

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, June 2, 2016

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Thursday, June 2, 2016. Commission members present included Leah Rogers, Janet Budack, Mary Evans, Carine Klein, Hugh Lifson, Patty Westerkamp, Dick Thomas, Paul Waelschli and Ed Sauter. The Minutes of the April 2, 2016 meeting were approved upon motion by Janet Budack and Patty Westerkamp.

Joel Miller and Deanne Rexroat from Cornell College presented preliminary plans for the new science building on campus. This is for discussion only and was not a pre-review presentation.

The new science building is part of a \$35 Million dollar project for the college. This project will include a renovation of the West Science Center and the construction of a new three-story building. The building is tentatively located to be on the east side of the campus, adjacent to 5th Avenue South. The architect for the project is BWBR Architects. The architect was chosen from approximately 8 competing firms. Joel Miller described how the college wants to continue to develop its ped mall concept through the campus to 5th Avenue. The new science building will be along the ped mall.

The main discussion regarding the building concerned the location of the building and the proposed demolition of two historic brick houses on 5th Avenue. Joel indicates that the houses will need to be demolished to make room for the re-grading of the site, and preparation of the site for construction of the building. The actual building will not be on the location of the two brick houses. Joel indicated that of the two houses, one is in fairly poor condition with a sinking foundation. No one has lived in the property for approximately a year. The other brick house, which is painted white, was said to contain asbestos and to have lead paint in the building. This residence is occupied. It is assumed that any lead paint or asbestos is fully concealed so it is not a hazard to the occupant. It may, however, pose a hazard if the building is demolished. Joel also mentioned that he has had a house-moving firm look at the properties and he was told it would be impractical to try to move the buildings.

Leah Rogers indicated that we should probably have our own inspection done of the buildings to confirm their condition, and to confirm whether or not they are structures that could be moved to make way for the science buildings rather than being demolished. Upon motion by Hugh Lifson and seconded by Janet Budack, Leah Rogers was instructed to hire Doug Steinmetz, an architect that she knows who could conduct the inspection and write a report for the commission. The motion passed unanimously. The commission feels it is important to have accurate information regarding the condition of the buildings so the residents of Mount Vernon can be assured that if there is a decision to demolish them, that there may not have been any other option available for the saving of the structures. The report can also identify material from the houses that could be salvaged.

Members of the commission gave views of the pros and cons of the design of the building. It is a large structure and will be very prominent in the proposed location and

will have a dramatic impact on the neighborhood. A final design of the building has not been completed and it is hoped that a more finished design of the building will be presented to the commission before the designs are accepted by the college. Questions were also asked regarding the long-term plans of historic properties on the Cornell campus. The entire campus is in a registered historic district and the city has a responsibility to maintain these districts. Concerns were expressed whether the college was failing to do the routine maintenance to preserve the condition of the buildings.

It is agreed that as Cornell's plans progress, they will keep the commission informed. Cornell has not filed a request for a building permit, nor a request for demolition of the structures or for initiation of site development.

Finally, Joel Miller gave an update on the renovation of the clock in the clock tower on King Chapel. The college continues to find exciting information about the quality and age of the clock. Joel also gave an update on the renovation of Bracket house, which has been supervised by Ed and Jan Sauter. A public reception and open house will be held on July 1, 2016.

Under old business, Hugh Lifson discussed the need to schedule an event as a grand opening of the Mickey Woods mural in City Hall. Hugh also raised questions about a piece of artwork in the Cornell collection that may need better attention than what it has been receiving.

Guy Booth gave an update on the effort to get the proposed demolition ordinance before the City Council. There will be a presentation in July if possible to encourage the council to have a public hearing for passage of the proposed ordinance.

Under new business, Mary Evans gave a report on the need to purchase a number of Hollinger boxes for preservation of archival documents. She has been able to design a box that will meet the need of some of the special archive books. The total cost of the boxes will be \$264.11. Upon motion by Dick Thomas, seconded by Leah Rogers, the motion to purchase the boxes passed.

Leah indicated that we need to get an invoice for payment of the wages of the intern for time he has spent in May and June working on our website project. The invoice needs to be submitted by mid-June so it will come out of this fiscal year's budget.

Ed Sauter gave a report on the work that has been completed on Bracket House. He described the changes that have been made, the update, and the fact that some of the old furniture has been returned to family members of Mr. and Mrs. Bracket, for whom the house is named.

This meeting is considered to be our July meeting. The next meeting will be in August, unless there is a need for design review prior to that time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary