

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
July 6, 2019

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Saturday, July 6, 2019 at the Mount Vernon Visitors Center. Members present were Leah Rogers, Ed Sauter, Mary Evans, Caroline Kelly, Suzette Astley, Machele Pelkey, and Guy Booth. Also present were Karen Morgan from Cornell College and Aaron Rittenhouse, consultant who is assisting Cornell in window renovation in several Cornell buildings.

Upon motion made and seconded, the Minutes of the meeting of June 12, 2019 were approved.

The first design review agenda item relates to the replacement of a fence at 605 6th St NW. This is property owned by Steve and Jessica Wallace. The Wallaces replaced a chain link fence along the Easterly lot line. Neither the owners, nor their fence contractor had approached the city for a building permit, so the fence was replaced with new fencing. The City is now requesting that a formal building permit be approved and because this property is in the Ash Park Historic District, a certificate from HPC is required. Discussion regarding the fence indicates that this is not a controversial subject. However, it is another occasion when contractors fail to appreciate the requirements of the historic districts for obtaining approval prior to construction work. Upon motion made by Ed Sauter, seconded by Caroline Kelly, the Commission approved a certificate of no material effect for the project.

The second design review request comes from Suzette Astley and Larry Hansen for the addition of a storage shed to be placed next to the garage. Suzette was present to discuss the project, the location of the shed and the material used for construction of the shed. A building permit is not required by county ordinance, however, a permit is required by the City of Mount Vernon. This property is located in the Ash Park District at 703 5th Ave. NW. Upon motion made by Mary Evans, seconded by Caroline Kelly, a certificate of no material effect was approved. Suzette abstained from voting.

Cornell was represented at the meeting by Karen Morgan and Aaron Rittenhouse. Cornell is undertaking several projects for repair work on three buildings. In particular, this is a pre-review for window repair and replacement at College Hall and at Old Sem. There are approximately 90 windows that will be affected in each of the two buildings. Questions arose regarding the propriety of doing renovation and repair work on the wood windows, as opposed to having them be replaced with new windows. The design of the windows will be compatible with the architecture of each of the buildings. However, under standards of the Secretary of Interior for Historic Preservation, it is recommended that before a final decision is made, that Cornell determine whether wood windows can either be repaired, or replaced with wood windows. The Commission requested that the contractor contact Wadsworth Historic Window Repair in Decorah to determine what the cost of a renovation project of the existing windows would be. The Commission is sensitive to costs in maintaining historic structures, but needs to understand the difference in cost between renovation, as opposed to total replacement. Cornell indicates they are very willing to get the quotes for this type of a project. The windows, however they are

constituted, will be double-hung windows that will have the same appearance as the historic windows. Cornell will give an updated report on this as soon as they have the information.

The third building that Cornell is working on is the repair of windows and the roof of Alley Chapel. The roof will be replaced with similar shingles. The windows will also be reviewed to determine the cost differential between repair/replacement of wood windows as opposed to non-wood windows. Cornell will include this information in their next report. The Commission greatly appreciates the efforts Cornell is making to see that the historic nature of their campus is maintained.

Ed Sauter gave an update on the Garner house project. It has been reported that a window on the second story above the front porch has been located. This window had been covered over in the past. The Garners propose restoring the window, as it will provide light to the upper hallway on the second floor. It will also bring the house back to its original design, which will be an attractive statement for the front of the house.

Ed also reported that because of the location of the garage on the property, the City will not approve any attachment of the garage to the house. The garage is located less than the amount of space needed for setback on the south side. Consequently, the garage that is in existence will remain as is, but the Garners will construct a new garage that will be in front of the old garage, and will comply with the setback and distance between structure placement required in the zoning ordinances. When the drawings are completed for the project, the Garners will be applying for a building permit and will have final review of the project for the appropriate certificate of approval. The Commission, by consensus, indicates that the plans presented by Ed for the Garner house do comply with the historic nature of the property which is located in the Cornell historic district.

Under new business, Leah reports that Dick Thomas has prepared a letter regarding Leslie Timbel and her contributions to the historic preservation at Cornell College. A copy of this letter has been published in the Cornell Report.

Leah gave a reminder of the Historic Preservation seminar that will be held in Maquoketa on August 3 and 4. Leah also gave a report on the State meeting that resulted in the approval of the 11 brick house nominations. She indicated there were some minor questions raised, but the Commission was very impressed with the quality of the reports and the work that both Leah and Jennifer Price have done to have these 11 structures be approved for the National Register of Historic Places.

Mary Evans gave an update on the archive project for the summer that has been worked on by Adrianna Pacha. Mary indicates she has done superior work on completing the genealogy of all of the businesses in the commercial historic district. The research by Ms. Pacha has identified every business that has been located in each of the buildings since the date the building was constructed. The research came from reading old newspaper articles, looking at city directories, and visiting with people who own property in the district. This genealogy will be on the website in the near future. Mary also indicates that we need to continue to budget annually for archival quality boxes for storage of printed information. She also suggests that we have a list of projects that will benefit from summer interns into the future. Mary also indicates that the intern will be working on some oral history interviews of people in the community.

Machele asked the question about how we might get historic preservation information to people who own structures that are considered to have some historical significance. These structures were identified in the City wide inventory that took place in the 1970's. Suggestions were made that this could be done through a newsletter that could be sent to the address of all the buildings that have been identified as historically significant. This could also be done electronically, or perhaps could be combined with the city's regular letter that is sent to all residents. We could identify which properties would receive this historic preservation insert. This could be done on a regular basis.

Caroline gave a brief report on the brick home tour which will be September 29. There will be two sessions; one from noon until 2:30 p.m. and the other from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. She feels the maximum tickets could be sold for either session would be 150. She is indicating the ticket price will be \$25.00. There are five houses that are currently identified as structures that can be part of the tour. Caroline still needs to identify volunteers to be present at the houses to answer questions. It was suggested she check with the counselor at Mount Vernon High School, as there are a number of students who have signed up for volunteer service projects and recognition. Caroline mentioned that she is arranging for a van that can be used to help transport people between houses. She will keep us informed of other developments.

It appears we will need to meet July 17 at 5:30 p.m. for our mid-month meeting. Leah will send an agenda as we approach that date.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary