

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
Nov. 5, 2018 Special Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. Roll Call. Meeting was called to order at 4:37 p.m. Present were Hayley Jackson, vice-chair, Adrienne Coffeen, Lois Humpal, Steve Kelsay, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Mark Muggli was absent. Present as a Decorah citizen was Janelle Pavlovec.

2. Historic District signage guidelines in other cities and how they might apply to Decorah. Members first reviewed the city of Decorah's sign regulations and description of HPC's stated duties. Among stated powers of the commission are several that could be interpreted as allowing us to make signage guidelines for our historic district.

Members commented about their research on such guidelines in Pella, Mount Vernon and Waverly in Iowa and Lanesboro, New Ulm and Northfield in Minnesota. There was general agreement that more guidelines for the commercial historic district signage are desirable, but Judy pointed out that DHPC is currently only an advisory group, and Lois asked how any new rules about signage would be enforced.

Adrienne read an introductory statement from the signage section of the city code of Mount Vernon, which has long-standing and fairly rigorous historic district sign regulations. It states: *"The historic and architectural value and quality of Mount Vernon is particularly important to the city's future. Street graphics and signs have a significant impact on the overall appearance and visual quality of the community. Therefore, it is essential that the style, quality and design of signs support the city's overall quality and reflect its historic character. In addition, signs can have a significant impact on the value and economic stability of adjacent properties."*

Commissioners supported this rationale for more guidelines on signage in Decorah's commercial district -- whether as simply suggestions by DHPC, or as new rules passed by the city council. Steve and Judy agreed to ask city manager Chad Bird about the possibility of additional signage guidelines based upon this thinking. They have a meeting scheduled with him this Thursday, Nov. 8, at 4 p.m. in city hall to ask about adjusting the timing of Planning and Zoning notifications so that DHPC has more time to react to permit requests. They'll give him a copy of the Mount Vernon statement and of signage guidelines for the Minnesota cities at the time of this meeting.

3. Public comment. Janelle responded to a question about city council support for additional signage guidelines.

4. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned about 5:45 p.m.