

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes of June 26, 2024 Meeting (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Mark Muggli. Commissioners present were Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Nan St. Clair and Judy van der Linden; Diane Scholl was absent. Also present for the meeting were Jenny Werner, who has applied to join DHPC, and Keith Koch, architect for the 111 Winnebago C-3 project on the agenda.
2. **Review of May 29, 2024 minutes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were adopted as written.
3. **C-3/Commercial District**
  - a. **111 Winnebago St. C-3 Site Plan permit application.** Mark wrote the DHPC response to this C-3 permit application and invited architect Koch to the meeting. Koch explained the building's condition and the owners' plans to repair the front facade with brick on the first level and a newer stucco-like material on the upper level similar in appearance to the stucco on the alley facade. Commissioners voted 6-0 to approve the permit application, and gave Mark permission to expand one portion of his response to reflect new information the architect mentioned during the meeting. (See the final response at the end of the minutes.)
  - b. **105 E. Water St. (etc.; Anundsen building; Rebound Properties) followup.** Mark reported that DHPC's instinct that no more work will be done on the ground level of these four buildings is apparently correct. One ground level space is currently for rent, indicating there are no plans to alter it. Mark emailed the owners about their plans but got no response.
4. **Decorah 175th Anniversary (1849-2024), June 15, 2024**

**NOTE that Adrienne Coffeen's four 175th posterboards will be available for viewing in the Council Chambers before the DHPC meeting 4:30.** Commissioners had a chance to study Adrienne and Kathy's posterboards before the meeting began. Mark reported that Judy and his 175th powerpoint presentation is now on DHPC's website. He also said Roz Weis of Decorah newspapers contacted him about a special 175th anniversary edition of the paper this summer, wondering if he, Elizabeth Lorentzen or Judy would write an article about Decorah history for the issue. *Mark, Nan and Judy are interested, and will suggest an article about surviving architecture from early Decorah. Mark will email Roz to see if she's interested in that topic.*
5. **DHPC Membership.** Mayor Lorraine Borowski said Jenny Werner's application to join DHPC will be considered at the July 1st City Council meeting, according to Mark. Nan and Hayley's nomination for another term on DHPC will be approved at the meeting, as well.
6. **Steyer Bridge sign project.** Mark hasn't heard back from the new city engineer or head of Parks and Recreation about the sign. He did note that Stacey Gossling found a third Michael Steyer-carved gravestone in St. John's cemetery in Locust, and he put a photograph of it in the DHPC Steyer Bridge information document.
7. **Significant Decorah Properties progress**
  - a. **Site Inventory progress.** Mark recently submitted his and Kathy's completed Site

Inventories online to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), but there was confusion about his account and login for the state website, which is still being upgraded. He feels SHPO has almost completed digitization of the process. He reported that although Diane retires from DHPC this month, she still wants to finish SIs for the Ulring property (909 Pleasant Ave.), and a second house across the street from it. Mark also informed commissioners that once an SI is submitted to the state, it becomes public property.

- b. **Highlight property anniversaries (150, 100) on Facebook Historic Sites of Decorah and Winneshiek County.** *Hayley volunteered to make a list of structures on DHPC's significant properties list that have 100- or 150- year anniversary dates approaching.*

8. **DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates.** Kathy forgot to monitor these in June but sent a summary on June 28th of board activity for the month. **Kathy volunteered to monitor again in July. NOTE: Board of Adjustment will meet Wed., July 3 at 5:15; Planning and Zoning on Monday, July 8 at 5:30; and City Council on Monday, July 1st and Monday, July 15th at 5:45. (Adrienne will monitor in August.)**
9. **Contacts.** Mark read a note from Dean, Lois and Chanda Humpal thanking DHPC for the 2024 Preservation Award and recognition ceremony in May. Mark also talked to City Manager Travis Goodken about a report that the city has an emergency fund for building owners. Travis said there is no city emergency fund right now (and that the Chamber of Commerce has a revolving fund that might have been mistaken for a city fund), BUT that the city is trying to set aside some money by way of TIF (tax increment financing) for the purpose of facade restoration in the C-3 district. Mark told Travis that DHPC would like to be involved in that program, preferably at an early stage in the application process. Travis suggested the city might write the grant application to include DHPC's input as part of the scoring process for the applicant, which Mark thinks could work well.
10. **DHPC Design Review expansion.** On a related note, Mark proposed the commission consider expanding its design review process to include any building on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or in a NRHP historic district in Decorah. This would require a change in city code, and therefore be a lengthy process, but he feels it would be a useful way to educate building owners and city officials. **MOTION – Mark moved “That DPHC pursue a conversation about giving us the opportunity to provide optional responses to building changes in all historic districts and NRHP properties.”** Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.
11. **Continuing Education.**
  - a. **“Power of the Sign,” Iowa Economic Development Authority, Oelwein, June 18, 10-4.** Mark planned to go but then had to miss this workshop.
  - b. **Preserve Iowa Summit, Mount Pleasant IA, June 6-8, 2024.** Nan attended and reported that she liked some aspects of the summit but overall felt it was disorganized and that the presentations were not impressive. She observed that representatives from SHPO were mostly young and seemed flustered. She sat in on one good presentation on grant writing but stayed at the summit only one day.
12. **Commissioner Reports.** Mark reported that Leslie White has updated DHPC's website, including adding the 175th Powerpoint presentation and text, as well as other changes. **Judy** said several people asked her about giving the 175th presentation a second time;

mentioned she and David Wright will meet in July to review his house SI, and said she thought the DHPC webpage didn't include our regular meeting time.

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

**14. Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, July 31, 2024, 4:30 pm.**

**15. Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

June 26, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken

FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorah.iowa.gov>

TOPIC: 111 Winnebago St. C-3 Site Plan Permit Application

#### I. The Property

111 Winnebago St. is a two-story brick building constructed in 1881. According to historical sources, it was constructed specifically to house the Decorah Post Office. The ground level has over time held a wide range of enterprises, including the *Decorah Republican* newspaper, the Decorah Gas Company, the Chamber of Commerce, the Positive Images photo studio, and, most recently, Wildcrafter Acupuncture and Herbs. The second story has in recent years been finished as an apartment. Because of the building's integrity (presumably the 1981 stucco and the removal of original design features), the property was considered "non-contributing" in the 2017 National Register Decorah Commercial Historic District

#### II. The Proposal

Given the recent discovery of water damage issues under the east elevation Dryvit synthetic stucco, the owners have already begun emergency rehabilitation with the City Manager's permission. The owners will at this time make only minor repairs to the north, alley-way elevation and will only make interior structural changes required by the new east facade. The east elevation facade has been completely removed, and the owners are proposing a number of strategies to recapture some of the building's historic feel:

- The ground level will be finished with full-size, mortared red brick that resembles the building's historic brick.
- The half-lite apartment door and full-lite business doorway (and its two sidelites) will be full-height, and will be topped with glass transoms.
- The second-story window openings will have raised, round-top window hoods of cellular PVC that will resemble the historic brick window trim. The undersized windows will be replaced with new square-topped, double-hung windows that will fill the original window openings, which have remained visible from within the apartment; the windows will have a small rounded in-fill at the top. The window on the corner will have an aluminum rail and balusters.

- The second story will be covered with lightly-textured, through-colored, breathable concrete-fiber panels held in place with a system of concealed fasteners.

### III. DHPC Response

DHPC has communicated with the building owners, initially after the structural problems surfaced, and later as their architect developed his plans, and are aware of some details that are not clear on the plan as submitted. We appreciate the owners' efforts to highlight the building's historic features in a challenging, costly situation.

- This project's original rough design sketch removed the southernmost second-story window and the ground story window on the angled building portion (which was originally the main entryway). We applaud that the owners will be restoring all the second-story windows to their original full height and are retaining the ground story angled-building-portion window. Given the importance of large glass expanses to commercial Victorian buildings, retaining and expanding these windows is a highly commendable, although expensive choice.
- The cellular pvc second-story window hoods and cornice/frieze—although not a reproduction of the elaborate original trim—will considerably improve the building's historic feel, and are much more in keeping with Decorah's current municipal code design standards than the flat-surfaced 1981 stucco version.
- We applaud the use of historic-looking brick on the ground level, despite its cost.
- We applaud re-introducing the original glass transoms above the apartment door and the main business entrance.
- We recognize that the dropped interior 8' ceiling, and the associated costs, make it challenging to re-introduce full-height windows with glass transoms into the ground story windows. But we appreciate that the owners have agreed to incorporate a structural system that will allow for easy re-introduction of full glass transoms in the future.
- Given costs and the emergency situation, we understand the decision to use fiber concrete panels on the second-story. At a minimum, we are confident that the panels will have a more appropriate historic feel than the current stucco.

**At its June 26, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the 111 Winnebago site plan, commending the owners for their commitment to highlighting many of the building's historic features.**