

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
April 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Chair Mark Muggli called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Commissioners present were Mark Branum, Adrienne Coffeen, Karen Tjossem, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Hayley Jackson was absent. Also attending were Travis Goedken, Decorah City Manager, Kristin Torresdal, Decorah Public Library Director, Zach Row-Heyveld, DPL Administrative Coordinator, and Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec.
2. **Review and approval of March 30, 2022 minutes (*distributed by DHPC secretary Judy van der Linden*).** Mark declared the minutes approved as written.
3. **C-3 Permit Application.**
  - a. **304 E. Water St. (Helms Funeral Home).** Judy wrote a response to this application, recommending DHPC not endorse the permit to demolish the 2-story part of the funeral home. She cited the structure's history and integrity. Mark B. and Mark M. disagreed and spoke against preserving the building, while Adrienne pointed out that important information about the proposed replacement building was missing from the permit application. MOTION: Commissioners voted 3-3 on the permit application motion, some opposed to demolishing a potentially historic building, others opposed because of inadequate permit information.
  - b. **202 Winnebago St. (Decorah Public Library) signage.** Mark M. wrote this response, recommending approval of the sign. MOTION: Members voted 6-0 to approve.
4. **Annual DHPC Historic Preservation Award**
  - a. **Recipient updates.** All three candidates – the Branums, Kevin Lee, Porter House Museum – will accept awards.
  - b. **Award event.** Mark B. offered his building at 207 Washington St. as a location for the event. Possible dates and times are Wednesday, May 11, 4:15-5:30 p.m., or Monday, May 16, beginning at 4:30 p.m.
  - c. **News release.** Mark M. is working on this.
5. **Broadway-Phelps Park Boundary Increase.** Mark said the expansion of BPPHD was recently approved by the National Park Service. St. Benedict's is pleased and has offered the church's gathering space for an event. Mark has not yet heard from Decorah Public Library.
  - a. **Award event.** Possible date is Wednesday, June 8, at the church.
  - b. **News Release.** Mark has shared a draft of a news release.
6. **Altfillisch project update.**
  - a. **Printed brochure.** The brochure final draft and printing have been delayed, Mark reported.
  - b. **Launch party.** Mark suggested a party wait until we have the brochure in hand.
7. **Discussion of Distinctive Decorah Properties project.**
  - a. **Site Inventories, SHPO, and project guidelines.** Karen asked about the goals of the project and for some parameters in choosing which buildings are "distinctive." Members seemed to agree that project results might be shared with the public via a printed brochure or via online pdfs posted to DHPC's website. With regard to

parameters, members agreed the standards of the National Register, embodied in the Site Inventory form, can be the starting point for deciding which properties to include, and also that buildings already on the NR or in an NR district would NOT be likely candidates.

**b. DHPC assignments for particular buildings.** See 8d. and 10 below.

**8. Contacts.**

**a. Kate Rattenborg ca. historic tax credits and the Green Parrot.** Mark sent Kate information about historic tax credits. He also emailed, thanking her for her Decorahnews.com letter regarding the Green Parrot. Kate is considering replacing the metal awnings on her bookstore building. *Judy volunteered to be her contact.*

**b. 300 College Drive (Green Parrot, Roscoe's, Kwik Star).** Travis Goedken told the commission that DHPC shouldn't intervene in any process already underway to demolish or change a building, unless that building was deemed historically significant long before the process began. He's concerned the city could be sued as a result of last-minute efforts to declare a property historic for the purpose of stopping its demolition or alteration.

**c. Decorah Public Library historic furniture.** Mark reported that he contacted his fellow Courthouse Advisory Committee members about a chair that several concerned Decorah residents said was original courthouse furniture. The chair had been put out for sale in the library foyer. Kristin Torresdal, Elizabeth Lorentzen and Ben Steines are working together to reupholster the chair and return it to the courthouse. Kristin commented that the library found itself with a number of items over the years with no records of ownership or provenance.

**d. Curtin House (614 W. Water St.).** Mark said the owner, Wanda Gardner, wants to put up a plaque on her house with historic information. Mark thought this might be a distinctive Decorah property. *Judy will contact and help her later in May.*

**9. Commissioner Reports.** Mark said in response to a question that he and hopefully Diane Scholl will be attending this year's Preserve Iowa Summit in June.

**10. Public Comment.** Janelle reminded the commission of a home she believes is distinctive, located at about 604 River St. *Karen knows the house and will research it.*

**11. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, May 25, 2022, 4:30 p.m.**

**12. Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned about 6:10 p.m.

April 27, 2022

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council  
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
(Contact: j.p.vanderlinden@q.com; 563-382-4282)  
TOPIC: 304-306 E. Water St., Fjelstul Funeral Home C-3 Design Permit Application

### I. The Property

Fjelstul Funeral Home is a conglomerate of two buildings and several additions. The business stands one half block east of the former Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul train depot – now Kelly Regan Chiropractic – which marks the east boundary of the Decorah Historic Commercial District. The 1-story west portion of the funeral home was constructed in 1986 of metal frame and features a stone front facade with a large, overhanging wood shake mansard roof. The east 2-story portion of the business was originally a wood frame house. It has a 1-story addition on the back. Both house and addition at some point were covered with stucco. The house portion was designed by Decorah architect W. S. Bucknell and built in 1895 as a residence for Henry A. Prastmark, a painter, decorator and owner of Decorah Wall Paper Store. This residence first became a funeral home when it was purchased in 1930 by L.B. Willis and P.J. Ness. Despite the stucco cladding and remodel of its entryway, the home retains a number of architectural features – a square-sided tower on the southeast, decorative molding along the the roof gables and the south 2nd-story bay window, “fish-scale” siding on sections of the north and west facades, and what appear to be original window openings on the east and south sides of the home. The exterior of this house portion of the business appears to have been well maintained considering the home’s age.

### II. The Proposal

The owner proposes to demolish the east, 2-story portion of the funeral home and replace it with a one-level addition. The C-3 permit application was incomplete at the time DHPC reviewed it. No exterior elevation view or description of proposed building materials for the new structure was included.

### III. DPHC Recommendation

We understand the owner’s desire to develop a more modern, single-level facility for his business. However DHPC cannot in good conscience wholly endorse the demolition of a building that appears to be well-maintained and structurally sound and retains as much architectural integrity as this one does. We believe the building’s long history as a funeral home also carries weight in a community like Decorah. We are just as concerned about the inadequate C-3 application material. While this building is not in the historic district, it does need to meet certain criteria for the C-3 zoning district, details of which are not included in the application. We hope that the Zoning Administrator, Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council will apply the standards of Code Chapter 15 as they consider a final, complete application.

At their April 27 meeting, DHPC members voted 3-3 on this permit application, with some members expressing reservations about the demolition of a building that may be considered historic and others frustrated over the lack of adequate application material.

April 27, 2022

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator  
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
TOPIC: 202 Winnebago St. (Decorah Public Library) Sign Permit

I. The Property

The Decorah Public Library (202 Winnebago St.) is housed in the former 1911 Federal Post Office, a historic smooth-cut stone building that in spring, 2022, was incorporated into the Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District. It is a building with great local historic significance with high integrity.

II. The Proposed C-3 Signs

The library proposes to replace two signs on the northwest corner of the building with very similar signs that reflect their new opening hours and that comply with their latest branding style.

III. DHPC Recommendation

The Zoning Administrator has judged that the new signs fit within the C-3 size guidelines. We believe that the new signs are not only stylistically appropriate for this important historic building, but that they comply with the principle in Ch. 15 and 17 that signs are compatible with the downtown's historic character.

**MOTION:** At its April 27, 2022 meeting, the DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the signage proposed for the Decorah Public Library (202 Winnebago St.).