

June 20, 2022

The regular meeting of the Decorah City Council was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

The meeting was held at the Decorah Council Chambers and electronically.

Members present: Emily Neal, Randy Schissel, Steve Luse, Kristen Olson, Kirk Johnson (via zoom), Steven Zittergruen, and Ross Hadley (via zoom)

Mayor Borowski opened the public hearing on the plans, specifications, form of contract, and taking bids for the Decorah 2022 Street Improvement-Asphalt Resurfacing Project at 5:47 p.m. No public comment. Public hearing closed at 5:49p.m.

Schissel made a motion to approve Resolution 3281 approving the plans, specifications, form of contract and awarding the Decorah 2022 Street Improvements-Asphalt Resurfacing Project to Skyline Construction, Hadley seconded the motion. Roll call vote. All voting ayes. Motion carried.

Mayor Borowski called on Dax Connely, Real Estate Manager with Kwik Star, to give a short presentation on the Kwik Star site plan. Connely explained that Kwik Star wants to add an additional third store due to Decorah's tourism, the improvement of Locust Road, and Luther College. He feels that Kwik Star can service the west side of Decorah. Kwik Star has made some adjustments that has been asked of them from the Street Department and Planning and Zoning Commission. They are wanting to work with the city to make this happen, including offering to include a painted/lighted crosswalk where the Decorah Staff thinks would be appropriate. Kwik Star will have the hours for the carwash from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. to help reduce the noise. Connely also explained that this building is a generation three building which is more like a grocery store. He feels what Kwik Star is offering will make a positive impact on the west side of Decorah.

Mayor Borowski opened the public hearing at 6:09 p.m.

Harland Nelson-911 Ridgewood Drive Apt 207, Decorah
It is Planning and Zoning job to enhance and preserve Decorah. It will take away business from Decorah Mart. He is against allowing another Kwik Star.

Darryl Jensen-803 Serenity Court, Decorah
Does not feel that this should be allowed. The taxpayers will have to pay to make this area safer due to the increase in accidents.

Uwe Rudolph-510 North St, Decorah-
He likes Kwik Star but does not feel a third one is necessary. This land should be used for housing or a hotel.

Don Fish-200 Highland Dr #5, Decorah-
This Kwik Star will put other businesses out of business. Don't do it.

Mark Muggli-722 Washington St, Decorah-
If this site plan gets approved, he strongly endorses the sustainability principles that have been brought forward. He would like to see the site flipped with store in front for walkability.

Jodi Enos-Berlage-3236 265th Ave, Ridgeway-

This will affect more than the people of Decorah but outside of Decorah as well. Appreciates Kwik Star trying to make this a safer place. This road is a bottle neck. Has a traffic study been done during peak times when school is in session? What impact is this going to have on this area for traffic? Who will pay for the improvements? Does this fit with the economic vision of Decorah?

Lisa Zittergruen-501 Leif Erikson, Decorah-

Appreciates the changes that have been made but feels that it is not enough. It is not safe. It divides Decorah. Luther College students walk and bike into town all the time. This will not be reversible. Please don't approve this site plan.

Gabriel Eide-602 North St, Decorah-

We already have two Kwik Stars, where they are appropriate. On the west side is not an appropriate location for a gas station. The changes that have been made are not enough to mitigate the long-term changes that this will have on the west side. The 2018 Decorah Visioning Plan should be taken into consideration.

Laurie Meinholz-207 East Water St, Decorah

I can see the pros and cons of Kwik Star, pretty neutral on this project. She wants to make sure that Kwik Star does not have any tax abatements and they should have to pay fees that every other business pays. It is only fair. These types of benefits should not only be allowed for the big corporations.

Jim Juve-503 Locust Rd, Decorah-

There have been a lot of changes in this town. There use to be a lot more businesses on this road when it was a two-lane road. The City Council needs to make this decision. This is a business that will bring in tax money and give jobs; they will do a lot for the community.

Jane Hardy-504 Locust Rd, Decorah-

Feels that the negatives that this Kwik Star would bring far outweighs any positives from this project. The traffic will become worse, the noise and light will be worse, and the danger to pedestrians and bicyclists will be greater. This is a commercial gas station.

Brian Backes-202 W Main St, Decorah-

He is very much a walker. Luther College students will be able to walk to this store and use it. This would be a benefit to the west side of town. The activity that this would bring is a good thing.

Kate Scott-405 E Broadway, Decorah-

Characterizing Luther as a university shows that Kwik Star does not understand Decorah or who we are. Feels that there should be a traffic study. Are there sufficient parking spots if this is more of a grocery store? Does Decorah have assurances that delivery trucks will be routed around Decorah?

Cody Whittle-607 E Main St, Decorah-

Is opposed to the new Kwik Star. Works at Pulpit Rock and speaks to a lot of people. People come here for the green space. This will have negative impact on other businesses. To go forward with another gas station would be backwards to what we should be doing.

Willard Hanson-1001 Ridgewood Dr, Decorah-

Has lived in Decorah for 64 years. Sick of Decorah fighting every business that wants to come in. So many empty store fronts downtown. There was a Jack and Jill store there that had a lot of trucks coming in. Could have had a Menards, time to wake up.

Scott Carlson 405 Decorah Avenue, Decorah-

In favor of Kwik Star. Kwik Star is good community citizen and a good employer. It will give a vital service on the west side.

Russ Novak-2036 Grandview Rd, Decorah-

This is simple; we are going to double our tax base, better paying jobs, control our stormwater management on the west side of town, and provide a convenience store on that side of town. It will look better. This is a no brainer.

Jim Martin-Schramm-104 Spring St, Decorah-

Represents the Sustainability Commission-Decorah aspires to be a leader in promoting and encourage active transportation. Two goals for College Drive are to increase amount of walking and biking along with making it more accessible. Encourage City Council to work with Kwik Star to make a plan that will work for everyone.

Brandon Schmidt-107 Quarry St, Decorah-

Kwik Star 20 pump gas station at the entry of Dunning Springs shows that Kwik Star does not understand what Dunning Springs means to Decorah. Cannot believe it is OK to put a truck stop into downtown Decorah. We are a small town and treat us like a small town. Car wash open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. is unacceptable.

Mayor Borowski closed the public hearing at 6:58 p.m.

Dax Connely came back to the microphone to answer questions from the City Council. Neal asked if there has been a traffic study done for this area. She asked the Kwik Star representative if they would be willing to pay for a study. Mr. Connely felt that the city would pay for that since they are the ones requesting it. Neal feels there should be a traffic study done before moving forward.

The City Council then discussed the options that they have. Zittergruen feels that the City Council has the power to decide on this and the Council should say no. Zittergruen does not feel that this site plan is fixable. Mayor Borowski said we also need to look at the economic impact. The commercial property taxes could double on this site with Kwik Star coming in. Olson is also concerned regarding the impact of the traffic. Hadley is supportive of having a Kwik Star and hopes that the City and Kwik Star can work on this together, but he does have concerns about safety and sustainability. Johnson looks forward to working with Kwik Star regarding the lighting and pedestrian traffic.

Motion by Neal to table the decision on this site plan and pursue a traffic and pedestrian impact study and then discuss this at a work session on June 28, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. at the Decorah Council Chambers. Hadley seconded the motion. Roll call vote. Ayes: Neal, Luse, Olson, Zittergruen, Hadley Nays: Johnson, Schissel. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 p.m.

Keri Sand
City Clerk-Finance Officer