

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
December 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** The electronic meeting was called to order at 4 p.m. by Chairperson Mark Muggli. Commissioners present were Mark Branum, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Steve Kelsay, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Also present were City Manager Chad Bird and Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec.
2. **Review and approval of Nov. 4, 2020 minutes.** *Distributed by DHPC secretary Judy van der Linden.* Mark M. declared the minutes approved as written.
3. **Decorah Commercial Historic District signage.** Judy reported that since last month's meeting, she and Mark requested a sign design from LetterWerks of Decorah and asked Iowa Prison Industries to tweak its previously-submitted design. The two final designs were similar, but LetterWerks' estimated cost per sign was over twice the cost of IPI's sign. Judy said they chose the IPI sign, which is orange in color and 36" long by 12" high. City Engineer Jeremy Brill placed an order for eleven of these signs on behalf of DHPC. IPI said that production may be slowed because of the coronavirus.
4. **C-3 Design Permits--review of recent projects.** Commissioners evaluated recent C-3 projects, beginning with the Court Street brick repair project between Water and Broadway streets. *Mark M. will write a letter to Chad Bird and Jeremy Brill praising the city for this work.* Members were also pleased with the city's reconstruction of Locust Road, including preservation of a unique cave off the west shoulder. With regard to new business signs, members generally approved of them and felt they accurately reflected the drawings in the C-3 sign proposals. Mark M. did send commissioners a template for writing a C-3 design permit response (*see attachment to minutes*).
5. **Murals in Historic Districts.** Mark B. and Steve have agreed to represent DHPC on a committee to develop ordinance language regarding murals in Decorah's historic districts. Other city groups that might be interested will be contacted by Chad Bird.
6. **Ingvaldstad Lumber trackage.** Mark M. reported that both David Wadsworth and Kelly Reagan are interested in the track, and that Scott Johanningmeier doesn't seem in a hurry to have it moved from his property, the former lumber company. Mark will continue to talk to Kelly and David.
7. **Luther College Campus Historic District.** Mark M. said Jan Full hasn't yet received official SNRC notes from the state preserves office. She won't be able to work on requested changes until mid-January, however Mark is confident the nomination will be finalized in early to mid-2021.
8. **Contacts.**
 - a. **Brent & Tovah Steinhofner, co-owners of 401 E. Broadway St. and 118 E. Water St. (Lulu & BB's).** Mark M. contacted them to congratulate them on owning two Altfillisch properties. They were surprised and pleased to know that.
9. **Grant possibilities.**
 - a. **Iowa Rural Revitalization Grants.** Mark M. wrote to both Luther College and Vesterheim Museum about the availability of these grants. LC responded. The Montessori School building was suggested as a candidate, but Mark realized it would not qualify because it's a non-contributing building within the district.

- b. Catalyst Grants.** Mark B. watched a webinar about this program and reported candidates must be within city limits, be underutilized, privately owned and have the potential to be a catalyst for significant improvement in a town. City officials must apply for the grant. David Wadsworth's depot, the former Ingvaldstad Lumber Company, Copyland and the Haymarket were all suggested as possible candidates. *Mark B. will talk to Chad to find out if the city is interested; Mark M. will talk to David; Steve will talk with Steve Johanningmeier.*
- 10. Decorah Ordinance Ch. 15 "Design Criteria" Guidelines.** Hayley reported that she and Judy will be incorporating Mark's proposed changes into the guidelines and will report in January.
- 11. Locust Road Cave project.** Mark M. told commissioners that the city went out of its way to preserve a cave along Locust Road during its construction project. Chad Bird would like a small sign near the cave explaining some of its history, and asked for DHPC's help. *Mark M. will write the local newspaper to request information. Diane will check the newspaper archives for references to the cave. Hayley will ask a Luther colleague about the Last Chance Tavern associated with the cave. Adrienne will try to contact the Bolson family and Mark M. will write to Duane Fensterman.* Janelle also suggested contacting Kevin Lee.
- 12. Charles Altfillisch progress report and brochure content.** Mark M. has made a rough draft of a 3-fold Altfillisch brochure. It can accommodate the list of Altfillisch buildings, a map and some artwork. Adrienne has been adding spouse names to those of building owners. She also described her Altfillisch home on Pleasant Ave. -- that description can be used as a model for others for the Altfillisch web content document. Commissioners decided the brochure could include a general statement about style name sources in the introduction. They also decided to drop Carrie Lee Elementary School and the Decorah Bicycles building from the listing, and debated listing in a separate section of the web content the home at 702 Center Ave. and the former Bob's Standard gas station. Adrienne continues to work on descriptions of St. Ben's school and the former bowling alley. Mark B. said he'd like to see fewer buildings listed in the brochure so it doesn't overwhelm readers. *Mark M. will assign commissioners buildings to be described and added to our web content document.*
- 13. Commissioner Reports.** Steve announced he would be out of town until Dec. 31. Mark M. mentioned a home at 701 Maple Ave. that the city is considering buying and demolishing. He wondered if the home were worth rebuilding. Diane commented that at least portions might be salvaged. Steve said the house has been purchased by Mike Grube of Cresco. *Steve will find out Mike's plans for the property.*
- 14. Public Comment.** There was none.
- 15. Possible upcoming meeting, Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 4 pm.**
- 16. Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned by Chair Muggli about 5:30 pm.

TEMPLATE for C-3 Permit Response

By Mark Muggli, December, 2020

[This “template” is a rough guide for DHPC members as they prepare reports on individual C-3 applications. It may be even more helpful to look back at previous adopted reports for some examples of the kind of details to include. (In recent months these reports have been included in DHPC meeting minutes.) Generally speaking, given their audience, these reports should fit on one page and be easily absorbable. The drafts prepared by DHPC members can, of course, be modified by the whole Commission at its meeting, but the draft makes possible the quick turnaround that our meeting schedule requires. Mark Z. Muggli, December 8, 2020.]

December 8, 2020 [date of DHPC meeting at which action is taken]

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
(Contact: mugglimz@luther.edu; 612-720-5795)
TOPIC: Address (with current building name in parentheses) C-3 Design Permit Application

I. The Property

Our goal here is to educate city officials and property owners about the property. But we don't have infinite time. At a minimum, we should paraphrase or quote the National Register nomination available on our DHPC website. Of course the owners and city officials could consult the nomination themselves, but we're trying to facilitate the process. Include the building's date. Say whether it is contributing or non-contributing, and explain why. Perhaps begin with a generalization about the building's relative importance, given its history, condition, and integrity. But even with less important buildings note some distinctive features. Don't be shy about adding comments based on direct observation of the building and its setting. In all cases we're trying to imply that the proposed changes matter to the whole Commercial District.

II. The Proposal

At the simplest level, we are summarizing the application. Note whether the zoning administrator has commented on size and appropriateness. But in almost every application, there is something left unclear that we can here identify and try to clarify. So we will sometimes say, “The owner seems to be proposing . . . , although the illustration doesn't”

III. DPHC Recommendation

The background to our recommendation included here *ought* to encourage city officials and owners to think complexly about the permit application. We want to outline our thought process, whether it is noting that the application is wonderfully complete (or woefully inadequate), our appreciation for the building, or our hesitation about the aesthetics of the proposal. We shouldn't

avoid digging into neighboring buildings, landscaping, mortars, paint colors, fonts, sign shapes, and a whole range of historical and aesthetic issues. We want to take the details seriously in order that the owners and city officials do the same.

At the end, in a separate paragraph, this report should provide sample wording for an actual DHPC motion. [E.g, "Considering the inadequacy of the application and the inappropriateness of the proposed changes, the DHPC voted xxx to xxx at its September 9, 2020 meeting to recommend denying this application."] Ideally the motion will be relatively simple, since the City Manager tends to summarize our actions as "approved" or "did not approve."