

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes of October 30, 2024 Meeting (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Meeting was called to order by Chair Mark Muggli. Present were Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson, Judy van der Linden and Jenny Werner. Nan St. Clair was absent.
2. **Review of September 25, 2024 minutes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were approved as written.
3. **State law requiring videoconferencing for all meetings.** Commissioners can expect to have all future DHPC meetings available via Zoom, Mark said, although he noted that no one from the city was present to set up Zoom for this meeting.
4. **C-3/Commercial District.** Mark wrote responses for both C-3 applications (attached at end of minutes).
 - a. **400 W. Water St. (Lefse Lodge) site plan.** New owners wish to install a new window and paint parts of the building, although it was unclear which parts. Mark will change his response to request the building's front facade limestone NOT be painted. Commissioners otherwise voted 6-0 to approve the application.
 - b. **115 W. Water St. (Rendered Unique) painting plan.** Members voted 6-0 to approve this plan to paint part of the facade a darker green.
 - c. **201 W. Water St. (JNC LLC) update.** DHPC had been reluctant last month to judge this application for new windows on the former Donlon building because of insufficient information. Mark reported that P&Z agreed with DHPC and tabled the application for the same reason. Mark also noted that the building owner changed paint colors from those approved in the application. *Mark will ask City Manager Travis Goedken if the color switch was done with or without his knowledge.*
 - d. **111 Winnebago St. review and update.** Mark reported he was surprised to see the entire front facade of this building repaired with brick, even though the owners had been approved for concrete panels on the upper story. The owners explained to Mark that brick turned out to be less expensive. *Mark will ask Travis if he was aware of that substitution, and will also ask the status of the owners' request for a city grant to help pay for repairs.* The city earlier denied the grant request but didn't clearly explain why.
 - e. **Other updates.** Mark reported that Koreana has four of six new windows installed, although the windows lack the transoms shown in the C-3 application. *Mark will also include this in his discussion with Travis.* Mark added that repairs on the rear elevation of the former Montessori school on West Water St. are underway.
5. **Steyer Bridge sign project update.** Corrections in the text have been sent twice to the sign company. Mark doesn't know if that will affect when the sign is completed, but hopes DHPC can hold a dedication ceremony of sorts when it's finally installed.
6. **Significant Decorah Properties progress**
 - a. **Site Inventory progress reports.** Jenny and Mark met to discuss the site inventory process. She is interested in researching and writing up 505 5th Ave., 701 5th Ave., and possibly also 501 5th Ave. Judy noted this is a good time of year to take photos of homes because leaves have fallen.
 - b. **Highlight property anniversaries (150, 100) on Facebook Historic Sites of**

Decorah and Winneshiek County.

7. **DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates.** Nan will monitor the city meetings for the month of November (**City Council** – Mon., Nov. 4 & Mon., Nov. 18, at 5:45: **P&Z** – Mon., Nov. 11 at 5:30: **Board of Adjustment** – Wed., Nov. 6 at 5:15).
 - a. **Downtown Economic Development Grant Program.** Mark noted that this grant program has been adopted by the City Council.
 - b. **Upper Explorerland “Decorah Wayfinding Report”.** Mark highlighted two aspects of the wayfinding report: 1) Its list of “must-see” features of Decorah is complete and includes the Broadway-Phelps Park and the Commercial historic districts, as well as Luther College. Although the college’s historic district was not identified on the list, commissioners felt it was something visitors could learn about once arriving on campus; 2) City Council members were enthusiastic about the city going on a “sign diet” after wayfinding signs are installed. This means some current signs would be removed in order to eliminate duplication and visual clutter along roads.
 - c. **Future of Decorah Municipal Center.** The local newspaper last month reported a City Council discussion about problems with the municipal center and the possibility of demolishing and replacing the building. Mark has spoken repeatedly to the council about the importance of the Altfillisch building, and one resident wrote a letter in response to the newspaper article urging the center be preserved. Commissioners are concerned, and will write a letter to city officials making clear their feelings and suggesting alternatives. *Mark volunteered to draft the letter, which he’ll circulate for comments before the November meeting.*
8. **DHPC Design Review expansion/Form Based Code.** Travis told Mark that the council continues to discuss form based code, but has taken no action on it.
9. **Contacts**
 - a. **512 W. Broadway (Rebecca McCarley).** This former home of Janelle Pavlovec was purchased by contractor David Wadsworth, who has hired historic preservation consultant Rebecca McCarley to research the house for possible historic tax credits. Mark said DHPC may have to work with her and David if questions about the house’s history or significance arise.
 - b. **Treadle sewing machine offer.** *Hayley will contact Winneshiek County Historical Society to ask if they are interested in and able to accept the machine.*
10. **Continuing Education**
 - a. **“WHAT’S STILL HERE: Decorah’s Surviving Properties, 1849-1870,”** Judy van der Linden and Mark Z. Muggli, Decorah Genealogy Association, Monday, Oct. 28, 2024, 7:00 pm.
 - b. **National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC), *The Alliance Review*, 2024, No. 2.** Mark will tell NAPC that commissioners are receiving digital copies of the magazine.
 - i. **“The Challenges of Reinventing Historic Industrial Properties,” pp. 10-15.** Mark briefly summarized this article about cases where the broad period of significance assigned to historical sites made it more difficult to secure tax credits.
11. **Commissioner Reports.** Mark reported that Deb Bishop contacted him on behalf of Oneota Historic Future Alliance, which wants to make a documentary about Decorah’s

East Side School, including its demolition and the use of leftover materials. She will speak to commissioners at the November DHPC meeting.

12. Public Comment. There was none.

13. Upcoming meetings: Wednesday, November 27, 2024, 4:30 pm; Wednesday, December 25, 2024. Because they conflict with holidays, the November and December meetings will be rescheduled to Monday, Nov. 25 at 4:00 pm (date and time were changed early in November to Thursday, Nov. 21 at 3:00 p.m.), and Thursday, Dec. 19 at 3:00 pm, respectively.

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

October 30, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorah.iowa.gov>
TOPIC: 400 W. Water St. (Lefse Lodge) C-3 Design Permit Application

I. The Property

400 W. Water St. is an 1893 two-story, wood-frame, false-front building that has housed a shoe store, a furniture/mortuary business, a grocery, and in recent years a coffee shop and cafe. The building is designated a “contributing” building on the 2017 National Register nomination because it retains its original “size, scale, falsefront, and overall profile,” although the nomination notes that the wide siding is replacement and that there have been changes to both the storefront area and to the originally-exterior River St. second-story stairway. The nomination notes that the excellent research done on this building by Judy van der Linden would provide much information for a full-scale restoration.

II. The Proposal

The owner proposes adding a 60” x 53” window on the ground story of the east elevation, to match a window just north of the proposed window.

They also propose painting the south elevation a cream color “to brighten the facade and to complement the inside of the Lefse Lodge Kafe.”

III. DHPC Response

Windows are a crucial feature of historic buildings, and we are typically hesitant to endorse major window changes, especially on brick or stone buildings where the changes are especially evident. But the eastern elevation of 400 W. Water St. has had a number of changes since

1893, including the enclosing of a staircase that was originally open-air and the addition of a porch/balcony with a view towards the north. The proposed window is designed to match an existing window and should therefore not have a major impact on the building's overall effect.

We wish the penciled note about painting the south elevation had been clearer: does it include both the white vinyl-siding second story and the dark burgundy storefront area and signboard area? Or is it just the burgundy that will be changed? In any case, there is not much basis for rejecting a neutral cream color on any portion of a building that has for many years been painted white. Still, given the lack of specificity about the owner's intentions, we do want to state what is perhaps obvious: it would be a mistake—and not in keeping with the preference articulated in City Code—to paint the natural limestone that was at one point added to the storefront area.

At its October 30, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the Lefse Lodge's proposed window addition and painting.

October 30, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken
FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorah.iowa.gov>
TOPIC: 115 W. Water St. (Rendered Unique) C-3 Design Permit Application

I. The Property

115 W. Water St. is an 1885 building that was used for at least 65 years as a grocery store before becoming the Sears Roebuck catalog store and then the "Bargain Outlet." The building's second story red and yellow brickwork is distinctive and well-preserved. The storefront was modernized in the 1930s by contractor A. R. Coffeen. The building is a "contributing" building in the 2017 National Register designation

II. The Proposal

The building's new occupant proposes painting the sage green storefront area with Roycroft Bottle Green (SW 2847). The door and window trim will remain unpainted.

III. DHPC Response

The proposed green color, although dark, will complement 115 W. Water St.'s brickwork and many other buildings in the Commercial District. We look forward to the day when the under-sized second-story windows are replaced with windows that fill the original distinctive tall openings.

At its October 30, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 6-0 to endorse the Rendered Unique's proposal for repainting portions of 115 W. Water St.'s storefront area.