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RTPC creates rental fee policy for established religious groups

BY JAMIE KERNER

The Rye Town Park Commission (RTPC) adopted a new policy regarding Rye Town Park facility rentals by religious organizations during a meeting on Tuesday, July 17.

Per the new policy, established religious organizations within the Town of Rye seeking to rent facilities for a religious service will have fees waived. However, if such organizations wish to rent facilities to hold an event other than a religious service, they will pay the non-profit rate to cover rental and parking fees.

“What that changes is that we’re not going to charge when a religious organization has a religious service,” Commission President Gary Zuckerman said.

Established religious organizations located outside the Town of Rye will pay the non-profit rate when renting facilities at the park, even if they are holding a religious service.

According to Zuckerman, established 501(c)(3) organizations qualify for the non-profit rate, which is half of what would be paid by an individual or company.

For the purposes of this policy, “blackout dates” have been

established by the RTPC. These dates, such as Memorial Day weekend, the Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend, are the biggest days of the season for the park, according to Zuckerman. Therefore, they stand as exceptions to this new policy.

The idea for the construction of formal protocol to be used for facility rentals by established religious organizations was first brought up at a Park Commission meeting on May 15 at the recommendation of Commission Attorney Jeff Binder, who suggested putting a policy in place and seeing how it evolves. At the following meeting on June 19, this issue was tabled. The new policy passed unanimously during the July 17 meeting.

“We have a very good relationship with our religious organizations and some of them have approached us and had services at the beach,” Zuckerman said. “We are establishing a formal policy for the first time.”

Through this policy the RTPC hopes to carry out more “fair and consistent” practices in terms of their rules and rates when an established religious organization seeks to rent facilities.