

Boone to Offer 'Licensing' for Future of Amphitheater

Written by Gary Childers
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Horn in the West and the Southern Appalachian Historical Association received a reprieve of sorts from Boone Town Council during Thursday night's meeting but it came with notice of changes to the traditional arrangement between the bodies—and for anyone else seeking to utilize town resources. Michelle Ligon, chairperson of the SAHA Board of Directors came before the Council for the second time this week outlining their needs and requesting a guarantee on the extension of their lease, "SAHA would like a longer lease—you know that. We are concerned in regards to licensing that it will mean further difficulties in finding qualified leadership." She went on to say it would be more difficult to market other aspects of the property, as well. Following Ms. Ligon's comments, Council member Rennie Brantz continued his efforts to help SAHA get their lease renewed for after December 31st as they could pursue ways to recoup the loss of \$25,000 that came from renting the parking area to Appalachian State University for student parking. With SAHA's recent struggles to raise adequate funds to insure long term stability or cover the costs of structural repairs to the facility, some Council members and town staff expressed concern that it might cost the town more money than it could afford to enter into a long term arrangement at this time—council member Jamie Leigh, "There are too many things that aren't in the crystal ball really clearly right now. Hoping for change and anticipating change and then all these other things might come up—I think it's a real mistake from the Town's point of view to promise more than we can give." After further discussion the Council approved a motion to authorize the town to take over management of parking at the Horn in the West through December 31st and pay SAHA up to \$12,500 of the proceeds after town expenses are covered. Then the Council approved a motion to authorize the Cultural Resources Board to develop, with input from the town attorney, a licensing process for all Town of Boone properties. They then approved SAHA staying in their current facilities through a licensing arrangement for 2014. Just how this will work for SAHA and other organizations will now be watched in action.