

MINUTES
OF
MOUNT VERNON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
September 7, 2019

The Historic Preservation Commission met at 9:15 a.m. on Saturday, September 7, 2019 at the Visitors Center. Members present were Leah Rogers, Susan Hargus, Peter Ault, Machele Pelkey, Hugh Lifson, Caroline Kelly, Suzette Astley, Ed Sauter and Guy Booth. Guests present were: Grace Chamberlain, Mike Smith, Cari Morgan, Ed Wygnal and Aaron Rittenhouse. The Minutes of the meeting of August 14, 2019 were approved.

There are two pre-review requests for today's meeting. The first comes from Mike Smith, owner of the building that houses Bauman & Co. Mike is in the process of applying for a Main Street grant, and wants to have HPC review his plans so that we can be supportive of the grant application. Mike did not have any information regarding the timeline for the grant application or what amount the grant will pay if he is selected for receiving funds from the grant. There are several exterior changes that are being contemplated. The most significant is Mike's desire to replace the front windows of the building. They are large windows and during the winter, because they are uninsulated, allows a good deal of ice to form, which in turn causes damage to the building as the ice eventually melts. Mike presented plans that suggest lowering the transom above the main windows by 14 inches and thus making the main window 14 inches shorter. Mike feels there will be little, if any, lost window space, nor will there be much of a change in the look of the front of the building. The current windows are not the original windows designed for the building. There was a good deal of discussion about the material to be used and the color of the window frames and supported structure. Mike indicates he will seek our advice on what will be the most appropriate colors for the windows. Peter Ault suggested that Mike consider reversing the change of the windows by leaving the transom windows in place and having a 14 inch wooden sill at the bottom of the window. This could result in less construction in replacing the windows. Mike and Peter will discuss this to determine the feasibility of this alternate approach.

Mike also indicates that he is going to be working on the parking lot at the rear of the building. It is currently gravel and is quite messy. He intends to put in a hard surface for the parking area, which will be concrete. Finally, Mike indicates that he is contracting for the repointing of the entire building. The work that Mike is having done will be at substantial expense, thus he is applying for a Main Street grant. Mike has thoughtfully looked at these necessary repairs to maintain the architectural significance of the building. Upon motion made by Leah, seconded by Caroline, the Historic Preservation will write a letter of support for the project that has been outlined by Mike.

The second prereview request is from Cornell College. Cornell has previously indicated that there is a plan to renovate the windows and exterior lighting on campus. The windows specifically are for College Hall and Old Sem. Pursuant to a suggestion from HPC, Cornell has consulted with Wadsworth Construction for a bid on wood window replacement. Cornell reports that the cost of the project will be substantially higher if Wadsworth Construction is the contractor. The windows that Cornell desires to use are vinyl, but have built-in muttons and will match the historic windows of the buildings. Cornell needed to know if HPC will be supportive of the windows they intend to use, as Cornell does not want to sign a purchase agreement until there is positive feedback from HPC. The Commission has given Cornell the indication that the

proposed windows are acceptable. This matter will come before the Commission once a building permit is requested.

The second item for Cornell is replacement of exterior lighting. The lighting has been in place on buildings throughout the campus. The lights are going to be replaced, and the new fixtures will be smaller and will be Cornell grey in color. There will be some additional lighting in places where the college indicates there has been insufficient lighting along sidewalks. The parking lot lighting will be affected by movement. The lights will be at a minimal level unless there is activity in the lot, at which time the lights will become brighter. Susan Hargus expressed concern about the brightness and the spread of light on campus. Also, she feels the color of the lights are very harsh. It was suggested that Cornell work on warmer tones for the lighting, and make sure that the lighting is projected downward, rather than being widespread. Aaron Rittenhouse, the person in charge of designing the lighting indicates that Cornell will work on these suggestions and he finds them appropriate. He agrees that light pollution should be limited wherever possible.

Under new business, Leah announced a historic preservation seminar that will be held at Independence, IA on October 26 from 9:00 to 3:30 p.m. This seminar qualifies for the continuing education requirements. Also under new business, Mary Evans has requested a leave of absence. She is going to be involved in dealing with family health issues in the near future which will take a great deal of her time and effort. Upon motion by Ed Sauter, seconded by Hugh Lifson, Mary Evans is granted a leave of absence from the Commission. Further, Patti Westercamp has submitted a letter of resignation. Patti has been a solid member of the Commission, and has always had good insight as to resolving the issues that come before the Commission. Patti's resignation is accepted with regret, and with gratitude for her contributions to the Commission. Leah also pointed out that Ed Sauter is being honored by the Arts Council on Saturday evening, the 7th of September. This is to recognize the contributions he has made to the arts and culture of the community. Finally, Leah pointed out that a painting of a landscape is now above the fireplace in the Visitor's Center. This is a picture from Mount Vernon's sister city, which is Diekirch, Luxembourg. This painting was presented to Mount Vernon in 1950 and has been on display in the school district. The school district has given it to Historic Preservation Commission as part of our archives, and it is now being displayed in the Visitor's Center.

Machele Pelkey discussed the letters that have been sent to owners of property in the historic districts. The letter points out the need for pre-planning if people are going to make changes to the buildings. It also gives advice as to becoming familiar with the process needed to obtain the various permits, whether it is from the City of Mount Vernon, Linn County Planning and Development, and/or HPC. This letter also will help the City understand their role in seeing that people in historic districts pursue the necessary permits when they desire to make changes to their property.

There are now two openings on the Commission. Grace Chamberlain attended today's meeting because she would like to become a member of the Commission. She has expressed interest to be a volunteer over the past year, so will now seek to become a Commission member. Grace is employed at the Cornell Library and does substantial work in the Cornell archive section. Leah indicates there have been two other people who have expressed interest, and they will be encouraged to submit an application if they do want to be considered by HPC and by the City Council.

Suzette Astley announced that CDG has received notice that they have been awarded a grant from the Hart Family Foundation. This is a grant designed for small towns. The grant money will be a matching money grant and will be used for the structural evaluation of the Visitor's Center. The evaluation will help prioritize repair and maintenance that needs to be done to the building. Suzette also indicated that she is working on material that can be used as orientation for new Commission members. Leah announced that Mary Evans has been talking with the City about archival space in the new building just purchased by the City. The City has purchased the LDS church building and there is substantial new space now available for City use. Leah also indicated that Rich Eskelson, from the Mount Vernon/Lisbon Sun will be contacted to see if we can continue having the newspaper digitized so it could be available through our website. All copies of the newspaper have been digitized up until approximately 2017. More recent copies should be digitized so there is a complete record of the newspaper that is available.

Caroline Kelly gave an update on the brick house tour which is scheduled for September 29. There will be two separate sessions. The first will be from 12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. and the second from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tickets for the tour will be \$20 per person. Caroline has put in a tremendous amount of work organizing this tour. She needs help from other members of the Commission to serve as volunteers at the various homes. The homes are Kucher, Harp, Meyers, Richardson, and Kelly. Junction Auto is supplying a 15-passenger van to help transport people between the homes.

Hugh Lifson asked if there had been any progress on determining the design for plaques that people may want to put on their homes now that the 11 new properties are going on to the National Register of Historic Places. There are a number of types of plaques that could be available, and this will be studied further to see if we should have a uniform design that is available to owners who would like to have the identification for their property.

The next meeting of the Commission is tentatively scheduled for September 18 at 5:30 p.m. at the Visitor's Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Guy Booth, Secretary