

## SAHA: Horn in the West Season in Doubt

Written by Gary Childers

Wednesday, 20 March 2013 07:40

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Southern Appalachian Historical Society Board member, Brian Woolridge, laid out the needs of their outdoor drama, "Horn in the West", in no uncertain terms to Boone's Town Council during Tuesday evening's meeting, "Horn in the West needs immediate support in order to open for its 62nd year. We need approximately \$20,000. We hope that the Town of Boone can help provide that support." He went on to express their desire to form partnerships and explore ways to improve their business model so they can develop sustainability and not wind up in the same situation again. In his conclusion he expressed appreciation to Council for all the support they provide for the drama and offered to answer questions they might have. The Council had some very direct questions concerning how SAHA planned to operate the Horn in the black this year. SAHA Board Chair, Michelle Ligon, responded that they plan to reduce the length of the season by one week which will reduce salary expenses by 12% and they have asked the director to cut 4% from costs. They also shifted the season back a little reducing the number of June performances which she indicated were not as heavily attended as the July and August performances. Council member, Andy Ball, wanted to know if there had been a change in the marketing program for the drama this year. Ms. Ligon indicated there had been greater effort to advertise in the major markets and a representative from the Tourism Development Board shared that they were willing to join SAHA in developing a new marketing plan for the future. Council member, Jamie Leigh, wanted to know if they had asked anyone else for financial help besides the Town. Ms. Ligon shared that they receive \$12,000 annually from the Commissioners and they have approached them for an emergency increase for this year. Council members and the SAHA Board have some time before the request is brought back for action by Council to consider the possible economic and cultural impact on Boone and Watauga County if the drama is not able to open for the coming season.