

COUNTY OF PRINCE GEORGE, VIRGINIA

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Prince George County Board of Supervisors Approves New Parks & Recreation Policies

Prince George County, VA – On Tuesday, Oct. 28, the Prince George County Board of Supervisors approved new Parks & Recreation Department policies, part of which addressed the concerns from some participants over religious references on County-owned property.

As part of the policy, no alterations or modifications will be allowed to the County-owned uniforms issued to all participants, except for the addition of a participant's legal last name and in cases of multiple same names, the addition of the initial of a first name. Uniforms will be limited to official county markings or approved sponsor messaging or speech.

However, some misconceptions may remain, and we hope to clear confusion by addressing a few frequently asked questions.

Question: Who owns the uniforms?

Uniforms are bought and paid for by the Parks and Recreation Department. When parents sign up their child for activities requiring uniforms, the registration fee falls under the general

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fund for the department. The department does not designate certain funds for uniforms, equipment, field maintenance etc. This means that the uniforms are leased by the county to the participants, until the end of the season or tournament. By that principle, the county owns the uniforms, until the end of the season.

Question: Why is the Invocation at the start of the meeting not considered religious?

The Invocation that the Board uses at the start of every meeting is considered a legislative invocation, not a government endorsement of religion. It is not considered a religious exercise for the public. This invocation is similar to what several other government bodies (including the U.S. Congress) practice before meetings.

Question: Why is the slogan ‘In God We Trust’ not a violation of the First Amendment?

The phrase references a generic deity without preferring a specific faith. Courts have determined this usage is a form of “ceremonial deism,” which does not violate the First Amendment because it lacks specific religious references.

The County would like to emphasize, individual free speech is not restricted; County uniforms are considered government speech as they are required to participate in county recreation sports programs/activities.

The County appreciates the strong community interest and open dialogue on this issue and is committed to fairness and clarity for all families participating in our programs.

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