

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
February 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by chair Mark Muggli. Present were Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Steve Kelsay (via telephone), Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Absent was Lois Humpal. Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec was present.
2. **Review and approval of Minutes from Jan. 14, 2019, recorded and distributed by Commission secretary Judy van der Linden.** Hayley moved approval of the minutes as recorded. Adrienne seconded and members voted unanimously to approve.
3. **2018 CLG Annual Report (due Feb. 28, 2019).**
  - a. **Draft for review.** If SHPO says that #2 on page 1 of the report form should include all properties within NRHP districts (rather than just NRHP individual properties), members suggested adding the Gossling building, J. C. Penneys, the Bodensteiner house and the Marlow building (if done in 2018) to the report. We can also add consultations done on First Lutheran Church to that item list.
  - b. **2019 DHPC agenda.** Steve suggested we add that we will be working with the city on the Main Street program and downtown district signage. Steve moved, Diane seconded and members approved a motion to endorse the nearly completed draft of the CLG report. *Mark will make suggested changes and send the report to the mayor for her signature. It will then be sent to the state and archived in City Hall.*
4. **Luther College Historic District update.** Mark reported that Jan Full received the researcher files in September, sent Mark draft sections regularly last fall and then sent him a complete draft. She submitted her completed survey to the state about Jan. 15. It was very thorough, and Mark said Jan is more confident about the district being eligible. If it proceeds to the next stage, Jan said she could do the work for about \$8,000. We might apply for an HRDP grant to pay for that -- due date is April 20. Mark hopes to hear from SHPO in 3-4 weeks.
5. **Courthouse Advisory Committee Final Report.** Mark served on this committee formed by Dean Thompson. Mark passed around a copy of the committee's final report, dated Jan. 16, 2019, which identifies many concerns about courthouse stabilization and rehabilitation and includes a plan for how to address them.
6. **Main Street Program exploratory meeting reports.** Hayley, Steve, Judy and Adrienne reported on this meeting, noting the program offers many resources, but also requires the cooperation of many stakeholders and a significant financial investment by the city, the exact amount of which was not made clear at the meeting. Mark moved, Judy seconded and members approved a motion to encourage the city manager, mayor and council to pursue the conversation and explore the benefits of the Main Street Program, and further noted that DHPC members are willing to continue to be engaged and participate if needed. *Mark will pass this information along to Chad.*
7. **Historic District signage update.** Mark encouraged us to look at Paula Mohr's email, containing links to historic signage information from Dubuque and from the U.S. Dept. of Interior. He noted the latter discourages the adoption of city ordinances that are

too restrictive. Commissioners decided to hold a special signage meeting on Tuesday, March 26, at 4:30 p.m. at Mark's home. *Before that, commissioners should each: 1) study the Decorah sign ordinance itself, 2) pull specifics from other towns that might be usable, and 3) walk down Water Street and write down 3-4 signs of which we particularly approve and 3-4 signs we think are inappropriate for a historic district.* Adrienne asked that a copy of the sign ordinance be sent to everyone. In order to schedule the extra meeting, Steve moved, Hayley seconded and the group approved holding our next regular DHPC meeting on March 4, 2019, the first Monday of the month.

**8. Vesterheim long-term planning project with Snohetta.** Diane said that she and Steve understood from their meeting with Vesterheim executive director Chris Johnson that there would be plans for the museum remodel available in April. Members are concerned about which Cary building may be demolished for the project. *Mark will call Chris to ask the status of the plans.*

**9. 2019 May Historic Preservation Month awards and activities.** *Mark asked that each commissioner bring awardee ideas to the March meeting.* He proposed two: A combination of St. Benedict's and First Lutheran churches, both for their work to save original church buildings; Steve Runde for restoration of the Weiser carriage house and chicken coop. *Members should also come prepared to choose other history month activities, such as the 2nd-story tour and scavenger hunt we've talked about.* Steve said Hairloom has a nice 2nd-story Airbnb that might be available for a tour.

**10. Charles Altfillisch project update.**

**a. Luther College acquisition of Altfillisch papers update.** Hayley's appointment with Kim Glock to pick up the final Altfillisch items from the Mound Street house was postponed, so she will reschedule that. The World War I letters have been scanned and will be photographed and then returned to the family.

**b. Long-term goals and ongoing tasks for Commission members.** Mark is excited about the possibility of a digital format tour or brochure on Altfillisch buildings. He urged members to keep checking on questionable buildings on our list. Diane suggested we contact other commissioners if we plan to call an owner about a building so that efforts aren't duplicated.

**11. Decorah Commercial Historic District update.** Mark noted that at some point we need to think about updating the brochure about the downtown.

**12. Broadway-Phelps Park amendment.**

**a. Timetable.** Mark hopes we can renew work on this amendment soon.

**b. Phelps Park features -- Iowa Great Places grant was received.** The grant money will be used to repair stonework in five iconic Decorah places, including Ice Cave and Dunning Springs.

**13. Local historic resources and Wikipedia.** Mark has noticed that several Decorah historic resources are on Wikipedia. He asked if some of us might want to be trained as Wikipedia writers who could expand the number and size of local interest entries as an additional educational tool. We could start with NRHP buildings and districts. Diane encouraged such writing be done sparingly. She, Hayley and Mark are interested in Wikipedia writing. (After the meeting, but before the minutes were written, Adrienne said she's also interested.)

14. **DHPC Municipal website revision.** Mark asked commissioners to send any additions or corrections to the website to him, and he will forward them to the city.
15. **Continuing education opportunities.**
  - a. **Preserve Iowa Summit, Newton, June 6-8, 2019.** Mark hopes many of us can attend the summit this summer.
16. **Commissioner Reports.** There were none.
17. **Public Comment.** Janelle asked questions about the J.C. Penney building and commented on the new Viking Bank. She said she wished a vacant building downtown could be converted to housing similar to Vennehjen. She also said she believes the Decorah and Winneshiek County historical preservation societies may be friendlier to each other now because of recent changes in WCHPS membership.
18. **Possible upcoming meetings: Monday, March 4, 2019 [note: this is the first Monday of the month].** Commissioners earlier in the meeting agreed on this date.
19. **Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.