made and seconded, Historic Preservation does not resist the City's request to demolish the building. However, it is requested that there be photographic documentation of the current condition of the building, as well as how it appears at its current location. This will be helpful for future reference if anyone is seeking information on the building.

Guy Booth reported on the demolition ordinance progress. He indicated the City will appoint a committee to review the proposed ordinance. The committee will consist of one or two members of historic preservation, a member of City Council, a member of planning and zoning, and perhaps one or two other residents of the City. It is hoped this committee can meet in the near future to make recommendations on getting the ordinance into final form. Guy mentioned that he has responded to the City Attorney by indicating that the City Attorney's office is misconstruing the ordinance. It is not a "historical preservation ordinance," but is a city-wide ordinance that would be the same as the city-wide ordinance for a building permit. If a building permit is needed to initiate construction on a new or existing building, the City should also require a permit for the demolition of an existing building. This is not limited to the historic districts which have been established in Mount Vernon.

Dick Thomas indicates he has made some progress on getting control of the website switched over to the commission. In particular, Mitch Bloomquist will help administer the website. It is also thought that the current information on the website will be transferred to a new program/search engine. Mitch will determine the most appropriate software to be used.

Hugh and Dick gave an update on the Micki Woods mural. The application for a grant funding the hiring of a conservator has been submitted. Leah Rogers gave substantial time and effort to get the grant application completed in a very short period of time so we could meet the deadline. The decision on the grant will be made by the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation in mid December. After we learn of the decision on the availability of the grant, our commission will discuss final budget needs for the project.

Janet Budack indicated that the cemetery records project is moving ahead. However, for legal reasons, the City is asking for three bids for the work of organizing and copying the sanitary records. The Thoreson Group from Cedar Rapids has submitted a bid of approximately \$9,500. We have had proposals in the past from other companies. Janet will assist in getting evidence of the other bids and these can then be presented to the City, meeting the requirement of having three competitive bids on the project. Thoreson Group is from Cedar Rapids. Other companies are from farther away. An important issue with the City is they want to maintain control of the cemetery records, and hopefully the winning bidder will be able to do the copying at City Hall.

Mary Iber indicates that Claire Solak, our summer intern, has provided a table of contents of all archival material and where it is located. The bulk of the material is at the Historic Preservation Commission storage area in the basement of City Hall. The table of contents is very lengthy, and we will determine how it can be placed on the website so it is efficiently used by people who are searching for information about the history of the community.

Mary Iber also indicated that Claire should receive additional compensation for the work she completed during the summer. She has submitted one bill for services, but Mary feels there were additional hours that were worked by Claire, and there is a substantial amount of work she completed which was above and beyond the job description. Thus far, Claire has not submitted a bill that uses up the funds that had been set aside for her summer work. Upon motion made by Ed Sauter and seconded by Ashley Anthony, the commission has decided to complete payment to Claire for the work she completed this summer by payment of an additional \$440. The motion carried.

In discussing the archives, a question arose as to how material is checked out and checked back in. It appears we could upgrade the system that we use. It was decided that the commission will have one of its monthly meetings at City Hall so we can all take a tour of the archive site so we are familiar with how it is set up and how people can arrange to view the material and/or check out certain items of material.

Dick Thomas gave a report on the State Historic Preservation Summit meeting scheduled for 2014 in Cedar Rapids. This is the annual meeting of State Historic Preservation. Dick indicates that we have been pushing toward having greater recognition of rural historic and cultural resources. Dick proposes that we make a presentation at the conference highlighting what our committee has done, especially regarding the development of our website. Leah Rogers has made substantial contribution to the rural resources in Linn County, so this could also be presented at the

conference. Finally, Dick suggested that we make Mount Vernon available as a tour for people attending the state conference. We can work on our proposal for providing an educational segment during the summit conference.

Dick Thomas indicated that we need to submit our budget request for the next fiscal year by mid-December. He requested that we appoint an executive committee to draft the proposed budget. Dick appointed himself, Guy Booth, Ed Sauter and Leah Rogers to pull together the information needed for our annual request. The motion to establish this executive committee was made by Ed, and seconded by Mary Iber. The motion passed. It was decided that our budget request should be increased to see if we can get funding in the amount of \$2,000 so we will have matching grants available to any individual who begins the research necessary to have structures placed on the National Historic Registry.

Dick also discussed the multiple property initiative we should undertake. In particular, he suggested we do the research on all properties that were originally shown to be proposed for the National Historic Registry so we know who the current owners are, and whether there are any restrictions to inclusion of the property on the National Historic Registry. Once this information is known, we can then plan to contact the property owners to determine if they are interested in looking at a National Historic Registration for their property. If so, we will hopefully have matching grant funds available.

Dick reported that the high school history class that deals with Mount Vernon history has done an excellent job in having students present projects on Mount Vernon history. Dick indicated it would be helpful to the commission as well as the school district if a high school student was appointed to serve on the commission in an adjunct position. It will be non-voting, but it will help younger people understand the importance of maintaining good records of the history of the community.

Janet Budack indicates that she will be leaving for her winter home in Green Valley, AZ within the next few days. She will not return until April, 2014. Because she will be unable to attend the monthly meetings of December, January, February and March, or any special meetings that are called, she asked to take a leave of absence from the commission, thereby eliminating the requirement that she be included for determining the existence of a quorum. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the commission has granted Janet Budack a leave of absence until April 30, 2014 at which time she shall once again become an active member of the commission.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for December 7, 2013 at 9:15 a.m. Notice will be sent to the commissioners as to the location of the December 7 meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary