

Boone Town Council; A Tale of Two Theater Groups

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Dire news for one theater group, great success for another at Tuesday night's Boone Town Council meeting. Due to Appalachian State University deciding not to rent the Horn in the West Parking area for the coming school year from the already struggling Southern Appalachian Historical Association or SAHA once again finds itself facing a financial crisis according to Michelle Ligon, chair of the organization's Board of Directors. SAHA counts on the \$25,000 earned annually from the rental arrangement with ASU to make ends meet. SAHA had already been allocated additional funds from the County Commissioners and was turned down by the Boone Town Council to open its outdoor drama, Horn in the West. Complicating this issue is the fact that SAHA's current lease with the Town of Boone for use of the Horn in the West property ends this December meaning they cannot seek alternative ways to use the parking area to generate funds next year. Council member Rennie Brantz brought SAHA's plight to the attention of the Town Council letting them know that the organization needed Town Council to provide assurance they will have use of the land after December so avenues for generation of funds to support the outdoor drama can be pursued. After a lengthy debate about extending the SAHA lease or to change licensing policy, the majority of the Council members expressed their desire to transition to a licensing process but with too many unknowns at this time, council member Brantz moved to extend the lease for one year. That failed in a three to two vote with the opposing Council members indicating they wanted more time to study the situation. The council decided to carry the matter over to tonight's Council meeting.

On a brighter note, the Board of Trustees for the Old Appalachian Theater renovation project now owns the theater, after it paid back the money it borrowed from the Town of Boone—with interest—and proclaimed a "Resolution of Appreciation" to the Town of Boone for making it possible. John Cooper, owner of Mast Stores and chairman of the Trustees. Upon the complete reading of the resolution the Trustees presented the Town Council with a check for \$624,500 and noted that the building will be "from henceforth known as the Appalachian Theater of the High Country, Inc.' The move showed the success so far of the 'silent' phase of their fundraising.