

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Saturday, September 6, 2014

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, September 6, 2014. Commission members present included Leah Rogers, Hugh Lifson, Guy Booth, Susan Hargus, Janet Budack, Patty Westerkamp, Sara Kelly, Dick Thomas, and Dianne Osmun. Also present was Francesca Thompson, a liaison from the Mount Vernon City Council.

Carl and Jane Thoresen were present to give a report on the cemetery records project. They indicate that the work is approximately 75% complete. They were able to give a demonstration of the database records that have been produced. The cemetery records books have been digitized and are now in the database. This information allows for a search in a number of categories, including year of death, location in the cemetery, the occupation of the decedent, military service of the decedent, and other family information. The City clerk's office will continue to use the cemetery record books to record information, but will also be able to enter the information into the database. Eventually, the direct entry into the database may supplant the use of the older books.

Carl Thorson indicated that the data that is being scanned into the database is not available through a link to the Mount Vernon City website or the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation website. However, using the computer information, a person is able to request the location of a burial site and determine if it is a family plot, and who else may be buried at the site. This update to the cemetery records will be of substantial assistance to the City, as well as to anyone seeking information about the burial site of a family member. It was recommended that the Thoresens give a report to City Council to keep them advised as to the progress of the project.

The next item of business was regarding the 7th Street project in the Ash Park Historic District. Guy Booth gave a summary of what has transpired, both with the City Council meeting and the construction meeting. Overall, it is clear that the City failed to follow the procedures set forth in the City ordinances. The discussion centered on how to have better communication with the City Administration so that the notice of a construction project is forwarded to Historic Preservation. Francesca Thompson indicated that she is working on a proposal that will assist both the City and residents of the community in having better communication. She has approached City Council members and they are in favor of an established procedure to be followed. It is important to make sure City employees are familiar with the requirements of notice to Historic Preservation when projects are located within the historic districts, even if a building permit is not required for the City. The Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Ordinance still requires the City to follow the procedures of requesting a certificate of appropriateness or in determination of no material effect on any City project that falls within the jurisdiction of the Historic Preservation Commission. There was additional discussion about other issues that citizens may want to pursue, but it was determined that this is outside of the purview of Historic Preservation. The Commission formally acknowledged their appreciation for Francesca to be present at the meeting.

Hugh Lifson gave a report on the trip scheduled to LeClaire, Iowa on September 13. He gave a summary of the itinerary of the trip, and then checked to see who was going to be attending. He will be responsible for making sure there is adequate transportation for the trip. Hugh has done a great job in arranging for people at LeClaire to give good information about their historic preservation projects.

Leah gave a report on the preservation summit held in Cedar Rapids. She indicated that Mike and Val Smith received an award for their renovation of the second floor of the Baumann Building. It would be a good idea to put together a seminar for a presentation of the steps that people can take to qualify for state and federal tax credits on preservation projects. Overall, the presentation made by members of the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission were well-received. The presentation of material on the website was especially impressive to members of commissions in other cities.

Dick Thomas indicated there has been no progress on completion of the restoration of the Micky Woods mural. He will follow-up to see if we can get a scheduled date of completion.

Dick Thomas reported that we are continuing to make progress on the Historic Preservation website. All material has been moved from our old website to the new website. Dianne Osmon reported that we need to complete the tags on a number of pictures. We also need to make sure that the references in the material are consistent. For instance, should Mount Vernon be spelled "Mount Vernon" or "Mt. Vernon?" We should be consistent on how this is approached. Dianne indicates she is working with Brook Bergantzel, who is a professor at Cornell College to complete a step-by-step booklet on the procedure for using the website. Dianne indicates there is a need for volunteers to proof read the material on the website, as well as work on tags.

Leah reported that there is no new information on the traffic signals in downtown Mount Vernon. The DOT has designated the design for signals controlling Hwy 1. It may be 7 or 8 months before the lights are installed. The City will be using the recommendation of HPC for the base and the poles for the lights, but the DOT is recommending an extended arm for those on 1st Avenue.

The porch tour is scheduled for September 21, 2014. Leah indicates we still need additional volunteers. She also indicated that we could use an additional musician group for the tour.

Leah also reported that the audio tour material is moving toward completion. Historic Preservation is putting up plaques for a number of buildings that will be on the audio tour. It is hoped this will be completed during the rest of this year.

Under new business, Hugh Lifson announced that there is an art opening at Cornell which features former students and professors.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 4, 2014.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary