

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes of April 26, 2023 Meeting (FINAL)

- 1. Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order by chair Mark Muggli at 4:34 pm. All commissioners were present: Mark Branum, Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl (who arrived late) and Judy van der Linden.
- 2. Review and approval of March 29, 2023 minutes, distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were adopted as written.
- 3. C-3/Commercial District.**
 - a. 122 E. Water St. (American Family Insurance / Cedar Valley Auction) sign permit.** Mark explained that the city attorney and city manager decided to allow this sign, despite DHPC's unanimous vote against it. Mark believes that with current code language, no city official will ever follow DHPC's recommendation to deny such a permit. Still, commissioners agreed to keep reviewing sign applications because the application responses are a way to educate city personnel and building owners and they allow DHPC to go on record about the signs and other changes.
 - b. Historic District within C-3?** Both Decorah's Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council have recently discussed whether to change zoning regulations within the C-3 district. It's unclear if the groups want tighter restrictions within the historic district part of the C-3, or if they want looser rules in the part that is not historic. DHPC so far has not been asked to weigh in, but members agreed it would not be advantageous to weaken regulations in the non-historic part. Judy mentioned that stronger regulations about demolitions in the historic district might be desirable. *Members will revisit the topic in May, and will bring along specific, stronger ordinance language they feel they could support.*
 - c. Other. 110 Washington St., (salu spa). Sign Permit Application.** Mark wrote this response for a back entrance sign. He pointed out the application was unclear, but seemed to include a blade sign for the front facade as well. Members liked the sign design and decided to change the response motion wording to cover both signs (see response attached). Hayley seconded it, and the MOTION was approved 6-0. **120 E. Water St. (Blazing Star). Design Permit Application.** Mark also wrote this response. He talked to Sean Brown three weeks ago about proposed changes to this contributing building – repainting, replacing three windows, a metal overlay, signage, lighting and planters – although commissioners just received the application and Mark's response the day before DHPC's meeting. Kathy seconded the response motion. MOTION passed 7-0. However, because this permit process was so rushed, Mark made a motion that DHPC no longer accept C-3 permit applications after Friday at 4 pm of the week before a DHPC meeting, and that the person drafting the response get it to commissioners ASAP, but no later than Sunday at noon. Hayley seconded the motion. MOTION passed 7-0.
- 4. Steyer Bridge repair project.** Members are grateful the City Council has awarded contracts for pavement and railing repairs to the Steyer Bridge. A MOTION passed 7-0 to write a letter expressing DHPC's appreciation and proposing that DHPC, perhaps along with the Parks/Recreation department, produce a sign about the bridge that is accessible to passers-by. *Mark will write the letter.*
- 5. DHPC membership.** Mark Branum has resigned from DHPC – 😞. Commissioners will suggest and vet possible replacements as they have in the past. Judy once suggested enlarging the commission so that more members could share the workload, and commissioners

will continue to consider that possibility.

6. Altfillisch project.

a. Web updates. These updates are in progress. Mark added two houses, one on Riverside and one on Leif Erickson.

b. 609 W. Broadway centennial celebration.

i. 704 W. Broadway web content. *Judy will do more research and add to the description of this house before the celebration.*

c. Preservation Iowa “Preservation At Its Best” award application.

7. DHPC 2023 Historic Preservation Award. Members have their assignments for the award ceremony. *Judy will send out an email asking for volunteers for refreshments.*

a. Monday, May 15, 2023, 4:30-6:00, Vesterheim Painter Mill shelter (rain venue: Amdahl Center)

b. Presenters

c. Certificates

d. Refreshments

e. News Release

8. Iowa Cultural and Entertainment District. Mark said that Jessica Rilling is confident the Chamber can finish an application by midnight, May 1. He and Jessica will meet May 1st at 1 pm and will work until it's done.

9. Decorah Demolition permit process. Commissioners have said they want more involvement in Decorah's demolition permit process, but Mark hasn't had time to do the needed research. *Hayley volunteered to research how other HPCs handle demolitions.*

10. Significant Decorah Properties project. There were no project updates.

a. Project Guidelines and goals.

b. List development.

11. Contacts.

a. Phil Iverson tour of restored 1860s cabin. No date was chosen for this yet.

12. Commissioner Reports. Judy said that Midge Kjome and Kevin Lee have offered space at Decorah Genealogy Association for items DHPC might accumulate. She recommends members tour DGA, 808 River St., during its open house May 20, 2-4 pm.

13. Public Comment. There was none.

14. Upcoming meeting: Wed., May 24, or Tues., May 30, 2023, 4:30 pm? Members decided to meet next on Tuesday, May 30 at 4:30 pm in City Hall.

15. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

April 26, 2023

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator, P&Z Commission, City Council

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

TOPIC: 120 E. Water St. (Sean Brown/Blazing Star building) Design Permit Application

I. The Property

The National Register consultant was not able to date 120 E. Water exactly, having support for an 1870 date and somewhat stronger support for an 1884-85 date. The building, in any case, has a well-preserved, painted upper-story brick facade with original Italianate detailing. The transom/signboard area has for many years been covered. The street level facade has been modified, but has considerable glass and includes a recessed entryway. The building is a “contributing property” in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

The proposed design includes a number of elements: second-story repainting and window replacements; a metal overlay, signage, and lighting on the transom area; and street level planters.

III. DHPC Response

The proposed repainting will include four colors, rather than the current three. The suggested colors are rich and varied, without being obtrusive, and fall within the color palette described in Municipal Code 15.04.050.G (“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.”) In addition, the repainting will increase the highlighting of the corbelled brick pediment and of the distinctive decorative recessed brick panels just below the pediment.

The building owner said in a late March phone conversation that the current windows, which are clearly not the originals, given their rectangular shape, are badly deteriorating. In an ideal world the replacement windows would have curved tops matching the second-story window openings. But it is perhaps more important that the original window openings and surrounds are being retained. Although we don’t have a photograph of the original building, we speculate that the tall windows were probably originally divided “2 over 2” or “4 over 4,” rather than the proposed “1 over 1.” (The restored original windows of 206 W. Water St. [T-Bock’s] are an example of “4 over 4,” as are those of the Steyer Opera House.) If the proposed 120 E. Water St. windows allowed for the option of removable window grills, this would definitely be a worthy investment, even if less desirable than replicating the original windows.

The transom area metal overlay, although perhaps exceeding in size the imagined use of metal as an “accent material” (Code 15.04.050.G) should provide a compatible background for signage and lighting, especially as the bronze color will match the current street-level window surrounds and the proposed second-story windows.

The two proposed gooseneck lamps are attractive. The proposed copper shades will add a distinctive element not seen in other similar, recently-installed downtown lamps.

The street level metal planters should be an attractive addition.

On April 26, 202, the DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the repainting, window replacements, transom-area sheathing, and lighting additions to the street elevation of 120 E. Water St., praising the building's owner for his concern for the building's overall historic aesthetic impact.

April 26, 2023

TO: Decorah Zoning Administrator

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

TOPIC: 110 Washington St. (salú spa) Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

110 Washington St. is a modern (1988) one-story, double-width brick building that is a "non-contributing property" in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

The proposed sign will be placed over the building's rear elevation entrance door. The business owners are perhaps also proposing a blade sign on the building's front elevation.

III. DHPC Response

The proposed sign has an elegant font, muted coloring, moderate size, and a slightly unusual but effective placement immediately above the building's rear entrance. Unfortunately the application is not clear about the blade sign shown on the final page. If this will be similar in size, shape, and materials as the other blade signs on the Washington St., elevation, we're fine with the proposal. If that isn't the plan, then we would vote to reject the proposal for lack of clarity on placement, size, and materials.

On April 26, 2023, the DHPC voted 7-0 to endorse the new sign for salú spa at the rear of 110 Washington St. and a new blade sign for the front elevation.