

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes of May 29, 2024, Meeting (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Mark Muggli, with commissioners Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson and Judy van der Linden present. Diane Scholl and Nan St. Clair were absent.
2. **Review of April 24, 2024 minutes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were adopted as written.
3. **C-3/Commercial District**
 - a. **219 W. Water St. (Chrysalis Children's Center) C-3 sign permit.** Mark wrote the DHPC response to this and the following two C-3 applications (see all three responses attached at the end of minutes). Members voted 5-0 to approve the sign, objecting only to its size. *Mark will rewrite the motion of approval to say all commissioners thought the sign should be smaller.*
 - b. **215 W. Water St. (Interior Design by Emily) C-3 sign permit.** Members voted 5-0 to endorse the proposed signage.
 - c. **110 Washington St. C-3 Mural permit (Maggie Schwarz & Chamber).** Members voted 5-0 to approve the mural. They also endorsed City Manager Travis Goedken's decision to give the mural final approval without Planning and Zoning or City Council reviewing the permit application.
 - d. **111 Winnebago St. consultation.** Mark reported that this building is undergoing repair and renovation after synthetic stucco on the front facade loosened. Mark told owners David Lester and wife about applying for historic tax credits, but they believe that repairs need to be made quickly, and the tax credit process takes too long. The owners are working with an architect and builder. They plan to re-stucco the front facade, but may not be able to save the brick under it. During discussions, Mark learned that city officials talked about making loans to building owners for work on facades. He was excited by the possibility and said DHPC needs to follow up on that report.
 - e. **105 E. Water St. (etc.; Anundsen building; Rebound Properties) followup.** Both P&Z and the City Council approved this C-3 permit for extensive work to develop ten apartments on the second floors of four buildings. The work is being partly funded with historic tax credits. Mark was surprised to learn that what was approved is apparently the owners' final plan, and includes no work at all on the buildings' first floors. *He will write owners "Rebound Properties" to try to learn more.*
4. **DHPC 2024 Historic Preservation Award.** The Dean, Lois and Chanda Humpal award ceremony went well, with an excellent slide presentation of the Humpals renovated homes, delicious refreshments and a good-sized crowd of 40 persons. Next year, Mark recommends again getting newspaper publicity out early and presenting the award to deserving persons who have lots of friends.
5. **Decorah 175th Anniversary (1849-2024) plans for June 15, 2024.** Mark said that his and Judy's presentation on surviving Decorah properties from 1849-1870 is progressing. Adrienne reported she will be enlarging and mounting Decorah historic postcards and other memorabilia on poster boards for display. Judy said the Chamber will print out the architectural treasure hunt brochures and she and Adrienne will fold them. *Mark will call Vesterheim about placing several poster boards in the Commons, and will ask Jessica*

Rilling whether she has money to reimburse Adrienne for her expenses and Judy for the brochure. Adrienne will ask Jessica about displaying posters at Winneshiek Hotel or in the Chamber office.

6. **DHPC Membership.** Diane told Mark she has decided to step down from DHPC when her term expires in June. She has served ten years. *Mark will encourage her to let the city know her decision, and will contact Mayor Lorraine Borowski about Hayley and Nan both agreeing to serve another term.* Adrienne has a friend, Jenny Werner, who has applied to join the commission.
7. **Steyer Bridge sign project.** Mark said he hasn't heard any more about the sign project.
8. **Significant Decorah Properties progress.**
 - a. **Site Inventory form.** Mark noted Kathy has finished editing her SI for 506 E. Main St. *He will send it to the state.*
 - b. **Review of Mark's SI for 305 Fifth Ave.**
 - c. **Highlight property anniversaries (150, 100) on Facebook Historic Sites of Decorah and Winneshiek County**
9. **DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates.** Beginning in October, 2023, members agreed to take turns monitoring the work of city commissions using an alphabetically-organized schedule. It continues with: **JUNE-Buzza**; **JULY-Coffeen**; **AUGUST-Jackson**; **SEPTEMBER-Muggli**; **OCTOBER-St. Clair**; **NOVEMBER-van der Linden** (Note: schedule does not include a new commission member). **As a reminder, BoA will meet June 5 at 5:15 p.m., P&Z on June 10 at 5:30 p.m. and City Council on June 3 and 17 at 5:45 p.m.**
10. **Contacts**
 - a. **1321 East Highway 9 (section 106 review for cell phone tower).** Mark noted that while DHPC had little to say about this review, the commission may someday receive notification of a review that will be important to research and comment on.
 - b. **Hayley Jackson, session chair and presenter, "Constructing Community: How Shared Historic Preservation Interests Build Better Places and Spaces," Midwest Archives Conference, Des Moines, Iowa, May 2-4, 2024.** Mark thought commissioners would enjoy reading and seeing Hayley's presentation from early May. *Hayley will put it in a format she can forward to everyone.*
11. **Continuing Education**
 - a. **Introduction to Planning and Zoning Workshop for Local Officials. (presented by Iowa State University Extension, Hotel Winneshiek, April 25, 2024).** Mark attended this and said he was struck by how much of what P&Z and especially BoA are able to do is determined by state law.
 - b. **"Power of the Sign," Iowa Economic Development Authority, Oelwein, June 18, 10-4.** *Mark will send commissioners notice of this workshop.* Those interested will need to register.
 - c. **Preserve Iowa Summit, Mount Pleasant IA, June 6-8, 2024.** Nan still plans to attend.
 - d. **NAPC membership.** Mark continues to look for an article in the NAPC's *Alliance Review* that all commissioners might be interested in reading and discussing. In the meantime, members may want to check out a series of nine 3-minute videos called "National Register of Historic Places Guide" on YouTube.

12. Commissioner Reports. Adrienne reported that Elizabeth Lorentzen and Ed Epperly met with Travis Goedken about Decorah Betterment’s initiative to repair and replace the content of downtown kiosks. She said Goedken had no idea the content belonged to several Winneshiek County historical groups and had been paid for in part with grant money from the Depot. Elizabeth will meet next with Decorah Betterment members about their plans for the kiosks. **Adrienne** also reported that owners of “Heavenly Made Gifts,” the business at 126 E. Water St. (the Thurston Kjome building), contacted her for information about the building. She gave them copies of a newspaper article by researcher Ed Epperly and the NRHP application information, and will look for a historic photo. They regretted not replying to Mark when he contacted them after they bought the building.

13. Public Comment. There was none.

14. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, June 26, 2024, 4:30 pm.

15. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned shortly before 6:00 p.m.

May 29, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>
TOPIC: 215 W. Water St. (Interior Design by Emily) C-3 Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

215 W. Water St. is a two-story brick building constructed sometime between 1870-80. The modern storefront has large glass windows and shares its signboard with 217 W. Water St., another historic building obscured behind a 1960s metal second-story cladding. The second story window openings and rounded brick window hoods of 215 are intact. Because of its age and its reasonably intact second story, the building is a “contributing property” in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

The business owner proposes window decals and a single, bracket-mounted blade sign in the signboard area. The owner is re-using a sign from their Calmar business. The application references a bracket similar to the one on “Heavenly Made” gift shop, although DHPC can’t locate any bracket on that business.

III. DHPC Response

“Interior Design by Emily” has a simple, attractive logo, and the proposed 20” x 20” blade sign will make a reasonable addition to the many varied blade signs that have been installed in the C-3 district in the last five years.

At its May 29, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 5-0 to endorse the “Interior Design by Emily” blade sign for 215 W. Water St.

May 29, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorahia.org>
TOPIC: 219 W. Water St. (Chrysalis Children's Center) C-3 Sign Permit Application

I. The Property

219 W. Water St. is a one-story brick property built by the Interstate Power Company in 1977 on the site of the historic Grand Theatre. The building is set back from the street and is minimally decorated, except for a distinctive curved wall that attaches to the building to the east. Because of its age, 219 W. Water is a non-contributing property in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

The Chrysalis Children’s Center proposes a single, flat-mounted sign placed on the large brick wall to the west of the building’s doorway and window.

III. DHPC Response

The Center’s proposed logo is visually striking and the sign design is compatible with the range of signs in the Commercial Historic District. Although within the allowable limits, the 72” x 40” sign nevertheless looks oversized for this low-lying building—although we grant that the size impact will be lessened by the building’s setback from the street. But all things considered, we think this public service organization would be better served by a smaller, less obtrusive sign.

At its May 29, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 5-0 to endorse the Chrysalis Children’s Center sign for 219 W. Water St., although we unanimously believe that the sign should be smaller than proposed.

May 29, 2024

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

Artist Maggie Schwarz and the Decorah Chamber of Commerce propose mural Artwork Number 2 in the Chamber’s Postage Stamp Series. The mural would be a block printed on circular MDO Plywood board, approximately 2’ x 2’ maximum size, and installed on the east-facing, northeast corner wall. The wall is grey-painted concrete block, and the mural would be installed with removable, painted screws.

III. DHPC Response

At the risk of over-responding to an exemplary application, we will comment on the proposed mural’s relation to the DHPC/City seven mural guidelines:

1. Murals should not be painted on a building’s primary elevation. The primary elevation is the side (or sides) of a building that (1) defines the building’s architectural style and massing (shape and size), or (2) forms the business’s main or primary entrance, or (3) faces the busiest street. Murals are encouraged to be painted in alleys, or on side-streets. **The proposed mural will be on an under-adorned alleyway wall.**
2. Murals should not cover or obscure architectural details. **There is minimal detailing on 110 Washington’s east elevation, and the small mural does not intrude on the building’s overall shape.**
3. Unpainted masonry (brick, stone) should not be painted. **The only “damage” to the block wall will be two unobtrusive screw holes.**
4. In order to preserve a building’s architectural integrity and make its overall massing clearly visible, murals should not cover the building’s entire elevation. For example, a neutral or unpainted border could surround a mural to ensure the building’s overall massing is visible. **The mural is small and muted, and both complements and enhances the building rather than obscuring it.**
5. Given the permanence of paint, muralists are encouraged to consider painting on wall-mounted panels. **In line with this recommendation, the mural will be painted on high-quality MDO plywood and screw-mounted.**
6. In order to facilitate regular maintenance and potential removal, owners and muralists are strongly encouraged to develop written contracts, photographic documentation, materials list, etc. **The application is fully explanatory, and the Chamber is committed to the mural’s on-going condition.**
7. As with any building alteration, owners planning a mural are encouraged to communicate with the owners of neighboring properties. **In addition to being supported by the building owner, the mural’s design, size, and placement has been endorsed by the business that has its entrance (and sign) on the building’s east elevation.**

The proposed, highly-attractive mural is a strong addition to the Chamber's Postage Stamp Series of small, unobtrusive murals that artistically enliven dead spots in Decorah's historic downtown. And in the mural guideline's spirit of collaboration, the Chamber has once again gone out of its way to connect with the important constituencies, including DHPC.

At its May 29, 2024 meeting, the DHPC voted 5-0 to enthusiastically endorse Maggie Schwarz's proposed mural on the 110 Washington St. east elevation.