

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes of Feb. 22, 2023 Meeting (FINAL)

**1. Roll Call.** Mark Muggli, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm. Present were Kathy Buzza, Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl (via Zoom) and Judy van der Linden. Commissioners Mark Branum and Adrienne Coffeen were absent. Also present were Decorah resident Janelle Pavlovec and Decorah City Manager Travis Goedken.

**2. Review and approval of January 25, 2023 minutes, distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Mark declared the minutes adopted as written.

**3. C-3 District.**

**a. 120 W. Water St. (Bank of the West/Bank of Montreal) sign permit application.**

Mark wrote this DHPC response and made a motion to endorse the application. Kathy seconded. MOTION passed 3-1.

**b. 212 Winnebago St. (Anderson Law Firm) sign permit application.** Response was written by Mark, who made a motion to endorse the permit. Hayley seconded. MOTION passed 4-0.

**c. Query from Julie Buddenberg (NEICAC), 301 W. Day Spring Ln. (Woolen Mill).**

Mark was contacted by Julie, manager of Woolen Mill Apartments, about whether NRHP designation would prevent her from making three improvements to the building – replacing 20-year-old leaky windows, filling in several “ghost” windows, and replacing the cap of clay tiles on the parapet with a metal cap when the roof is replaced. Mark told her that the state funding they’d received in the past might affect those projects (although SHPO was unclear about that when Mark contacted them). DHPC members were polled and felt it was fine to replace leaky, non-historic windows, but that they’d prefer the clay tiles be retained and the ghost windows be insulated in some way other than completely blocking them, if possible.

**4. 2023 CLG Report**

**a. Final 2023 Work Plan.** Mark submitted DHPC’s 2023 work plan to the state.

**b. Council Presentation, Feb. 6.** DHPC’s annual report was made to the council by Mark on Feb. 6.

**5. Altfillisch project**

**a. 609 W. Broadway centennial celebration.** In an effort to involve owners of three other Altfillisch homes near the Goodman’s home, *Mark and Kathy will continue to try to contact Drew Stevenson, Maria Jones and Jeni Grouws, and Diane will contact Lois Humpal.* Hayley commented that Dick Cole’s wife, Joie, is excited about the Altfillisch brochure and project. On a related subject, Mark asked commissioners if DHPC should be applying for a 2023 “Preservation at its Best Award” for the Altfillisch project, rather than making a presentation about it at the Preserve Iowa Summit June 1-3. Mark will contact Preservation Iowa, which gives the PAIB Award, and ask if the Altfillisch project seems like a good candidate for the award. Application for the award is due March 30.

**6. DHPC 2023 Historic Preservation Award.** DHPC had an abundance of possible recipients for its preservation award for 2023. In addition to the four mentioned in January, commissioners also considered Nancy Lerdall, Convergence CiderWorks, Janelle Pavlovec, Jim and Nancy Ulring, Lois and Dean Humpal and The Depot Outlet. Commissioners decided to offer two awards this year, one to Vesterheim Museum for its development of Heritage Park, and one to The Depot Outlet, for longstanding support of a wide range of historic preservation projects in

and around Decorah. *Mark will contact the two organizations, and also ask if the award ceremony might be held somewhere at Vesterheim.*

**7. Iowa Cultural and Entertainment District update.** Mark reported that the planning group will meet Feb. 27.

**a. Application date: May 1, 2023**

**b. Planning Group: DHPC, Chamber, Vesterheim, ArtHaus, Decorah Betterment, Visit Decorah Tourism, Decorah City**

**c. Upcoming planning meeting: Monday, February 27, 11:00 am, Chamber of Commerce**

**8. Decorah Demolition permit process.** Mark explained that demolitions in Decorah require a simple form that is signed off on by several city authorities. This is not a permitting process that means the city can refuse the demolition, Travis added. He said other cities in Iowa have a more formal demolition process, and in some places, historic preservation commissions weigh in on proposed demolitions. After some discussion, commissioners decided they would be willing to dedicate extra work and time to weigh in on demolitions. They also seemed to agree: 1) that they don't want the authority to veto demolitions, and 2) that it would be good to have another body (such as the Planning and Zoning Commission) considering demolition requests. *Mark will draft several paragraphs about DHPC's possible role in demolitions so that commissioners can comment. He will also contact SHPO for advice.* Travis suggested members also search for ways that other planning and zoning commissions in Iowa handle demolitions.

**9. Continuing Education: NAPC Webinar for Commissions without Historic Preservation Staff, January 12, 2023.** Mark reported that he attended this webinar but that its content wasn't geared toward a city like Decorah.

#### **10. Contacts**

**a. Phil Iverson tour of restored 1860s cabin.** Mark said Phil looks forward to giving us a tour when the weather is better.

**b. Eben Crawford, Nebraska Winnebago Tribe, Angel De Cora Museum.** Eben contacted Mark about cooperating on any project documenting the Winnebago presence in Decorah. Mark put him in touch with David Faldet. Eben and David may work on a sign about the Winnebago in Decorah.

#### **11. Significant Decorah Properties project**

**a. Project Guidelines and goals.** Mark reported that he added this sentence to the end of the Significant Properties List preamble: *For properties after 1900, we have included only representative examples of the major building styles.* Commissioners discussed how many of each type of home style (Queen Anne, bungalow, etc.) should be put on the list. Members agreed for now to keep the list open for more additions. Mark also suggested DHPC members be more careful when writing comments about buildings to put "significance" and "integrity" descriptions in the correct boxes on the spreadsheet.

**b. List development**

**12. Commissioner Reports.** There were none.

**13. Public Comment.** Janelle noted that The Depot Outlet first opened in the former Milwaukee depot building on East Water St. and has moved three times since then.

**14. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, March 29, 2023, 4:30 pm**

**15. Adjournment.** Chair adjourned the meeting at 6 pm.

Feb. 22, 2022

TO: Decorah Building Official Greg Swanson  
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>  
TOPIC: 120 W. Water St. (Bank of the West/Bank of Montreal) C-3 Sign Permit Application

### I. The Property

120 W. Water St. is a substantial 1971 Midcentury Modern metal/glass building that has in recent years changed ownership—and therefore signage—several times. Because of its integrity and age, the building is a non-contributing property in the 2017 NRHP Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. BMO proposes to install new permanent signage in the same positions as the former signs, and also proposes to install temporary banners in three of those locations in order to announce the bank ownership change.

### III. DHPC Response

We are assuming that the proposed signs fit within the city's size limitations. We will comment on the aesthetics of each sign individually:

- Like the current sign, the primary street-facing facade sign will be halo-lit, not an ideal sign type in downtown Decorah, but understandable in this context. Because the owners wish to hide previous sign installations, they are proposing a solid blue background panel. Although the overall size of the new sign is approximately the same as the old, the background panel will make the sign a more dominating presence that we are sure will be commented on by citizens interested in the downtown's historic character.
- The North Alley elevation will also have a new halo-lit sign to replace the current halo-lit sign. Again, the replacement sign is very similar to the original, but because the new sign will not have a blue background panel, the new sign will have a similar impact as the original.
- The custom wall panel by the Water St. entrance, again of similar size to the replaced sign, will be more prominent because of the dark blue color (vs. the current silver). On the other hand, the sign does not include the company logo and will therefore be somewhat less visually fussy than the original.
- The rear entrance vinyl transom panel will be double the size of the panel it replaces.
- The rear entrance sidelite vinyl will be very similar to the original in size and impact.
- The Water St. vinyl transom sign will be larger and somewhat more prominent than the vinyl sign it replaces.
- The temporary banners on the front and rear elevations will be the same size as the permanent signs they will substitute for.
- The temporary cling banner over the rear and front elevation entrances will be more dominant than the original or the final vinyl signs.

Although the sign content is mostly the company logo in various formats, and therefore outside of our purview, we are somewhat concerned about the increased visual impact of the Water St. elevation sign. But the east half of 120 W. Water is a large, dominant, and unbroken palette of

Midcentury Modern vertical metal siding, and we believe the space can handle the sign's impact.

**MOTION: At its Feb. 22, 2023 meeting, the DHPC voted 3 TO 1 to endorse the new signage proposed for 120 W. Water St. (Bank of the West/Bank of Montreal).**

Feb. 22, 2022

TO: Decorah Building Official Greg Swanson and City Manager

FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>

TOPIC: 212 Winnebago St. (Anderson law) C-3 Sign Permit Application

#### I. The Property

212 Winnebago is a substantial Postmodern triple-front-gable stuccoed building constructed in 1987. The building is in the C-3 district, and is in a prominent place on Decorah's Courthouse "square," but is not included in either the Broadway Phelps Park Historic District nor the Commercial Historic District, both because of its location and its age.

II. Anderson law proposes to replace their front elevation sign in order to incorporate the name of a new partner. The replacement sign will be in the same location as the older sign, and evidently of approximately the same size.

#### III. DHPC Response

Because the new sign will involve so little change from the current sign, and because the current sign—restrained in style, although large—seems appropriate to the building and and the firm's need, DHPC has no concerns about the change.

**MOTION: At its Feb. 22, 2023 meeting, the DHPC voted 4 TO 0 to endorse the new signage proposed for 212 Winnebago St. (Anderson law).**