

DECORAH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Aug. 31, 2022 Meeting (FINAL)

- 1. Roll Call.** Chairperson Mark M. called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Present were Mark Branum, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden. Janelle Pavlovec and Kathy Buzza, Decorah residents, also attended.
- 2. Review and approval of July 27, 2022 minutes, an update of Mark Branum's notes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Mark declared the minutes adopted as written.
- 3. DHPC membership.** Mark introduced Kathy Buzza, who moved to Decorah in 2001 and has applied to join DHPC. Welcome! Mayor Lorraine Borowski is considering Kathy's application.
- 4. First Lutheran Church renovation report.** FLC is renovating and remodeling its church building because the roof and side walls have warped. Mark is on the sanctuary design committee. He asked commissioners what they thought of a proposal to remove the large concrete stairway that leads to the main entrance on the south side of the church. Diane felt removing it was acceptable. Mark encouraged others to contact him with their thoughts.
- 5. Charles Altfillisch project update.** Printing of DHPC's Altfillisch brochure has been delayed several months by the Decorah Chamber of Commerce. To make amends, the chamber produced 100 copies of the brochure for distribution at NordicFest. The copies contained some errors in the text and map, so corrections are underway.
- 6. Chamber of Commerce open forum with City Manager (Mark and Judy report).** Mark and Judy attended this forum – present were mostly downtown business owners – regarding development of the north alley and proposed downtown housing projects. Business owners were angry that they were not included in early conversations about proposed development, so City Manager Travis Goedken agreed to recommend the north alley consulting firm of Bolton & Menk meet especially with them, perhaps on Sept. 13. Mark was told the consulting firm will circulate survey forms and that there will be time for DHPC to make recommendations.
- 7. Commission education: National Association of Historic Preservation Commissions, *The Alliance Review*, "Online Interactions and Opportunities" (sent to individual DHPC emails).** Mark noted that, like the Spokane, WA, preservation commission featured in one article of this issue of *The Alliance Review*, DHPC has been able to upload nearly all locally-done preservation research to the Decorah city website, and he feels DHPC is fortunate in that regard.
- 8. Iowa Cultural and Entertainment District discussion.** Mark described an Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs program to designate and award grants to cultural/arts/entertainment districts within cities. He believes Decorah would qualify. *Mark will contact the Chamber of Commerce about possibly working with DHPC and other groups to identify and help sponsor such a district in Decorah.*
- 9. Significant Decorah Properties project.** Several members have added properties and photos to the spreadsheet. Mark and Adrienne will review Altfillisch properties that might

qualify. Mark said he hoped Hayley could enter relevant George Knutsen properties on the list by Sept. 28, as well as other commissioners with specific properties to add.

- a. **Project Guidelines**
- b. **List development**

10. Contacts:

- a. **222 W. Water St. for building history--Judy van der Linden.** Judy reviewed Jan Full's NRHP description for this property at the request of Ben Harman, who wanted more information about its history. She discovered new evidence that the building was constructed in 1893, not before 1870, as Jan suggested. She has reported to Ben and will put updated information in the NRHP folder in the library.

11. Commissioner Reports. Commissioners reviewed two, last-minute C-3 sign permit applications but did not take formal votes on either because they were not on DHPC's official agenda. Mark wrote both responses (see attached), one for Oneota Valley Family Eye Care Center (305 E. Water St.) and one for Vesterheim Museum (508 W. Water St.). Members voiced approval for both signs. Mark will send the responses to the zoning administrator. Mark also encouraged commissioners to check out the results of recent C-3 district construction and painting. He is pleased that building owners seem to be more aware of historic materials and features.

12. Public Comment. There was none.

13. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, September 28, 2022, 4:30 pm. Next month's meeting date and time were noted.

14. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

August 31, 2022

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>
TOPIC: 305 E. Water St. (Oneota Valley Family Eye Care) Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

305 E. Water St. is a substantial, stylish one-story commercial building constructed in 2012. The building falls near the eastern end of the C-3 district, and lies about a half-block outside of the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The proposed sign is large (7' high x 7' wide x 2' thick). It includes an upper sign set upon a faux stone base that matches part of the main building facade.

III. DHPC Response

Although the proposed sign is large, we are assuming it fulfills city ordinance requirements. The sign plate's design matches the business's tasteful logo. With its substantial, stone-looking

base, the whole piece will have a positive, almost-sculptural effect on the rather plain East Water St. streetscape, just across from the new Dry Run pocket park.

On August 31, 2022, the DHPC briefly discussed the proposed Oneota Valley Family Eye Care sign. Because of timing, this was not a formal agenda item that could be acted on. The chair noted that he intended to inform the Zoning Administrator that he approved of the sign, and all five other Commission members expressed approval.

August 31, 2022

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>
TOPIC: 508 W. Water St. (Vesterheim Museum) Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

The Vesterheim complex includes three contributing Water St. buildings in the Decorah Commercial Historic District. The proposed sign will stand in front of a new building under construction.

II. The proposed sign is a flat, metal sign 3 feet 8 inches wide, and 78 inches tall. It will include a cutout of the modern Vesterheim “V” logo (partly intended to provide photo opportunities) and some non-raised lettering with wayfinding arrows. The sign will be embedded directly into the pavement in the area of the curb expansion previously approved by P&Z and the City Council.

III. DHPC Response

We assume that the substantial sign embedded into the pavement fits within city ordinances. Stylistically the sign represents Vesterheim’s latest branding and matches the modernist/post-modern look of Vesterheim’s new Commons building. We’re slightly concerned that the sign will create foot traffic congestion. But we speculate that the newly-created pathway to the north between the Dayton House and the Commons, which will open up the substantial new Heritage Park to Water St., will provide a release for any traffic build-up. (The original Commons site plan included stone benches in this same area, just to the east of the sign.) This is not a conventional Decorah historic district sign, but it represents an exciting, compatible visual counterpoint to the more traditional blade signs on many of the area’s nineteenth-century buildings.

On August 31, 2022, the DHPC briefly discussed the proposed Vesterheim sign. Because of timing, this was not a formal agenda item that could be acted on. The chair noted that he intended to inform the Zoning Administrator that he approved of the sign, and all five other Commissioners voiced approval.