

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
December 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll call.** Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Mark Muggli, with commissioners Adrienne Coffeen, Lois Humpal, Steve Kelsay, Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden present. Vesterheim Museum President and CEO Chris Johnson and Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec also attended.
2. **Review and approval of Minutes from November 11, 2019, distributed by Commission secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were approved as written.
3. **Report on Vesterheim long-term planning, Chris Johnson Vesterheim CEO (30 minutes).** Chris discussed why Vesterheim is developing a master plan in cooperation with architectural firm Snohetta. Project #1 of the plan -- landscape, trail and signage work in Heritage Park (the museum's outdoor campus) -- is scheduled to begin in May, 2020, and be completed by October. One building now on site will be moved, two entry portals constructed and a small amphitheater developed. For Project #2, the museum hopes to repair and repurpose the former Cary machine and welding building. It's main floor would become a multipurpose/event center space, the upper floors would be converted for storage, with hopes the building will eventually become part of the museum's new entryway. Final plans for Project #2 and subsequent parts of the master plan are dependent on financing.
4. **Decorah Commercial Historic District.**
  - a. **206 W. Water St. (T-Bock's), C-3 lighting application.** Mark drafted a DHPC response to T-Bock's proposal for six gooseneck lamps to illuminate the business sign and sidewalk. MOTION -- Mark moved, Steve seconded and members approved a motion to recommend Planning and Zoning grant T-Bock's proposal. Judy edited Mark's response form and will send it to members of P&Z and to Chad Bird. (Secretary notes that a copy of the response is attached to these minutes.)
  - b. **309 W. Water St. (Zahasky Building), exploration for potential buyer.** Adrienne reported she retrieved information about the building from DHPC's files in the library. *Mark will take that information to the potential buyers.*
  - c. **DHPC downtown signage update.** There is still no word from the street committee about the DHPC signage proposal.
  - d. **Revision of Decorah ordinances Chapter 15 "Design Criteria" and permitting process for C-3 zoning district -- followup.** Mark reported that Chad Bird has taken the draft of revisions to several groups and received a positive response to certain changes. Chad will take it to one or two more groups and then to P&Z, and eventually to the city council for review.
  - e. **Building design guidelines development.** Steve, Hayley and Judy are working on writing these guidelines.
  - f. **Masonry expert visit to Decorah.** Mark said he talked to Lee Zook, who's building at 300 W. Water St. apparently has water issues along all four brick walls. Lee is interested in meeting with the masonry expert from Martin Gardner Architecture Firm of Marion, but Mark feels we need to find other building owners

to attend. He suggested DHPC members look for other buildings that might have water seeping through brick.

5. **Luther College Campus Historic District update.** Mark reported that Jan Full redoubled her efforts, finished the application draft by Dec. 3 and sent it to SHPO. She made the case that the college district was eligible for the NRHP under both criteria A and C. Mark expects a response from SHPO via Jan by April. He said Jan also sent the college her first invoice.
6. **Charles Altfillisch project update.** Mark noted that Hayley has assigned commissioners certain properties from parts of the newly-found Altfillisch project list. His goal is for commissioners to include all of those properties on our Altfillisch spreadsheet, even if we decide to remove them later. Judy reported the city does indeed have paper or digital copies of all blueprints for Decorah City Hall construction and remodels. Mark said he's requested a box of old building permits the city is supposed to have. Wanda Hemesath is trying to locate it.
7. **Commissioner Reports.** Mark said David Wadsworth is still working on tax credits for the house he remodeled at 409 E. Main St. Mark asked if DHPC should approach WCPC about co-sponsoring a tax credit workshop in the future. Lois noted an Altfillisch home on Upper Broadway is for sale and volunteered to tour the home and take some photos of Altfillisch interior details if possible. Mark suggested commissioners begin thinking about candidates for the May historic preservation award. Two possibilities are Stan Fullerton for Impact Coffee and restoration of a cupola on the home at 208 Leif Erikson Dr., and John and Llew Jenkins for the interior of their Altfillisch home at 901 Park St. Steve suggested David Wadsworth as a third possibility, for the renovation of his house on East Main Street.
8. **Public Comment.** Janelle commented on a home in Calmar that may have been designed by Charles Altfillisch. Although the commission's spreadsheet focuses on Decorah area properties, Mark noted that Altfillisch properties outside Decorah can certainly be added if commissioners learn of them.
9. **Possible upcoming meeting: Monday, January 13, 2020, 4:30 p.m.** Members noted the next meeting date and time.
10. **Adjournment.** Members approved adjourning the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission  
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
(Mark Z. Muggli, chair; mugglimz@luther.edu, 612-720-5795)  
TOPIC: 206 W. Water St., C-3 Design Plan

### I. The Property

206 W. Water, constructed in 1869, is a “Contributing” property in the 2017 National Register Decorah Commercial Historic District. (The consultant’s NRHP nomination notes that “with improvements to the store front,” the building might be eligible for “individual” nomination--in addition to the “district” nomination--because of its architecture.)

The upper stories of the building have been very well preserved. The DHPC presented the Bockmans with its 2013 annual historic preservation award, partly because of the Bockmans' work with David Wadsworth to carefully restore the building’s wooden windows (see <https://www.decorahia.org/historic-preservation/awards>). The 2016 addition of a “garage-door” opening on the first floor, while not an historically accurate change, was supported by some DHPC members because the additional glass on the first floor actually brings the building closer to its original look.

### II. The Proposed C-3 Design Plan

The proposal shows two goose-neck lights to illuminate the business sign and four others to illuminate the sidewalk seating area in front of the building.

The proposed lighting seems to meet the minimum code requirements. (Code 15.04.050 “L” notes that lighting should “enhance the development,” excludes bare bulbs, and discourages “fixtures without adequate shades.” )

The “Sign Guidelines” developed by DHPC in 2019, but not yet distributed to P&Z, encourages shielded lighting, which these goose-neck lights are. The Guidelines also discourage lighting that “overpowers the building or street edge,” and the relatively low light intensity listed on the application meets that requirement and the fixtures would shield the lighting from traffic. The Guidelines also include two photos of shielded goose-neck lights as examples of lighting to be encouraged on historic buildings--the lights being considered are obviously not authentic to an 1869 building, but they have a nice historic feel to them and would complement other similar lights in the downtown. We would also note that the proposed downward facing lights should improve night-time walkability, an important factor to be considered in the preservation of historic buildings.

### III. DHPC Recommendation

At its December 9, 2019 meeting, the DHPC voted unanimously to recommend that the application be approved by P&Z.