

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
May 25, 2022 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Chair Mark Muggli called the meeting to order about 4:30 pm. Present were commissioners Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl, Karen Tjossem, and Judy van der Linden; Mark Branum and Adrienne Coffeen were absent. Also present was Jim Dale, representing First United Methodist Church, and Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec.
2. **Review and approval of April 27, 2022 minutes – *distributed by DHPC secretary Judy van der Linden.*** Mark declared the minutes adopted.
3. **C-3 Permit Application.** (See both permit application responses attached.)
 - a. **302 W. Broadway (First United Methodist Church) sign permit application.** Mark wrote the response to this application. Jim Dale said he believed the proposed sign will be made of plastic. Mark reminded him the material may fade and have to be replaced. MOTION: The motion to endorse the signage was unanimously approved.
 - b. **400 Heivly (Skyline Bowling) building permit application.** Mark wrote this response. Judy suggested a phrase be added to the beginning of the response motion. MOTION: The revised response motion was approved unanimously.
4. **Annual DHPC Historic Preservation Award**
 - a. **Follow-up.** The award ceremony was well attended and well received. Articles about the ceremony were published in the Decorah Public Opinion (May 2, 2022) and on decorahnews.com (May 12, 2022).
 - b. **Decorah Sustainability Commission inquiry.** DSC chair Jim Martin-Schramm contacted Mark, saying he thought DHPC's annual preservation award was admirable. Mark noted that sustainability is an important theme in historic preservation, and the two agreed both commissions might cooperate on presenting a sustainability award in the future.
5. **Broadway-Phelps Park Boundary Increase.**
 - a. **Award event.** Tentative date, time and place for the event are Wednesday, June 8, at 4:30 pm in St. Benedict's Church gathering area. To prepare: *Mark will reconfirm the date with St. Ben's; Mark will invite the church council and priest from St. Ben's, the Decorah mayor and city council; Judy will invite all members of the library Board of Trustees, president of the Friends of the Library Board Karla Brown and library director Kristin Torresdal; Hayley will personally invite the president of the BoT; Judy will prepare a flyer announcing the event; Mark will distribute the flyers to residents of the BPPHD, and Mark will prepare a short history of the district to present at the event. For refreshments: Mark will bring wine, Squirt and bread, Judy will bring crackers and cheese, and Diane and Karen will contribute food.*
 - b. **News Release.** *Mark will finish and send out a news release.*
6. **Discussion of Distinctive Decorah Properties project.**
 - a. **Site Inventories, SHPO, and project guidelines.**
 - b. **Meeting with City Manager.** Travis Goedken told Mark that properties accepted for this project would likely be considered historically significant by the city (allowing DHPC to argue for their preservation in case they are threatened). Mark suggested DHPC rename the project "Potentially Significant Decorah Properties," tying it more closely to the National Register, and he suggested the property spreadsheet introduction include the idea that these buildings be thought of as contributing

buildings in a theoretical historic district. Wording of the introduction was endorsed by commissioners. Karen suggested a photo for each property. *She can take and/or assemble photos.*

- c. **DHPC assignments for particular buildings.** Mark suggested commissioners review available resources in order to find likely buildings. *Mark will go through the Robert Davis book and list all possible properties. Hayley will review George Knudson's two books. Judy will review the Vera Harris book, and will read the "Walk Into the Past" signs on the west end of Water Street and in West Decorah. Karen will read other WITP signs. Mark suggested Diane may want to read other WITP signs, and Adrienne may want to review DHPC's Altfillisch web materials for possible project buildings. On a related note, Mark will add Karen's suggestion to June's agenda that DHPC advocate for requiring a permit to demolish a building in Decorah.*

7. Altfillisch project update.

- a. **Printed brochure.** The chamber still hasn't finished DHPC's brochure.
- b. **Launch party.** No discussion.

8. Continuing Education.

- a. **NYTimes "How Preservationists are Losing the fight against Luxury Real Estate."** Mark distributed this article to commissioners. He recommended another one by Jacob Aubinder entitled "What Historic Preservation is Doing to American Cities" (*The Atlantic online*), which opposes preservation efforts. He hopes commissioners can have a frank discussion about these issues, especially as developers put increasing pressure on Decorah to construct more housing, even downtown, and to demolish existing buildings, including within the historic district.

9. Communication.

- a. **Website.** The city is updating DHPC's website.
- b. **Google site for working drafts.** Mark contacted City Manager Travis about moving working drafts of DHPC agendas, minutes, etc., from his ownership to a commission Google account set up previously. Travis okayed the transfer, so all of these documents will be more accessible in the near future.
- c. **Email.** Mark will meet with the city IT director tomorrow to implement a DHPC email account through which the commission can be reached by the public.

10. Commissioner Reports. Judy will send commissioners a few photos she took in Vienna, Austria, relating to historic preservation.

11. Public Comment. Janelle Pavlovec commented that items she believes are city historic artifacts continue to disappear from the library. *Mark will put this on June's agenda.*

12. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, June 29, 2022, 4:30 pm.

13. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 6:17 pm.

May 25, 2022

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
TOPIC: 302 W. Broadway (First United Methodist Church) Sign Permit

I. The Property

The First United Methodist Church occupies an important historic building that is part of the Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District. The original church building is a Gothic Revival design constructed in 1874 of rose-colored brick with native limestone foundation and highlights. The 1961 red-brick education building and the office wing on which the proposed sign would hang are well-preserved Midcentury Modern buildings designed by the important local architect Charles Altfillisch (see <https://www.decorahia.org/historic-tour/302-w-broadway> for a full description).

II. The Proposed C-3 Signs

The Methodist Church proposes placing one large colored sign on the southwest, Broadway-facing side of the 1961 office building.

III. DHPC Recommendation

The Zoning Administrator has judged that the new signs fit within C-3 size guidelines. We believe that the new signs are stylistically appropriate for this important historic building, and that they are compatible with the principles in Ch. 15 and 17 and the historic character of the downtown and the Broadway-Phelps Historic District.

- A. We note that the sign is a wall-attachment--a commendable design that is much more appropriate than a sign painted directly on the brick (with the potential that paint creates for future masonry deterioration and the inevitable over-painting that a sign change would require).
- B. The sign is large for the wall-space on which it is mounted, but the small scale of that building area is compensated for by the larger, more prominent, more important attached church building to the east.
- C. The application does not seem to list the sign material. Plastic is not ideal, especially given the south-facing location, but we assume that the church will be diligent in complying with the city code for maintenance or replacement if the sign deteriorates.
- D. The sign colors are vivid and may strike some people as inappropriate given the general color guidelines for buildings in Municipal Code Ch. 15. (15.04.050.G says "The color of buildings should work in harmony with other C-3 structures and should maintain the unique historic quality of the downtown. The accent colors should complement the primary color.") We believe, however, that historic buildings and some vivid colors are compatible, especially, as in this case, when the color palette reflects the building occupant's historic (red flame) and contemporary (colored rainbow) branding.

Motion: At its May 25, 2022 meeting, the DHPC voted 4 to 0 to endorse the signage proposed for the First United Methodist Church (302 W. Broadway).

May 25, 2022

TO: Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council

FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission

TOPIC: 400 Heivly St. (Skyline Bowling) C-3 Design Plan

I. The Property

According to Assessor's records, 400 Heivly was built in 1977. It is a low-pitched roof metal building with a brick facade on the Heivly St. elevation. The building is in the C-3 district, but lies outside the boundaries of the 2017 National Register Decorah Commercial Historic District. The closest historic properties are the 1851 Painter-Bernatz Mill--probably the oldest existing Decorah building--just across the street to the south/south-west at Vesterheim Museum (NRHP 1974), the Charles Altfillisch-designed 1960 Decorah Municipal Building along Heivly to the southeast, and the Water St. buildings a block to the south.

II. The Proposed C-3 Design Plan

The owners have already received P&Z and Council permission for a building addition to the east and two facade projections on the south, including new materials and entryway lighting and canopies. The current proposal is for an additional 16' x 54' addition to the west, set back approximately 25' from the building's SW corner. There is no additional lighting proposed.

III. DHPC Recommendation

- A. The addition will be metal siding, matching the current metal siding of the west elevation. Municipal Code 15.04.050.A. says the following:

Traditional materials such as brick, stone (including cast stone), stucco, and in some cases wood, should be used as the primary exterior materials. The following materials are prohibited on the facades or sides of buildings that are visible, with exceptions for particular architectural styles:

1. Aluminum, vinyl or fiberglass siding or roofing materials;
2. Wood shake shingles, barn wood, corrugated metal, mirror or reflective glass, plywood and chipboard siding; . . .
4. Materials that attempt to mimic traditional materials (e.g., fiberglass panels molded to look like brick;) without consideration by the historic preservation commission and specific approval by the planning and zoning commission and council in the site plan approval process.

The February 2022 permit application indicated that the addition would include glass, "Wood Look Metal Panels," and "Metal Panel Siding." DHPC did not resist those materials. We did object to the "painting/staining" of the existing brick, including the painted-on signage, given the specific prohibition in 15.04.050.A. of painting existing masonry.

- B. Given the setback from the SW corner, the lack of windows and distinctive roofline, the addition's relatively small width (16'), and the prominence of the new central entryway canopies and the SE

corner patio, the addition will not be very noticeable from Heivly St. Given the houses currently on the lots to the west, the addition will also not be currently very noticeable from Mill St.

Motion: At its May 25, 2022 meeting, the DHPC voted 4 to 0 not to resist the permit application, largely because the proposed addition is not highly visible.