

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes of April 24, 2024 Meeting (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order shortly after 4:30 pm. Present were Chair Mark Muggli, Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Diane Scholl, Nan St. Clair and Judy van der Linden. Hayley Jackson was absent. *Decorahnews.com* reporter Alexander Rosenow also attended.
2. **Review and approval of March 27, 2024 minutes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Mark suggested two corrections to the minutes: Note in 4b that May 22 is not DHPC's regular meeting day, and note in 11b that Kathy is also considering attending the Preserve Iowa Summit this year. With those corrections, minutes were approved.
3. **C-3/Commercial District**
  - a. **105 E. Water St. (etc.) (Rebound Properties).** Mark wrote the response for this complicated permit application involving four buildings. Kathy noted there are 10 apartments planned for the buildings rather than the six stated in the response. Mark will correct that and reword another section to discourage the applicant from installing natural aluminum storm windows. Commissioners voted unanimously 6-0 to endorse the permit application with these changes (response attached).
  - b. **Review of previous applications/responses**
    - i. **201 W. Water St. (JNC, LLC) design permit application.** Both Planning & Zoning and the City Council endorsed this application despite some DHPC members' concerns about colors and the number of murals. DHPC will review the project once it's finished. Mark said the developer assured him that a new C-3 application would be filed for any murals added to the buildings.
    - ii. **401 W. Water St. (Rilling Chiropractic).** DHPC voted not to endorse this sign application, but owners put up the size sign they wanted in their preferred location anyway. Adrienne thinks it looks okay, while others think the new sign looks off-center and too close to the roofline.
    - iii. **519 W. Water St. (K-Nails and Spa).** Members approved this sign application in January and think the finished project is acceptable.
4. **DHPC 2023 Historic Preservation Award**
  - a. **Lois & Dean Humpal, and Chanda.** *Judy will check with Lois about Chanda's last name and will ask if there are individuals or groups the Humpals would like to invite (Nan offered to send invitations). Mark will put DHPC's news release on Historical Sites of Winneshiek County website and email the release to a list of his history-minded friends. Kathy will put the release on Decorah Now. It will also be sent to decorahnews.com and the Decorah newspapers.*
  - b. **May 22, 2024, 4:30-6:00, Municipal Council Chambers.** Judy reserved the council chambers for 4:00-5:30 pm. *She will double check times with the city and the Humpals and will work with Chopper Albert on technology for the slide show.*
  - c. **Certificates.** *Mark will write out language for the certificates.* Adrienne has ordered the certificate frames.
  - d. **Food.** *Kathy and Nan will help with food. Hayley and Adrienne may also help. Kathy will check to see if DHPC can serve wine in the council chambers.* Final details of food assignments will be decided by email.
5. **Decorah 175th Anniversary (1849-2024)**

- a. **Plans for June 15, 2024.** Mark summarized activities planned so far for the anniversary, including DHPC's talk on surviving architecture and a presentation by Prosper Waukon sponsored by Winneshiek County Historical Society. A short program Saturday at 10:00 am will open the celebration. Planned activities also include an ice cream social, band concert and children's old-fashioned games.
  - b. **DGA April 22 lecture on Decorah's origins.** Adrienne, Kathy and Judy attended this lecture and assured Mark that its content would not overlap with DHPC's event on surviving architecture.
6. **Luther College Campus Historic District signage.** Mark reported that a bronze plaque noting the LCCHD is underway. College vice president for communication Bill Smith also wants a second informational sign on campus, for which Mark will suggest the text. Mark invited other commissioners to help write the content.
7. **Steyer Bridge sign project.** Decorah Parks and Recreation Department director Andy Nimrod recently emailed Mark about the sign for Steyer Bridge that he, Mark and Jeremy Brill planned. Andy is retiring, but wants the sign to go forward. Commissioners agreed that Mark should also remind Andy about a second sign the three men discussed for Twin Springs that would further describe this part of Decorah. Mark said that with both Andy and Jeremy leaving their positions, it would be best to get sign content to the city within the next month, if possible.
8. **Significant Decorah Properties progress**
  - a. **Site Inventory form.** Mark said he met with Diane to review the SI form since she couldn't attend the group SI study session this winter.
  - b. **Review of Mark's SI for 305 Fifth Ave.** Mark encouraged commissioners to read and comment on his SI. The SIs will be submitted to the state as group projects, so he feels it's important to have input from multiple commissioners.
  - c. **Kathy Buzza's SI for 506 E. Main St.** Kathy just emailed this completed SI to commissioners today. Mark said her SI sets a high bar for all others, but reminded members that the state doesn't require SI's to be as detailed and complete as Kathy's. He feels it's important to get as many property SIs on file with the state as possible. In response to a question from Diane, he also said SI's filed with the state can be updated or replaced fairly easily, and those on DHPC's website can be changed if new information about a property comes to light.
  - d. **Highlight property anniversaries (150, 100) on Facebook Historic Sites of Decorah and Winneshiek County.** Mark reminded members of this option.
9. **Decorah Demolition permit process**
10. **DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates.** Nan will monitor city groups agendas, etc., in May. Judy noted in an email that the BoA meets May 1st, P&Z on May 13th and City Council on May 6th and 20th.
11. **Contacts**
  - a. **Introduction to Planning and Zoning Workshop for Local Officials (presented by Iowa State University Extension, Hotel Winneshiek, April 25, 2024).** Mark will attend this.
  - b. **Preserve Iowa Summit, Mount Pleasant IA, June 6-8, 2024.** Nan, Kathy and Mark are considering attending. If no one attends, commissioners must find other ways to fulfill the state's continuing education requirement this year.

c. **NAPC membership.** Mark is still trying to straighten the membership snafu out. He said commissioners may access archived issues of the Alliance Review and past webinars by signing in on the NAPC website using “Decorah” as a username and “Pres1234” as a password.

**12. Commissioner Reports.** Adrienne reported that the Downtown Decorah Betterment Association is planning to repair four kiosks downtown and replace their historic Decorah content with business advertising. Elizabeth Lorentzen will talk to Travis Goedken about the changes, which people Adrienne knows object to. *Adrienne will report back to DHPC.*

**13. Public Comment.** There was none.

**14. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, May 29, 2024, 4:30 pm.**

**15. Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm

April 24, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken

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

TOPIC: 105 E. Water St. (etc.) (Rebound Partners) C-3 Design Permit Application

#### I. The Property

The “Anundsen” publishing property is a complicated, interconnected complex of buildings, each with its own history:

- 105 E. Water St. was a one-story building, purpose-built by the Anundsens in 1938 for the Piggly-Wiggly grocery store on the site of two demolished single-story buildings. The architect was notable Decorah engineer/designer Charles Altfillisch, with construction by Lars Seim. The building was designed to accommodate a second story, which was added by Anundsens in 1955. Unfortunately the second-story materials and design (including the under-sized windows), which Altfillisch was evidently not involved with, bear little relation to the design of the first story or to the Commercial District as a whole. (Because of a special rule concerning buildings adapted for commercial purposes more than fifty years ago by the original owner, the building is considered “Contributing” on the Decorah Commercial Historic District National Register nomination.)
- 107 E. Water St. is a c. 1899 two-story red brick building. The first story has been changed from a typical nineteenth century commercial facade to a more modern-looking office entrance. The second story includes some dramatic brick and terra cotta work that is largely original. (This is an NRHP “contributing” building.)
- 109 E. Water St. is a 1901 two-story red brick building. The first story is modernized, but “retains the traditional recessed entryway flanked by large display windows sitting on

large bulkheads” (NRHP nomination). The building was never under Anundsen ownership. (This is an NRHP “contributing” building.)

- 106 (or 108?) Washington St. was constructed before 1885. In 1887 it became the home of the *Decorah Posten*. In 1955 the Washington St. facade was dramatically modernized by owner Jack Anundsen. Charles Altfillisch was the architect. (Because of the building’s important history locally and nationally, and the large preserved sections to the rear, this is an NRHP “contributing” building.)

## II. The Proposal

Rebound Properties intends to create ten second-story apartments in the Anundsen building complex. In addition to extensive interior reconfiguration (which, according to the full building plans, does preserve some historic flooring, ceilings, doors, windows, and other materials), Rebound proposes several exterior renovations, including restoration and replacement of brickwork, expanding several windows and doors to their original openings, and replacing a south-facing wooden second-story overhang with brick facing and a metal access stairway.

## III. DHPC Response

It would be ideal to return these four important commercial district buildings to their original exterior design and detailing, although the 1938 one-story blonde-brick Piggly-Wiggly building would even then seem odd in its location between its nineteenth-century red-brick two-story neighbors. We regret that the first-story renovations aren’t, at this point, more thorough—they mostly consist of retaining renovated facades. (The preservation of the 1955 second-story addition to 105 E. Water St. is defensible on historic grounds, but a sensitive rehab might actually be preferable.)

Nevertheless, almost all the changes that Rebound *does* propose are for the good:

- The NPS-Standards restoration of the 107-109 E. Water St. second-story brick and terracotta facades should be an impressive historic preservation example for other business owners considering modernization or demolition.
- The expansion on 106 Washington St. of the four window openings back to their original size is a positive decision, and a good reminder of the importance of preserving original window designs.
- The south and east sides of 106 Washington St. (and the south of 109 E. Water St.) will be restored/renovated in ways that will make these elevations historically evocative and impressive restorations. The positive changes include these:
  - the NPS-Standards brickwork on the south and east sides of 106 Washington St. (and of the south side of 109 E. Water St.)
  - the removal of red foam-coating and the preservation or replacement of the brick underneath
  - the re-opening of two separate door transoms (one on the south, and one on the east)
  - the removal of some dilapidated loading ramps and a wooden second-story

overhang, and their replacement with uniform metal stairways.

- The complete drawings show that most wooden windows will be restored, rather than replaced, which is admirable from both historic preservation and climate change perspectives. We do strongly urge that the replacement aluminum storm windows not be natural aluminum.

**At its April 24 meeting, DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the Rebound Property proposals for 105, 107, 109 E. Water St. and 106 Washington St., lauding almost all the proposed building changes, with hopes that Rebound will in the future do more extensive first story restorations.**