

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes of January 31, 2024 Meeting (FINAL)

- 1. Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Muggli. Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Diane Scholl, Nan St. Clair and Judy van der Linden were present.
- 2. Review and approval of Nov. 29, 2023 minutes, distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were approved as written.
- 3. C-3/Commercial District**
 - a. 519 W. Water St. (K-Nails and Spa) sign permit application.** Mark wrote the response for this permit application. There were no changes to his response. The application was endorsed by a vote of 7-0.
 - b. 110 Washington St. (salu spa) sign permit application.** Mark wrote this response as well. The application was endorsed 7-0.
 - c. Electronic signage.** The Planning and Zoning Commission in January held a public hearing on and then approved proposed changes to city code to regulate electronic and digital signs in the city. Kathy attended the hearing. Judy wrote to thank P&Z for continuing to ban digital signs from the central business district. The City Council will discuss the recommended sign regulation changes at its meeting Feb. 19.
- 4. DHPC Annual Tasks**
 - a. Election of 2024 officers.** Mark, Hayley and Judy were nominated to serve as chairman, vice-chair and secretary, respectively, for another year. Each was approved unanimously.
 - b. Annual SHPO written report (draft distributed; due Feb. 2).** Mark completed this form. Commissioners suggested several corrections, then endorsed the draft 7-0.
 - c. Annual DHPC work plan (draft distributed; consult “Planning for Preservation” for guidance).** Mark described minor changes he made to the 2023 work plan for 2024. Commissioners endorsed the 2024 draft plan unanimously. Mark suggested members look at the finalized work plan regularly for inspiration.
 - d. Annual City Council oral report (Feb. 19).** Mark will make this report to the council, highlighting the award DHPC received in June, DHPC’s completion of the Significant Decorah Properties list, and DHPC’s role in the successful designation of a cultural and entertainment district in Decorah. He will also take the opportunity to make a pitch to the council and mayor for the architectural and historic significance of Decorah’s city administration building.
- 5. Decorah 175th Anniversary (2024).** Mark reported that the planning committee for this event met Dec. 15. The committee decided on a 1-day celebration on Saturday, June 15. The Chamber of Commerce will organize and publicize it. Individuals or groups are responsible for planning activities for the day. Mark will develop one about Decorah buildings that survive from the period of 1849-69. Diane, Hayley and Nan talked about a cemetery tour similar to one done once by Kristen Underwood. *Nan will talk to Kristen about the tour.* Judy mentioned a Day family tour as a possible activity.
- 6. Excellence in Collaboration Award.** Mark wrote an application naming DHPC for this award, but the commission did not win it.
- 7. Luther College Campus Historic District signage.** Mark said the sign is in progress – wording is being considered by the college’s new vice president for communication.

8. Steyer Bridge sign project. Mark has created a Google document for information about Steyer Bridge and Twin Springs that can be used for a sign near the bridge. Mark would like to get the content together soon; DHCP members' original deadline was Feb. 15. Mark noted that a Luther student wrote a paper on the Decorah area Civilian Conservation Corps about 15 years ago that may be pertinent.

9. DHPC 2024 Historic Preservation Award. Members should begin thinking about possible awardees, Mark said. He mentioned two; Lois and Dean Humpal, for their renovation of a number of historic homes, and various restored windows of downtown buildings, such as those in Magic Morpho, 130 W. Water St., and the former Otts' Pops, 112 Winnebago St.

10. Decorah Demolition permit process. There was no discussion.

11. Significant Decorah Properties progress. Members briefly discussed the list and background information document. They decided to hold a SI Draft Party. Tentative date is Saturday, March 2, time and place to be determined. *Judy will send everyone a link to the fillable Site Inventory form.*

12. DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates. *Mark will keep track of agendas, etc., for the month of February.*

13. Contacts

a. Travel Iowa Insider Meeting, Decorah, Feb. 27-28, 2024. Mark forwarded commissioners an email on Jan. 28 about this meeting. He suggested they contact both him and Jessica Rilling at the Chamber if interested in attending.

b. Preserve Iowa Summit, Mount Pleasant IA, June 6-8, 2024

c. IA SRF Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. Section 106 of federal law asks interested parties to comment before construction or other changes affect potentially historic properties. DHPC has received several notifications in the past asking for comment. Mark hopes SHPO monitors and addresses these. He doesn't plan to weigh in on them in the future, but any commissioner can do so by contacting him.

d. Pat Downs (406 High St.). Pat believed her home might have been designed by Charles Altfillisch, but Judy researched it at the courthouse and could find no evidence Pat's lot was owned by anyone other than Orlando Qually (or Qualley) at the time the house was built. Altfillisch did not record any house designed for Qually in his project books.

e. NAPC mailing list. Mark discovered that DHPC's membership in the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions had expired, explaining why commissioners haven't been receiving the NAPC Alliance Review newsletter. He informed City Manager Travis Goedken and hopes the membership will be renewed.

14. Commissioner Reports. There were no official reports.

15. Public Comment. There was none.

16. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 4:30 pm.

17. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at about 6:00 p.m.

January 31, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>
TOPIC: 519 W. Water St. (K-Nails and Spa) C-3 Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

519 W. Water St. (which includes both the 517 and 519 W. Water St. addresses) is a modern (1978) brick building. The facade lacks the differentiation, segmentation, and trim required by the current, post-early-2000s City Ordinance design requirements. The National Register consultant notes that the building's windows are unusually small for the facade size. Because of its age, the building is non-contributing in the National Register Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

K-Nails proposes a rectangular, flat, surface-mounted sign with the business's name/logo in red, to be mounted over the western street-level window. The visual illustration suggests that the sign would match the size and shape of the Oneota Financial sign above the eastern facade window. Both signs appear to match the width of the street-level window. The attached correspondence suggests that the client was considering both a "larger" and a "smaller" sign—but there is no indication which of the sizes is shown in the illustration.

III. DHPC Response

The proposed sign would replace a small blade sign that announces the building's current "western" occupant. Partly because 519 W. Water is—as noted above—a large unbroken brick facade, with no trim and with unusually small windows, the proposed, more demonstrative sign may actually improve the building's general appearance. The sign itself is simple and dramatic. Given that everything else about the building is very symmetrical, we hope that the installed sign will match the size of the current Oneota Financial sign (and therefore the width of the street-level windows), rather than being either larger or smaller.

At its January 31, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 7-0 to endorse the new signage proposed for 519 W. Water St. (K-Nails and Spa), noting especially their preference for a sign similar in size to Oneota Financial's.

January 31, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org> TOPIC: 110 Washington St. (salu spa) C-3 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

Salu spa proposes a flat, non-illuminated, 5' x 5', surface-mounted sign with its business

name/logo, to be mounted on the portion of the south-facing building elevation visible between 120 Washington St. (La Rana Bistro) and 106 E. Main St. (Northeast Security Bank). The logo and design match the blade sign and rear entrance signs endorsed by DHPC on April 26, 2023. Unfortunately the blurry application illustration makes it impossible to decode the wording below the business logo (although it is probably “sauna + wellness spa,” Salu’s business sub-title visible on its website).

III. DHPC Response

In its April 26, 2023 response to the Salu Spa sign permit application, DHPC commented, “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.” The current sign is considerably larger, which might be cause for concern (although it presumably falls within the City Ordinance size limits). But given the lack of signage on La Rana’s side elevation, the minimal impact of the Northeast Security Bank building because of its limited height, and the long setback from the street of 110 Washington’s south elevation, the proposed sign might bring some new life into what feels like a dead-end alleyway (accentuated by all the street-surface parking around the bank and at the back of 110 Washington). It’s not quite like having a new, curiosity-creating, south-elevation entryway into 110 Washington, but the proposed sign does at least announce that 110 Washington—and downtown Decorah!—is open for business.

At its January 31, 2024 meeting, the DHPC voted 7-0 to endorse the new signage proposed for 110 Washington St. (Salu Spa).