

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
July 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Electronic meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chair Mark Muggli. Present were Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Steve Kelsay, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Lois Humpal was absent.
2. **Review and approval of May 11, 2020 minutes, distributed by DHPC secretary Judy van der Linden.** Mark declared the minutes approved as written.
3. **C-3 Design Permit applications.**
  - a. **418 W. Water St., Montessori School, addition of storage shed.** MOTION --Judy moved, Mark seconded that DHPC not make a recommendation on this application. Motion passed.
  - b. **307 W. Water St., “Your Place,” sign permit.** A draft of the DHPC recommendation was written by Mark and presented to commissioners for deliberation. Steve commented the proposed sign on the front of the building may be too large. MOTION -- Mark made a motion to approve the sign with the exception of its size, suggesting it be reduced by 25% to be more in scale with the building’s Water Street front. Judy seconded and the motion passed. *Judy will email DHPC’s recommendation to Planning and Zoning before its next meeting.*
4. **Decorah Ch. 15 “Design Criteria” and permitting process for C-3 zoning district update.** Mark reported that the ad hoc committee hasn’t met to discuss final changes to the Ch. 15 wording, including Paula Mohr’s comments. *Mark will talk to Chad Bird and urge the committee meet to make those changes.*
  - a. **Design Guidelines update.** Steve, Hayley and Judy were working on these but have not met recently for lack of enthusiasm and time. They agreed that if the city council approves the new Ch. 15 language they will restart the process. A possible **change in DHPC meeting times** was also discussed. Mark suggested DHPC begin meeting on the Tuesday after the first Monday of the month. Time would be 4:30 p.m. Commissioners did not object. *Mark will talk to Chad about it. In response to a question from Steve, Mark will also find out if The Landings is in the C-3 district.*
5. **Luther College Campus Historic District update.** Mark reported that on May 25, SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) approved Jan Full’s draft of the Luther College Campus Historic District application for presentation to SNRC (State Nominations Review Committee), with hope that it could be on their October agenda.
6. **Annual historic preservation award ceremony/press release follow-up.** Mark reported that Decorahnews.com and the Decorah newspapers published his press release about DHPC’s 2020 awards to Stan Fullerton and David Wadsworth. City staff, on their own initiative, used the press release to add

DHPC's 2020 awards to the commission's page of the city website. City staff are also preparing a certificate for each award. *Judy will purchase frames for the two awards and deliver the framed certificates to Stan and David.*

7. **Section 106 filings for local cell tower changes update.** Mark reported a number of filings about cell tower locations arrived, but too late for DHPC to comment on the locations because the city has apparently already approved them. Mark did not believe any of them were located in historic areas.
8. **Preserve Iowa Summit, "Dubuque" virtual, June 4-6, 2020 followup.** Judy attended some of the sessions and reported briefly on one having to do with HPC design review. She said presenters stressed that design review requires the political will and support of city officials, extra time and/or meetings for HPC members, and clear guidelines, instructions and communication for/with permit applicants. *Judy will send the link to summit presentations to all DHPC members.* Mark asked members to let him know if they actually do watch the presentations.
9. **Charles Altfillisch progress report and brochure content.** Mark said that Llew Jenkins will talk to Constance Johnson about Constance's planned book about Charles Altfillisch (CA). DHPC may be able to use some of her materials. He also argued for including Luther College buildings in DHPC's future CA brochure -- other commissioners had suggested the campus buildings be described instead in a separate brochure. Discussion of the possibility of developing two brochures will continue. *Mark volunteered to develop the web content about the Luther buildings for the brochure. He will resend links to the brochure content documents to all commissioners.*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 after DHPC's Zoom connection was abruptly cut off.

10. **Commissioner Reports**
11. **Public Comment**
12. **Possible upcoming meeting, Monday, August 3, 2020**
13. **Adjournment**

July 8, 2020

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission  
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
(Contact: [mugglimz@luther.edu](mailto:mugglimz@luther.edu); 612-720-5795)  
TOPIC: 307 W. Water St. C-3 Design Permit

I. The Property

307 W. Water St. is a non-contributing building on the 2017 National Register of Historic Places designation because the building lacks its original integrity. The NRHP nomination, however, notes that “this little shop building is among the last of the wood-frame shops from the earliest generation of Water Street stores” and therefore has considerable historic importance.

## II. The Proposed C-3 Design Plan

The proposal on the front, Water Street side is for a double-mounted blade sign with goose-neck lighting. The rear facade would have a similar, flat-mounted sign. The City Administrator notes that the application appears to meet code requirements.

## III. DHPC Recommendation

- The lettering, coloring, lighting, and blade structure are a definite improvement over the current flat-mounted sign and will in a small way highlight the building’s historic importance.
- Although the proposed sign suggested for the front of the building falls within code requirements for size, DHPC is concerned that a four-foot diameter sign may overpower that facade. DHPC recommends the owners consider reducing its size by 25% to bring it more in scale with the building front.
- We note that there have been a lot of blade signs introduced in the commercial district in the last couple of years. Stylistically these signs are generally compatible with the area's historic character. But since the goal is that signage represent different businesses and buildings, rather than reflecting a single, imposed, uniform style, we think there might come a time when there are too many of these blade signs with a very similar character. Among other things, we therefore appreciate the proposed double-mounting that is somewhat different from many of the new front-facade blade signs.

The DHPC voted unanimously at its July 6, 2020 meeting to endorse the sign, and commends “Your Place” on its improved signage.