

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Saturday, November 5, 2016

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, November 5, 2016. Members present were Hugh Lifson, Leah Rogers, Mary Evans, Susan Hargus, Sarah Kelly, Patty Westerkamp, Ed Sauter, Janet Budack and Guy Booth.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Minutes of the September 1, 2016 meeting of HPC were approved.

Design review of an application for a permit to demolish buildings was forwarded from the City zoning administrator for review. This request is to demolish two brick houses that are located along 5th Avenue South on the Cornell campus. Attending the meeting on behalf of Cornell College was Deanne Rexroat and Joel Miller. Also in attendance was Randy Clarahan of Mortenson Construction, Stephanie McDaniel of BWBR Architects, and by telephone, Craig Peterson of BWBR Architects.

It is the desire of Cornell College to have the two brick houses demolished to make room for site preparation of the proposed science building. The college responded to two requests made by the Commission. The first request was to determine if the two houses could be moved to a different part of a campus so they could continue to be used for campus activities. The college has received information from a building mover indicating that the costs of moving both houses to a different site on the campus would be between \$200,000 and \$250,000. There would also be costs associated with rehabilitating the buildings so they meet all required building codes. This additional cost is burdensome to the college in the total budget for the project to construct a new science building.

Secondly, HPC requested that the architect determine if the new science building could be adjusted so that they would not need to demolish the two houses. Ms. McDaniel gave a presentation of the difficulties of changing the site of the building in terms of access, window space for the proposed science labs in the building and compliance with international building code requirements of the new building being at least 60 feet from any other building. The change of site of the building would require additional retaining walls and re-design of the entrance to the building, which would then have to be on the 3rd floor. The architect indicated the additional costs would be in excess of \$600,000.

It was brought up by members of the Commission that the plans that had been made by Cornell College were done without any pre-planning or contact with HPC. HPC has the duty of seeing that historically significant buildings are preserved in the community. In applying the interior secretary's guidelines, effort should be made to have buildings remain as they are, and not to be demolished for the convenience of new construction. The Commission feels the college has not accepted their responsibility for working with HPC to save buildings, rather than demolish buildings.

Comments from guests who were in attendance, which consisted of several faculty members from Cornell who will be teaching in the new science building, reminded the Commission of how important it is to have the new science facility, and the consequential

impact to the College, as well as to the City if the lack of good educational facilities adversely affects the success of the Cornell. The Commission pointed out that there has to be good reason for allowing the demolition of a building. Factors to be considered are the financial considerations of saving the buildings, the good faith attempts by the college to find alternatives to demolition of the buildings and consideration of ways to preserve the architectural features of the buildings, as well as have a well-documented history of the buildings before they are demolished. The Commission reviewed the difference between a certificate of appropriateness and a certificate of no material effect. The certificate of no material effect seems to be most relevant as it deals with the historic district as a whole, and not just the two buildings to be demolished.

Upon motion made by Guy Booth and seconded by Sarah Kelly, the Commission approved a certificate of no material effect. Reasons for approval are set forth in the motion. A copy of the motion is attached hereto and made a part of these Minutes.

A number of people were present and spoke from the audience. Persons present were Brian Johns, Jai Shanata, Craig Tepper, Nathan Countryman, Marty Condon and Nor Meyer.

In old business, Mary Evans indicated that she has reviewed the Mount Vernon High School student history projects. All of the projects are submitted digitally, so Mary will be able to select the projects which should be placed on the HPC website. She felt the students did a good job on doing research regarding Mount Vernon.

Mary Evans also gave a summary of the consultancy report submitted by Timothy Walch. He reviewed the records storage area and our efforts to preserve historical records. Mary submitted a copy of Mr. Walsh's report to the Commission. In summary, Mr. Walsh felt that our efforts in historic preservation of documents, as well as other work that we have done as a Commission has been outstanding. He knows of no other community that has done a better job in archival record storage and maintaining the integrity of the historic elements of the community. It was rewarding to have him give such accolades regarding the activities of the Commission. Mary also indicated that there are additional supplies that are needed for storage of material. She requested that she be allowed to purchase 20 flip-top boxes and file folders that are needed. The cost will be \$232.30. Upon motion by the Commission, which carried, it was decided that this type of architectural preservation material can be purchased without seeking prior approval, so long as material that is being ordered does not exceed \$1,000. The invoices for all materials purchased shall be submitted to the chairperson so that the Commission is always aware of its expenditures and budget balances.

Dick Thomas advises that we should continue to work on prioritizing the projects that we undertake. In particular, we should have a specific program for dealing with Cornell College so the problems created by the demolition of the two houses does not become a re-occurring situation.

Hugh Lifson reported on the Mickey Woods Mural Dedication Ceremony. The ceremony was extremely well done.

Janet Budack announced that next May, during Historic Preservation Month, that we will conduct a seminar for people who own historic properties that are not on the historic register. It is hoped we can identify a number of properties that can move toward being placed on the register. Janet also requested a leave of absence from the Commission as she will be living in Arizona from November through April. The request for leave of absence was approved.

Under new business, Leah indicated that budget planning will be taking place in the next couple of months. Also, she indicated the annual CLG report will be due in February, so members should advise Leah of any activities they had attended that should be included in the report.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 3, 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary

RESOLUTION

Upon motion made by Guy Booth, seconded by Sarah Kelly, the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission shall issue a certificate of no material effect, based upon no effect to the Cornell College Historic District as a whole, and further, based upon the following factors:

1. That Cornell College attempted to find alternatives to demolishing the two houses requested in the proposed site plan.
2. That Cornell College can find no economically or technically feasible alternatives to the removal of the houses.
3. That Cornell College has committed to engaging in the architectural salvage of both houses, and further, that the College will strive to incorporate architectural material from the two houses into the proposed science building to be constructed on the site.
4. A roll call vote on said motion was made. Commission members Lifson, Rogers, Evans, Hargus, Kelly, Westerkamp, Budack and Booth voted in favor of said motion. Commission member Sauter abstained. The motion passed.