

Decorah Historic Preservation Commission  
Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024 Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

1. **Roll Call.** Commissioners present were Chair Mark Muggli, Kathy Buzza, Adrienne Coffeen, Hayley Jackson (arrived at 4 p.m.), Jenny Werner and Judy van der Linden. Nan St. Clair was absent.
2. **Review of Nov. 21, 2024 minutes distributed by secretary Judy van der Linden.** Minutes were adopted as written.
3. **C-3/Commercial Historic District.** Mark wrote responses for site plans “b” and “c” below. He pointed out both had been sent by mistake to Planning & Zoning and City Council before DHPC saw them. P&Z and the council approved the 107 W. Water St. plan, although their approval is contingent on DHPC’s action tonight. The council also approved 101 Winnebago, but P&Z tabled it, waiting to hear from DHPC. Owners of both buildings applied for Downtown Economic Development Grants to help fund the projects they described in their application/site plans.
  - a. **Decorah Downtown Economic Development Grants.** Mark explained first that seven building owners had applied for the grants, requesting a total of \$137,000. The grant program had \$150,000, and all seven were given their funding. Mark was one of the persons asked by City Manager Travis Goedken to read and vote on each of the grant applications.
  - b. **107 W. Water St. (Perfect Edge) site plan.** This was one of the seven grant applications. Owners proposed a 2-part project replacing and expanding windows on the first and second floor. DHPC commissioners agreed with Mark’s positive response to the project and voted 5-0 to endorse (response attached behind minutes).
  - c. **101 Winnebago St. (former Donlon’s building) site plan.** This was another of the seven grant applications, although P&Z did NOT act on this one at its recent meeting. (Mark believes some P&Z members were confused because the owner submitted a site plan in September for other work on the building that is still in limbo.) Commissioners liked the owner’s proposed addition of a large window at street level on the Winnebago side of the complex, but wanted more detail about the window. Commissioners first voted 5-1 to reject the motion in Mark’s response, and then voted 6-0 to approve a substitute motion saying DHPC endorses the project in principle but needs more details before acting on it. *Mark will finish composing the substitute motion.*
4. **Municipal Center memo and responses.** Mark reported that three city council members responded to his memo about preserving the city’s municipal center. Steve Zittergruen emailed that he agreed with DHPC but for economic reasons rather than preservation ones. Emily Neal asked to meet with Mark in January to talk about the matter. Christopher Miculinich thanked Mark for the memo.
5. **Oneota Historic Future Alliance (OHFC) potential collaboration.** At last month’s DHPC meeting, Deb Bishop presented her organization’s plan to produce a documentary film about East Side School. OHFC is seeking collaborators to help with the film. Commissioners agreed they don’t have the skills or interest in taking a lead in fundraising or film making, but thought they might offer to collate a list of where the school salvaged materials were used with one of the city’s significant properties and

sites, or a similar project. *Mark will write to Deb about the discussion.*

6. **Washington Prairie postcard.** Mark will donate this postcard to the Luther College archives. It was given to Diane Scholl by Becky (Linnevold) Shaw, then Diane passed it on to Mark. Members agreed with him that they do not want to create a DHPC archive for it and other artifacts.
7. **DHPC web updates and DHPC Google Drive.** Mark reported that he got a Site Inventory (SI) for the Fred Biermann home at 408 S. Mechanic St., written by Janelle Pavlovec and Lyle Otte in 2010, added to the website.
8. **Luther College National Register sign update.** The Luther College sign has arrived, Mark reported, but accompanying bolts didn't fit so college officials have ordered a frame for the sign.
9. **Project inventories from local crafters.** Mark wonders if DHPC shouldn't be more proactive and gather information about which local artisans (i.e., Ted Wilson the stone mason) did which projects in Decorah in order to begin a record of their accomplishments.
10. **Significant Decorah Properties progress**
  - a. **Site Inventory progress reports.** Using research and interviews from Adrienne and Diane Scholl, Mark and Adrienne finished an SI for 909 Pleasant Ave. Members were asked if they believed it was complete enough, and *Judy volunteered to visit the courthouse to try to clarify some confusing changes in ownership of the property.*
  - b. **Highlight property anniversaries (150, 100) on Facebook Historic Sites of Decorah and Winneshiek County:** Hayley has made a spreadsheet for properties that have anniversaries in 2025. Five buildings will celebrate 150 years old. *Hayley will share the spreadsheet.*
11. **DHPC, City Council, Planning and Zoning, Board of Adjustment updates.** Jenny will monitor city meetings in January. They will be: **City Council, Monday, Jan. 6 and Monday, Jan. 20, at 5:45 p.m.;** **Board of Adjustment** would normally meet the first Wednesday of the month, which is Jan. 1, so their meeting is rescheduled to **Thursday, Jan. 2 at 5:15 p.m.;** **Planning & Zoning, Monday, Jan. 13, at 5:30 p.m.**
12. **Contacts.** Mark learned that the city threw away the contact information for the sewing machine owner, so he won't be able to follow up on its possible donation.
  - a. **Decorah Treadle sewing machine offer**
13. **Continuing Education.** Kathy attended a webinar, "Navigating ADU (Accessory Dwelling Units) Development in Historic Districts," and *she will give a brief summary of it at the January meeting.*
14. **Commissioner Reports.** There were none.
15. **Public Comment.** There was none.
16. **Upcoming meeting: Wednesday, January 29, 4:30-6:00.** Mark reminded commissioners that he needs a volunteer to present the commission's annual report to the City Council in February.

- a. Election of officers
- b. City Council annual report

**17. Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned about 4:35 p.m.

December 19, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken

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

TOPIC: 107 W. Water St. (Perfect Edge) C-3 Design Permit Application

### I. The Property

107 W. Water St. is a two-story nineteenth-century building with a 1939 Commercial-style facade (the exact dating is unclear). The second-story brick detailing and stonework is well preserved. According to the 2017 National Register nomination, the original building may have been stone, but was brick by the later nineteenth century. The building is designated a “contributing” building on the National Register designation.

### II. The Proposal

The owners’ Economic Development grant proposal is clearer than the recent site plan in outlining this project’s ambitiousness:

- On the second story, new windows, ceiling raised to original height, new kitchen, bath, flooring, new heat pump, etc., all to create an attractive apartment;
- On the ground floor, raising ceiling and exposing original beadboard, removing steel facade panels and introducing enlarged windows, adding bronze metal panels along the outer edge;
- The proposal also includes an attractive, distinctively-shaped blade sign mounted between the first and second-story windows, although it isn’t clear whether the sign is formally part of the application.

### III. DHPC Response

This is a significant commercial building restoration. The existing 1939 second-story brickwork, with its ever-so-slightly Art Deco stone circles and other detailing, will not be affected. The second-story apartment will be attractive, partly because the original ceiling height will be re-introduced.

Unfortunately we do not have a photo showing the post-1939 storefront, but the new full-height bronze windows with two distinct “transom” areas will definitely be in the spirit of 1930s Commercial-style buildings (even though the bronze railings are likely more substantial than typical 1930’s window separations—like the lighter separations, for example, on the remaining original second story windows of 101 W. Water St. [Impact Coffee]). Although it wouldn’t be surprising if the 1939 entrance was centrally located, retaining the existing side entryway makes economic sense and is not visually disruptive. The metal trim along the two sides (described in

the application as “style [perhaps “stile?”] and rail wainscoting,” although not an original feature, should be compatible with the new ground and second-story bronze windows. Raising the interior ceiling to a uniform height will be advantageous, although the exposed beadboard ceiling may actually date to the nineteenth-century building.

Overall, the completed building will nicely complement other restored Commercial District buildings, including, for example, the 1925 Mott Building [Impact Coffee] building at 101 W. Water St.).

And we might note that we are in support of the shape, design, and location of the sign included in the site plan image.

**At its December 19, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 5-0 to endorse the Perfect Edge’s site plan, commending their investment in the downtown and their commitment to historically-appropriate renovations.**

December 19, 2024

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken

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

TOPIC: 101 Winnebago St. (Caleb Ulring) C-3 Design Permit Application

## I. The Property

As explained in a March 2024 design permit response, and in a September 2024 response for this same building, 201 W. Water St. is a large stuccoed building that incorporates what were originally three distinct properties. As the 2017 National Register of Historic Places nomination notes, the building sits at an important corner location at the core of the commercial district, but because of the building's lack of historic integrity, the whole building complex is “non-contributing” in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

## II. The Proposal

The owner’s Economic Development grant proposal, which was what was in front of us, seems quite straightforward: the owner proposes adding a large six-light window in the ground-story location of the blue-painted stuccoed “square” that lies between the building’s brick-high-lighted Winnebago St. entrance and the brick/window facade bordering the alley just to the left of the “square.”

(We are acting on the assumption that this submission is distinct from the September 19, 2024 application that proposed adding “three new commercial style windows to the corner of 201 W.

Water St. (please note current structural damage from car accident).” DHPC didn’t make a recommendation on that application because of its lack of information on the window size and placement and lack of comment on the existing Homstad wall mural; P&Z tabled the application pending further information.)

### III. DHPC Response

As we have noted before, and as the building owner is fully aware, a full historic restoration of 201 W. Water St. is impractical. But the building that remains is difficult to classify and difficult to sensitively and coherently renovate. The owner has improved the building’s impact, and its compatibility with the whole downtown, by treating it more like the three separate buildings it originally was—he proposed doing this through distinct painting in red, blue, and yellow colors (the proposed bright yellow became a much darker green between the original site plan adoption and the actual painting). The owner also effectively added raised second-story window trim on the whole building in order to increase its design detailing (a requirement of Municipal Code for new buildings).

As the owner says, the proposed large commercial-style windows would add interior light and would echo the original large-scale windows on this portion of the Ben Bear Winnebago facade. Some people may feel that these large scale windows will be out of character with the current Water and Winnebago St. ground-story facades. But it does not seem to us advantageous to mimic the current facade, which, with its clerestory-like windows on the north and the small window on the south-eastern Winnebago corner, is so out of character with the expansive windows of Decorah’s signature downtown buildings.

But because the proposal does not include the required full site plan, we are concerned about some important elements, including the exact size of the windows, their exact placement, and the size and materials of the lintel under the windows.

**At its December 19, 2024 meeting, DHPC voted 6-0 to not to make a formal recommendation on the proposed 101 Winnebago St. renovation because of inadequate documentation, although the Commission is in general support of the proposed window additions.**