

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
August 29, 2020

The Historic Preservation Commission met via Zoom on Saturday, August 29, 2020 at 9:15 a.m. Members present on Zoom were Leah Rogers, Suzette Astley, Susan Hargus, Janet Budack, Hugh Lifson, Ed Sauter, Mary Evans and Guy Booth. Also in attendance via Zoom was Isaac Weddington.

The Minutes of the meeting of August 1, 2020 were, upon motion, approved.

The first item of business was a request for pre-review concerning a carriage house renovation at 712 6th Ave. NW. This house is in the Ash Park District. Isaac Weddington, the owner of the property was present and discussed his ideas for replacement of windows on the north side of the attached garage. This is the structure that has been described as the Carriage House. The garage entrance faces 6th Avenue NW. There is one window on the north side, and because the Weddingtons desire to use this portion of their house as a recreational/entertainment area, they desire to have additional windows. Mr. Weddington was able to connect into his computer and show the various options that were available. The Commission discussed the various types and designs of window to work through what would be most appropriate for the historic nature of the property, and still be consistent with the planned usage of the structure. Mr. Weddington was able to use the assistance of HPC to work toward finalization of his plans. When he is ready to proceed with the work, he will need a building permit and an application for a certificate of appropriateness.

At this point in the meeting, the Secretary, Guy Booth lost the audio portion of the meeting, and was unable to hear any of the conversations for the rest of the meeting. By preparing a sign and showing it on the Zoom meeting website, Suzette Astley volunteered to take notes and prepare the Minutes for the remainder of the meeting. This voluntary service is greatly appreciated. The remainder of the Minutes are prepared by Suzette Astley.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary

Minutes of 8/29/2020 meeting of MVHPC

Cornell College discovered damage to the roof of Russell Residence Hall following the August 10, 2020 derecho and has submitted a building permit application and COA application for design review by the Commission. The College's building permit and COA specify that the repair will be done with materials like those already on the roof. Sue Hargus moved for approval with specification of No Material Effect, and Ed Sauter seconded. Issue passed on voice vote.

Mary Evans reported that the Lion's Club minutes that are on loan to us were not affected by the recent water problem in the Mount Vernon Archives as the Lion's documents were stored in her home. She reported the receipt of 52 custom made boxes for storage of Assessors documents. The \$1300 cost of the boxes is to be paid by the City of Mount Vernon. Mary noted that she is intensively monitoring the Archives for signs of mildew spread but has not noted any reason for concern at this point.

Mary also reported that the new MVHPC website is scheduled to go live on Thurs. Sept. 3. The cover page will be a triptych showing Mount Vernon's 3 historic districts. The members noted appreciation for Mary's extensive work on this project. Mary took photos following the Aug. 10 derecho that she intends to upload to the Commission's web site.

In other business, Leah Rogers noted that she had received a resignation letter from Commissioner Hugh Lifson indicating that because he no longer resides in Mt. Vernon, he is no longer eligible to serve on the Commission. Leah read the resignation letter to the commission, in which Hugh expressed the satisfaction he has received from his long service on the Commission. Hugh also expressed a desire to continue to come to Commission meetings as a guest and to continue to receive Commission minutes. Members expressed their appreciation for Hugh's service and voted to formalize that in a letter to come from the Commission Chair.

The Commission received one application for the position recently vacated by Machel Pelkey. Sue Astley made the motion that Donald Moore be recommended to fulfill the remaining year of the open position, and Mary Evans seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote. There was one application for the position vacated by Hugh Lifson, whose term will be completed in September. Ed Sauter made the motion that Duane Eash be recommended to fulfill the open 3 year term beginning in September, and Janet Budak seconded. Motion passed by voice vote. Our recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

Leah Rogers reported on results of her Letter to the Editor in the Sun noting assistance available for damage to historic buildings. She said that she received reports on the damage to the Rueben Ash home owned by the Maurices, to the high-style Craftsman home owned by the Sutherlands, and to the building housing the Sing Along Café and the building formerly housing Zoe's Pet Deli. Guy Booth also reported that there was damage to his historic house in the Ash Park Historic District. Leah noted that the Zoe's building is not in the historic district and had not been recommended as a historic property; therefore, the owner will likely need to contact FEMA for individual building assistance through their regular disaster aid program rather than go through FEMA's historic building program.

Leah then reported on the agencies and people who are responsible for assisting with repair of historic buildings from the derecho disaster. Now that there has been a Federal disaster declaration, FEMA is involved and it has a special program for historic buildings. This time around, that program is being handled by the Department of the Interior, and the person whose region includes Iowa is Courtney Hoover. She will be working directly with FEMA and the State Historic Preservation Office concerning aid for damaged historic buildings in Iowa. She has asked that persons with damaged historic properties contact her directly at 303-478-3373. Leah noted that she and Steve Maurice have had rewarding interactions with Hoover, who was generous with her time, encouraging in coming assistance, and receptive to more interaction.

Leah reported that because of the extensive damage to the Maurice home, the building has been declared uninhabitable and is in need of immediate assistance. Leah applied on behalf of the Commission for the services of historic architect, Doug Steinmetz, of Cedar Rapids under the State Historical Society of Iowa's Field Services technical assistance program. This HRDP-affiliated program pays for Steinmetz's time to conduct a field assessment of the damage to the Reuben Ash House and prepare a report that will assess the damage, its repairability, and potential cost of such repairs. He will visit the Maurice house this coming Thursday. It is hoped that this assessment will provide the information the Maurices may need to save their historic home from demolition and to help negotiate with the insurance company and FEMA. As part of the Field Services program, the applicant is required to pay for the reimbursable expenses of Steinmetz, which will probably be limited to mileage to and from Cedar Rapids. As the applicant, the Commission will need to pay these expenses. Janet Budak moved that the Commission pay the cost of Mr. Steinmetz's mileage to and from Mount Vernon and Cedar Rapids, and Sue Hargus seconded. Motion passed by voice vote.

Leah summarized what she knew of grave damage to historic structures in Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Alburnett.

Mary Evans took a screen shot of those in attendance at the meeting and requested permission to show the image that includes our names on the MVHPC web site. All agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.

Next meeting Sept. 16 at 5:30.