

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
November 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Commission chair Mark Muggli called the electronic meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Present were Diane Scholl, Judy van der Linden, Hayley Jackson, Mark Branum and Adrienne Coffeen. Steve Kelsay was absent. Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec joined part of the meeting by telephone. City Manager Chad Bird was present for the first half hour.
2. **Review and approval of October 7, 2020 minutes distributed by DHPC secretary Judy van der Linden.** Chair Muggli declared the minutes approved as written.
3. **C-3 Design Permit applications.**
 - a. **C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 228 East Water Street, *Beautistry by Eileen, LLC; sign, facade paint and awnings.*** MOTION: Judy wrote this draft and moved to approve it. The motion was seconded by Mark M. and passed 6-0.
 - b. **C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 101 East Water Street, *Broker Leather, sign relocation.*** Adrienne wrote the draft, and noted the sign dimensions are 5'X4'. MOTION: Adrienne moved approval, Diane seconded. Motion passed 6-0.
 - c. **C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 110 Washington Street, *Unique Precision Brow Studio, new / replacement sign.*** Mark M. wrote this permit draft. Owner seemed to imply there would be a logo on the sign but none was pictured in the application materials. Steve Kelsay emailed before the meeting that the permit was incomplete and should be denied. Chad said during the meeting that an initial C-3 design permit from April for this building was never formally approved for lack of documentation. MOTION: Mark M. made a motion to approve the sign assuming it is identical to the illustrations provided except for different wording. Mark B. seconded and the motion passed 6-0.
 - d. **C-3 Commercial Design review re: 104 West Water Street, *Silver Birch, new sign.*** Mark M. wrote the draft response. MOTION: Mark M. moved, Judy seconded, a motion to endorse the sign with hope the owner will consider DHPC's recommendation of a raised frame around the sign. Motion passed 6-0. *Mark will write brief guidelines for preparing a response draft for commissioners.*
4. **Decorah Commercial Historic District Signage.**
 - a. **Background.** Mark M. reported he met most recently with SSMID members about historic district signs and got favorable comments.
 - b. **Current considerations: color, size, wording.** Mark M. and Judy walked the district with City Engineer/Street Commissioner Jeremy Bril whose only concern was sign size. He suggested signs 9-12 inches tall, 30-40 inches long. Judy learned that the city's branding campaign brick orange color can be duplicated by Iowa Prison Industries but will be prone to fading. IPI sent a color chip of a more permanent orange that is similar. Mark M. said SHPO and Jan Full both felt using the word "Commercial" rather than "Downtown" on the signs was preferable. Mark M. also asked members if vendors other than IPI should be contacted for bids, specifically a city vendor Jeremy recommended and/or LetterWerks.

- c. **Action.** MOTION: Mark M. moved and Adrienne seconded a motion that he and Judy be given the authority to move forward with the project within the general parameters established. Motion passed. MOTION: Mark M. moved and Hayley seconded a motion that the sign color be the more stable orange. Motion passed. MOTION: Mark M. made a motion, seconded by Diane, that sign size be 9-12 inches tall, 30-40 inches long as suggested by Jeremy. Motion passed. MOTION: Mark M. moved and Judy seconded a motion that the word “Commercial” be used on the signs. Motion passed. MOTION: Mark M. moved and Judy seconded that we retain IPI for sign contract. Mark B. proposed an alternate motion to contact LetterWerks as an option to IPI. Adrienne seconded. Members supported the second motion, effectively defeating the first.
5. **Murals in Historic Districts.** Chad Bird sent a link to a SHPO-produced webinar on murals to P&Z members. He told Mark M. that if P&Z is open to the idea, Chad supports having representatives from P&Z, DHPC and SSMID work on guidance or ordinance language for murals in historic districts. *Mark B. volunteered to represent DHPC in the group. Mark M. will ask Steve if he is also interested in serving.*
6. **Decorah Ordinance Ch 15 “Design Criteria.”**
- a. **Design Guidelines update.** Hayley shared a copy of the design guidelines draft that she and Judy have written, noting the guidelines still need illustrations. Mark M. made a number of suggestions. *He also asked each commissioner to bring at least three illustrations of restorations to December’s meeting -- either well-done or flawed ones.*
7. **Iowa Rural Revitalization Grants.** Mark M. explained criteria for the Iowa rural revitalization grants. Mark B. suggested the Montessori School might be a grant candidate. *Mark M. will contact Christine Gowdy-Jaehnig at the Montessori School, and also alert Vesterheim and Luther College.* Mark M. noted there also are Iowa Economic Development Authority Community Catalyst Grants available. *Mark B. offered to watch the IEDA webinar describing criteria for the grants and report to commissioners at the next meeting.*
8. **Contacts.**
- a. **Vesterheim: Rebecca McCarley, Spark Consulting, Cedar Rapids Iowa.** Mark M. said he consolidated several commissioners’ comments about the old Cary building and sent them on to Rebecca.
- b. **Jean Parker, Saskatchewan, concerning great-grandmothers historic photographs.** Mark M. said several people are helping identify these.
9. **Decorah railroad history opportunity.** Mark M. reported David Wadsworth is interested in the trackage in the former Ingvaldstad Lumber Company. Duane Fensterman sent Mark M. some information about the trackage but said his former railroad group can’t take on this project. Mark B. mentioned there are many old cabooses stored near Spring Grove, if David takes the track and needs a train car. David’s depot was suggested as a grant candidate (see #7), and *Mark M. said he’d contact David about the grant.*
10. **Luther College Campus Historic District update.** Mark M. said he attended the State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC) meeting at which the LC district was

considered. Committee members approved the district and made some minor suggestions to the nomination, which Jan Full will address. Jan is waiting now for the official SNRC meeting notes.

- 11. Charles Altfillisch progress report and brochure content.** Mark M. reported he has made some progress getting LC buildings described for the brochure. Judy and Adrienne toured 401 E. Broadway with Lois Humpal.
- 12. Commissioner Reports.** Judy asked Mark M. for impressions of the Jenkins house, an Altfillisch home formerly owned by the Sproats. *Judy will ask John Jenkins if DHPC can have a copy of the house's architectural drawing, and will offer to pay for it.*
- 13. Public Comment.** There was none.
- 14. Possible upcoming meeting, Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 4:00 pm.** Commissioners noted the next meeting date and time.
- 15. Adjournment.** Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

November 4, 2020

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission; Decorah City Council; City Manager
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission (Contact: Mark Muggli, mugglimz@luther.edu; 612-720-5795)
TOPIC: 228 E. Water Street "Beautistry by Eileen" C-3 design plan permit application

I. The Property

This building was constructed in 1873 as a home. It is not a contributing building to the commercial historic district because of extensive modernization (the original brick walls have been covered with stucco, the building's windows replaced and most details of its Italianate architecture removed or covered.) Nevertheless, the building does have historic interest because of its age and the fact that it was a residence converted to commercial use. We note the business' entrance will be located on the east-facing porch, which apparently was original to the historic home.

II. The Proposed C-3 Project and Signage

Owner proposes repairs and remodeling, including rebuilding a balcony above the east-facing porch and replacing main level doors and windows and some trim and gutters. Owner will also repaint, add awnings and erect a new sign in the yard north of the building.

III. DHPC Comments and Recommendation

Although 228 E. Water St. is not a contributing building, its age and history make it worthy of this maintenance and these updates. We commend the owner for keeping the building in good repair. The size and location of the proposed awnings are appropriate and do not obscure any important architectural features. We believe they will add interest and depth to the facade. The accent color of black for trim, awnings and balcony railings is complementary to nearby

downtown buildings and to the proposed signage. The proposed sign may be the only one in the historic district that is located on a lawn. It's color, simple design and font complement the building.

At its Nov. 4, 2020, meeting, the Decorah Historic Preservation Commission voted 6 to 0 to recommend the permit application for 228 E. Water St.

November 4, 2020

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission & City Council
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
(Contact: mugglimz@luther.edu; 612-720-5795)
TOPIC: 101 E Water Street (Broker Leather) C-3 Design Permit for Signs

I. The Property

101 E Water Street, currently occupied on the ground floor by Gracie's Boutique, is a contributing building on the 2017 National Register Commercial Historic District. It is a prominent brick building on the corner of Water Street and Washington Street. Originally designed by a Chicago architectural firm as Sampson's grocery and dry goods store in 1891, it became the Decorah State Bank in 1906. A professional consultant notes that the remarkable feature of the building is the rounded two-story oriel which overhangs the main entrance.

II. The Proposed C-3 Design Plan

Broker Leather will share the street level retail space with the current Gracie's Boutique business. Gracie's Boutique sign on the Water Street side of the building is trimmed with a white wooden border. Broker Leather intends to reuse its sign from a former Water Street location. This Broker Leather sign measures 5' wide, 4' tall. It will be placed on the building's Washington Street side and will be trimmed with a white wooden border to match.

III. DHPC Recommendation

The Broker Leather sign previously received C-3 design permit approval, and the photo on the application shows this existing sign. Since two businesses will each have a sign, the white wooden border placed around the Broker Leather sign will complement the existing white framed Gracie's Boutique sign.

101 E Water is a well-maintained building. Our commission commends the owners, Andy and Nancy Nelson, for their careful attention to preserving this historic property.

At its November 4, 2020 meeting, the DHPC voted 6 to 0 to endorse the signage plans for 101 E Water Street.

November 4, 2020

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council & Manager
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
(Contact: mugglimz@luther.edu; 612-720-5795)
TOPIC: 110 Washington St. (Unique Precision Brow Studio) C-3 Design Plan

I. The Property:

Built in 1988 on the site of a large livery and later a grocery store, this modern building is two lots wide and a single story. It has a central entrance door for the three businesses inside. There is a large window on either side of the entrance. Walls are faced with red brick with some decorative limestone quoining on the alley side end wall. The building does not contribute to the downtown historic district because it is modern (per Jan Olive Full, National Register of Historic Places application for the downtown), and the building in general does not match the expectations of C-3 design features put in place in the early 2000s.

II. The Proposed C-3 Design Plan:

In April the owners proposed changes in the facade (applied board highlights, lighting, sign changes) that were received too late by DHPC to provide a response, although Commission members did provide some oral responses at the P&Z meeting. We have been told that the proposed changes were approved with provisions by the P&Z, but because those provisions were never fulfilled, the application was never affirmed by the City Council. The sign designs included with the current application seem to be generic proposals from LetterWerks that may have been part of that earlier proposal.

III. DHPC Recommendation:

The application seemed to suggest that the applicant would provide a sample of the business logo that may be intended as the sign design. DHPC never received a response to our October 27, 2020 email request to the owner. Given the lack of detail and the confusion over the material provided, it is difficult to judge the proposed sign. At the November 4 DHPC meeting, however, the City Manager said he had been assured that the proposed sign would be identical to the samples provided by LetterWerks in the application attachment, except for the substitution of the appropriate business name.

At its November 4, 2020 meeting, the DHPC voted 6 to 0 to approve the design, but only assuming that the Precision Brow Studio sign will be identical to the sign illustrations provided (although with different wording).

November 4, 2020

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, City Manager
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
(Contact: mugglimz@luther.edu; 612-720-5795)
TOPIC: 104 W. Water St. (Silver Birch) C-3 Design Permit for Sign

I. The Property

104 W. Water St. is part of one of the most important buildings in downtown Decorah. The building as a whole is a contributing building in the 2017 Decorah Commercial Historic District, but because of the Steyer Opera House on the third floor, the building was in 1979 listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. The property has a complex building history; major portions date to 1870 and 1875. As part of the Hotel Winneshiek rehabilitation project of the 2000s, the building moved closer back towards its original character.

II. The Proposed Signage

The owner is proposing a single flat wall-mounted sign in the display space above the first-floor windows.

III. DPHC Recommendation

The proposed wall-mounted sign echoes the two currently-installed large oval window decals. The design is striking, and very appropriate for the historic district. The wall sign seems to have a narrow black band that imitates the black band surrounding the window decals, which will help set the sign off from the grey metal that covers the original transom area. As we have suggested to other owners, a raised frame might provide an even more effective way of highlighting the sign's shape and distinguishing it from the grey transom-area background.

At its November 4, 2020 meeting, the DHPC voted 6 to 0 to endorse the signage plans for 104 W. Water St., with the hope the owner will take into consideration the recommendation to add a raised frame.