

MINUTES  
OF  
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
March 6, 2019

The Historic Preservation Commission met on March 6, 2019. Members present were Hugh Lifson, Machele Pelkey, Leah Rogers, Mary Evans, Suzette Astley, Peter Ault, and Guy Booth. Guests present were Heather Flynn, zoning administrator, and Jake Krob and Casey Westoff.

Two design review issues are on the agenda. First, Jake Krob was present regarding the application for a certificate of appropriateness for the signs that will be on Mount Vernon Confections. The business has recently changed hands, and the new owner desires to have additional advertising signs in the windows. This application was before the Commission at the March 2, 2019 meeting, but there were questions regarding the allowable size of the proposed signs. Heather Flynn indicated that the proposed signs fit well within the regulations of the sign ordinance for downtown commercial buildings.

There was some confusion as to whether the signs included more than the graphic that was shown in the picture. From the photograph, it appeared the sign had a background that covered the substantial part of the window. Jake Krob indicated that was merely a misrepresentation of the photograph. The windows will be clear, except for the actual graphic that will be placed on the window. There was some commentary on the separate signs that appear along the base of the window. Mr. Krob acknowledged that this could be reviewed with Rickard Sign Company, and they will experiment with script on the windows, as opposed to script on a colored background. They will choose the one that seems to be most appealing to the concept of the confectionary store.

Upon motion by Mary Evans, seconded by Suzette Astley, the certificate of appropriateness was approved.

Casey Westoff was present for the design review for a kitchen renovation in their home located at 406 2<sup>nd</sup> St. SW. The application for the certificate of appropriateness was discussed at the March 2 meeting, and a couple of questions arose. Mr. Westoff was present so he could review the proposed plans with the Commission. The Commission is only concerned with the changes to the exterior of the building. The interior kitchen design is not within the jurisdiction of the Commission. In particular, the Commission explained that the Westoff residence is historic and has windows that are architecturally significant. Plans for the kitchen renovation would include the elimination of a window on the east side of the first floor of the house. It was suggested that the location of the window be preserved by leaving in place the framing of the window. It was suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Westoff could choose whatever design they would like in what would have been the window opening, but leaving the reference to the window would preserve the historical and architectural integrity of that side of the house. Mr. Westoff was very receptive to reviewing this with the contractor for the project and was interested in the suggestions that were offered. The Westoffs will review the options regarding the window and will report to HPC as to their more finalized plans. The Commission also suggested that the Westoffs look at the new 3-part window that will be in the kitchen to attempt to find windows that would most closely resemble windows from the early 1900's. The Commission expressed

appreciation to Mr. Westoff for bringing his plan to the Commission so we had a better understanding. An application for certificate of appropriateness will be presented to the Commission at a later date.

Leah indicated the Minutes of the March 2, 2019 meeting needed to be reviewed for approval. Hugh Lifson pointed out that his comments about the Venetian style of the Russell house referred particularly to the front of the house, and not to the rear of the house where a new porch would be added. The Minutes should reflect that he was referring to the front of the house. Secondly, Suzette Astley asked that the Minutes more accurately reflect that the grant program that could come from City TIF funds included not only moderate income families who desire to work on renovation projects, but also would apply to renovation projects in the downtown commercial district. This could include repointing of buildings and work on the buildings to improve windows and other architectural features.

The Minutes, after addition of these corrections, were approved.

Leah indicates that because of the pressure of her business, as well as the fact that she commutes to and from Iowa City every day has caused her to have a difficult time keeping up with all of the issues that come before historic preservation. In particular, it could be helpful if the design review responsibilities could be shifted from Leah to other members of the Commission. Guy Booth suggested that there be a rotation of members of the Commission to be in charge of design review, with each rotation lasting two or three months. This would allow all of the members to be more thoroughly involved in setting up the design review meetings, and in working with applicants as they get ready for the meeting. It was decided that Leah will prepare a summary of steps that are needed from start to finish when there is a request for design review. This would be the template that would be followed by any member of the Commission who is in charge of design review for a period of time. This will be discussed further at the next HPC meeting.

Mary Evans presented information regarding the Hart Family Fund. This is a fund that issues grant money for Main Street members who are doing renovation work on their structures. This is not for bricks and mortar type work, but would be for other projects to enhance the historic preservation needs of buildings. Mary pointed out that this would be a grant that requires dollar-for-dollar matching. One type of project would be to hire an architect as a consultant to report on the needs of a building, and in particular, on the visitor's center. We will try to determine the projected cost of the review of the building and the report by an architect as to work that needs to be done. Mary mentioned that a Mr. Steinmetz, who has done some consultation work in Mount Vernon could give us an idea of the cost of that type of a project. In this way, we would know what amount of money needed to be raised locally if a dollar-for-dollar grant become involved.

The Commission appreciated the attendance of Heather Flynn, as she can be extremely helpful in making sure that historic preservation concerns are met by the City, and so the Commission understands what needs to be done to protect the community and stay within the historic preservation ordinance. It became clear that a review of the sign ordinance may be helpful to clarify issues that may be inadequately addressed in the current ordinance. We will look forward to working with her to resolve any problems that arise in the administration of the historic preservation ordinance.

With no further business being presented, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary