

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2025**

Mayor Garnes called the regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Mayor Garnes, Mayor Pro Tem Carter, Councilmembers Orr and Wilson

Absent: Councilmember Woodall (excused)

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Community Development Director Caldwell, Finance Director Sanborn, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Wastewater Superintendent Moore, City Clerk Dunham, and Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel

Absent: Chief of Police Phinney

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters. No public comment was received.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Garnes asked if any council member, staff, or members of the public would like to remove any item from the consent calendar for separate discussions. No items were removed.

CarterOrr/Wilson made a motion to approve the consent calendar, including the following items:

- 1) Approve Minutes of October 7, 2025, Regular Meeting;
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Scope of Service with the City Engineer, GHD to Complete the Design and Issue Bids for the Infiltration Gallery Repair Project;
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Scope of Service with the City Engineer, GHD for the Eel River Trail Accessible Ramp Project; and
- 4) Receive and File the Check Register for September.

The motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

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City Manager Knopp announced that the October Nuisance Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting scheduled for tomorrow was canceled and called for questions from the Council on the staff update.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that once again, there were no cats transported to Miranda's Rescue.

SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Informational Report on the Development of a New Solid Waste Franchise Agreement and Related Topics Including by not Limited to Universal Collection and SB 1383

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that the current franchise agreement with the city and Recology Eel River will expire on December 31, 2026.

There have been ongoing conversations for several years related to a new solid waste, recycling, and organics franchise agreement including the concept of establishing universal collection.

To prepare for the next franchise agreement update, Rio Dell joined a regional collaborative effort with the cities of Fortuna, Arcata, Eureka, and the County of Humboldt. These jurisdictions are working with the technical contracted support of CSG to provide a franchise agreement with current industry standards.

The goal is to improve recycling, organics, outreach/education programs consistency for Rio Dell and neighboring jurisdictions; meet SB 1383 and other new state mandates; provide clear and transparent rate setting procedures; provide performance standards and accountability for the hauler and convenient services for residents and businesses; and provide the benefit of economics of scale and shared expertise while maintaining flexibility to tailor Rio Dell specific program options cost-effectively.

City Manager Knopp provided a brief review of the universal collection timeline and background beginning in 2019 when Recology Eel River provided a presentation on the concept of universal collection to the Nuisance Advisory Committee. The Nuisance Advisory Committee recommended the City Council endorse the concept and later, followed up with correspondence to the City of Fortuna encouraging their adoption of universal collection. He pointed out that Fortuna's participation in the universal collection program would dramatically increase the subscriber base thereby spreading out the fixed costs and potentially making it a viable option for Rio Dell to consider.

He further explained that there were a series of meetings and public hearings on the concept of universal collection in 2021 and 2022 which led to the consensus of the City Council to continue pursuing universal collection. The evolution of this was that by 2024 it was determined that universal collection was never going to be an option available to Rio Dell until Fortuna agreed to go to universal collection. As such, the concept stalled out while the city was in a waiting pattern to make that consideration.

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He noted that economy of scale is an important factor since new trucks, equipment, and bins need to be purchased. He noted that those comments are reflected in the attached minutes and cautioned the council to disregard any of the numbers mentioned in the 2021 minutes since part of the process tonight is to come up with valid numbers.

City Manager Knopp said that there have been a couple of very important developments between 2021 and today. One is the contract with the consultant CSG using CalRecycle grant money to assist with the negotiation process with Recology Eel River, compliance issues related to SB 138,3 and all the new regulations across California. The other development is that Rio Dell partners with other local jurisdictions to standardize the solid waste franchise agreements across the board with only minor variations to adjust for unique circumstances of each jurisdiction. He noted that the jurisdictions are cooperating by holding regular local task force meetings and staff meetings related to SB 1383 implementation so there is incredible synergy between the cities and the county to work out the details in updating the franchise agreements.

He commented that the purpose of the consultant is to make sure that the costs that are represented by Recology Eel River are accurate. The goal of tonight's meeting is to receive direction from the Council on what they would like to see in the franchise agreement so they can go back to the negotiation table with Recology and discuss the implementation of a new contract and what that would look like.

He pointed out that universal collection is not a mandate now but will likely be in the future. Rio Dell does not currently have a time schedule with CalRecycle on implementation of SB 1383 although the County, Fortuna, Eureka and Arcata do and are being forced to adopt universal collection. The state goal is to eventually get everyone at 100% diversion so that nothing goes into the landfill.

City Manager Knopp turned the discussion over to Kathleen Gallagher from CSG Consultants to provide a presentation on the implementation of universal collection.

She began by stating that she has been involved in the recycling world since 1989 and explained that CSG only provides assistance to jurisdictions and not private entities.

She said that SB 1383 is an unfunded mandate placed on jurisdictions to provide mandatory organic waste collection to all residents and businesses. In terms of SB 1383, she has been talking with Recology about some of their best practices, and successful profit margins.

Tonight, she is asking for feedback from the City Council to see what provisions Rio Dell wants included in the new franchise agreement.

She said that the purpose of the program is to implement consistent, weekly collection services for garbage, recyclables, and organic materials for all residents and businesses with some exceptions to meet SB 1383 standards.

She noted that the other participating jurisdictions are transitioning to universal three-container service which helps avoid customer confusion and supports regional outreach and education campaigns.

Two options were provided for City Council consideration which were:

- **Option A – Full Implementation:** This requires Recology to provide weekly garbage, recycling, and organics collection beginning January 1, 2027.
- **Option B – Deferred Implementation During Waiver Period:** This would include language allowing deferral of organics collection while the CalRecycle waiver remains active.

Kathleen explained that while the City's SB 1383 Low Population Waiver remains in effect (until 2027), Recology would not be required to provide organic waste collection services but would continue weekly garbage and recycling collections until expiration, revocation, or non-renewal of the waiver. She warned that deferral could create rate increases later when organics collection is mandated.

She said that one thing to keep in mind is that it might make sense to do the full rollout along with the other jurisdictions to avoid confusion with the other jurisdictions having services that Rio Dell doesn't have and for cost efficiency.

Mayor Garnes called for questions from the Council on this portion of the presentation.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that just because the city has the option to kick the can down the road on universal collection implementation, doesn't necessarily mean it's the best option. She pointed out that universal collection is coming whether we do it now or later and thought the best approach would be to do it now along with the other jurisdictions. She said that she liked the cohesive approach and recommended Option A with full implementation. She commented that she would like to see numbers related to the rates.

Councilmember Wilson agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Carter and said the Council has been talking about the concept of universal collection from when he first became a council member in 2012 and now, it's 2025 and it still has not been implemented and that he would like to see it move forward. He said that the big concern is SB 1383 and asked what CSG's relationship is with Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA) since they will ultimately be the ones that handle the organics processing.

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Kathleen said that she has been working closely with Eric Keller-Heckmman, the Executive Director of HWMA and said that he has been very responsive in terms of programs and the delivery of organics and methods for keeping these materials clean.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the idea is to have four containers or if the organics will be combined with the green waste.

Kathleen explained the process and said that food waste will be comingled with green/yard waste, and the container will be labeled to show what materials are acceptable.

Councilmember Wilson said that he would also like to see costs and how SB 1383 plays into those costs before moving forward. He noted that approximately 50% of Rio Dell residents have garbage services now and his hope would be to not increase the rates, if at all possible, with implementation of universal collection.

City Manager Knopp reiterated that staff and CSG are looking for direction from the City Council so they can go to Recology Eel River and ask for solid numbers.

Kathleen explained that she would integrate the feedback from the Council into the franchise agreement and make sure the numbers are accurate before bringing the package back to the City Council for review and approval.

Mayor Garnes pointed out that the costs will be higher than the quotes in 2021 and would only go higher if the city waits to implement universal collection. She agreed to move forward with the implementation sooner than later. She stressed the importance of letting citizens know that the costs would be shared with other jurisdictions if we do it now and that this decision is not something the City Council takes lightly.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward under Option A, Full Implementation.

The presentation continued with discussion of **Residential Bulky Item Collection and Frequency**.

Kathleen explained that this service would allow at-the-curb service for residents to dispose of large bulky items such as furniture, appliances and mattresses once or twice a year by appointment rather than waiting for the annual clean-up day to dispose of large items.

Three options were presented for City Council consideration which were:

- **Option A:** One (1) free annual bulky item pickup per household (up to 2 cu. yds)
- **Option B:** Two (2) annual pickups (increased convenience, higher cost)
- **Option C:** No curbside program; continue current annual cleanup day

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It was noted that bulky collection improves accessibility for elderly and low-income residents who cannot transport materials to cleanup sites and can reduce illegal dumping.

Kathleen said that there were 134 vehicles that participated in the last annual community cleanup in Rio Dell so there was not a lot of participation. She added that community outreach and education reduces illegal dumping. She encouraged the Council to consider implementing a bulky item pickup program.

Councilmember Orr recommended two annual bulky item pickups.

Councilmember Wilson asked how residents would schedule the bulky item pickup and said that Recology Eel River is not good at responding to phone calls.

Kathleen explained that residents would call Recology and schedule the pickup and they would have a day allocated for Rio Dell and come with a flatbed truck and pick up the bulky items. She suggested the city include information on the city website. She indicated that the phone response issue could be included under performance standards in the franchise agreement with a recommendation that they commit more staff to answering phone calls.

She further explained that the bundled service including solid waste, recycling and organics would include one rate whether the bulky item service was used or not so there would be no additional charge on the bill if the bulky item service was used.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed on a bulky item pickup, either one or two annually depending on the cost. She commented that Recology Eel River needs to answer their phone when customers call.

Mayor Garnes recommended Option 2 with two annual bulky item pickups.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the annual cleanup day would be eliminated under Option A or B. The response was that it would be eliminated.

The consensus of the Council was to go with Option B with two annual bulky item pickups per household.

The presentation continued with discussion on the **Low-Income Discount Program**.

Kathleen explained that the idea would be to provide rate relief for income-qualified residents and could consider offering a 10% discount for qualifying single-family customers enrolled in the PG&E CARE Program. She said that the percentage of the discount would be at the discretion of the City Council, noting that the other jurisdictions were looking at a 10% discount for all income-qualified residents, as opposed to only offering the discount to seniors.

Councilmember Orr asked if the base rate would still vary based on the size of the solid waste can and the answer was yes.

The consensus of the council was to provide a discount rate for income-qualified residents.

Mayor Garnes agreed with the discount but wanted to see the cost savings before agreeing to a percentage, noting that the other ratepayers would burden that cost.

Next was discussion on the **Annual Community Clean-Up Day**. The following three options were presented for consideration:

- **Option A:** Continue the annual cleanup day as currently structured
- **Option B:** Replace with one or two bulky item curbside pickups per year
- **Option C:** Hybrid approach-retain one cleanup event plus one bulky item pickup

Kathleen cautioned the Council that Option C would be more costly.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that she preferred Option B but would like to know what other jurisdictions were doing.

Kathleen indicated that the other jurisdictions were opting for Option B.

Councilmember Orr agreed with Option B and asked as an alternative if vouchers could be issued so residents could take multiple items to HWMA rather than be limited to one single bulky item pickup.

Councilmember Wilson expressed concern about residents having multiple bulky items and questioned Option C as perhaps a better option.

Mayor Garnes asked for clarification on Option B as to whether it would allow for one or two bulky items for each pickup.

Kathleen explained that it would allow for one bulky item per pickup not exceeding 2' x 4' or a certain number of bags not exceeding 2 cu. ft.

The consensus of the Council was to go with Option B with clarification on the feasibility of a voucher program.

Next was discussion on the **20-Gallon Garbage Container Option**.

Kathleen explained that there are a significant number of items that can go into the organics/yard waste container and encouraged the option of offering a smaller garbage container for residents who generate minimal waste. She noted that it would encourage

waste reduction, provide a lower-cost service, and support SB 1383 waste reduction goals.

The consensus of the Council was to provide residents with an option for a 20-gallon garbage container.

Next was discussion on the **Franchise Fee Modification**.

Kathleen said that the purpose of the franchise fee is to provide revenue to offset administrative and oversight costs for solid waste management and support general fund activities related to waste programs. She noted that Rio Dell's current franchise fee at 5% is lower than neighboring jurisdictions and asked if the Council would be open to increasing the fee to 8% to match Fortuna. She noted that adjusting the franchise fee to a level consistent with regional averages (8-10%) could increase City revenue modestly with minimal ratepayer impact when phased in with new service improvements.

Councilmember Wilson commented that he would like to keep the rates as low as possible.

Councilmember Orr agreed to an increase in the franchise fee to cover increased administrative costs.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter supported leaving the franchise fee at 5%.

Mayor Garnes asked if the 5% was based on 5% of the ratepayers' bills?

Kathleen explained that it was 5% of the franchise holder's gross revenue.

City Manager Knopp pointed out that the vast majority of the ratepayers' bill is related to Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA) fees.

Kathleen agreed to provide an analysis of the 5% versus 8% franchise fee.

Mayor Garnes called for public comments on the solid waste franchise agreement and universal collection. No public comment was received.

Receive Staff Report on Past Discussion and the Process for Establishing Billboards

Community Development Director Caldwell provided a staff report and said at the Council meeting of October 7, 2025, Wally Coppini, representing the Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Council asking that the Council agendaize a discussion on billboards, in particular community billboards promoting the city and its businesses.

He explained that the City's current sign regulations limits billboards to the Humboldt-Rio Dell Business Park (HRDBP). He said that it would make sense to allow billboards/signs across the freeway on the City's Wastewater Disposal parcel but in order to do so, the regulations would need to be amended to allow billboards beyond the Industrial Commercial (IC) zone or rezone a portion of that area currently zoned Public Facility (PF) to Industrial Commercial (IC).

He said in 2022, the Council discussed three possible sites for billboards at the wastewater disposal site with the intent to generate revenue and promote the City's image and community events. Staff were then directed to issue Request for Proposals (RFP's) for up to three signs which would be constructed, operated and maintained by a third party. Staff solicited proposals however, no proposals were received.

He explained that with Council direction, staff would take the item to the Planning Commission and pursue a rezoning for up to three slivers of land to site potentially three billboards on the west side of Northwestern Ave. One would be a community billboard, one would possibly be an LED billboard, and the third would be normal billboard.

He noted that the City's current sign regulations restrict billboards, so they are no closer than one half mile apart. Staff are suggesting an amendment to limit billboards to a distance of no more than 1,000 feet. He noted that Jessie Jeffries property would accommodate a billboard if that amendment were approved.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment related to billboards.

Wally Coppini addressed the Council and thanked them for agendaizing the item. He referred to the community billboard example in the packet and said that one thing he would change is to add "next exit." He said when he first approached the City Council, he was speaking solely on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce but now it seems to be more of a City/Chamber venture. As far as potential funding is concerned, he suggested waiting for more information before soliciting grants.

Community Development Director Caldwell clarified that it would take approximately two months to have the new regulations in effect.

Jessie Jeffries addressed the Council and said that he was interested in putting up a commercial LED sign that can be changed remotely on his parcel on the east side of the freeway at 350 Northwestern Ave. (next to Glenn White's parcel). He commented that he acquired that parcel at the height of the real estate boom and it is probably only worth half of what he paid for it. As such, he would like to generate some revenue from the site.

Community Development Director Caldwell pointed out that in the event of an emergency, Jessie's LED billboard would be available for use by the city.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked Wally Coppini for following up on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. She said that the community billboard idea may be attainable but would take a little time.

She said that she would like to make it possible for Jessie Jeffries to enhance revenue on his vacant parcel and asked him what he would have on the billboard.

Jessie explained that the billboard would be available to rent out to anyone for advertising.

Councilmember Orr said that he was in support of amending the sign regulations to allow for more billboards if it will help bring people into Rio Dell.

Councilmember Wilson asked if there would be a charge to use Jessie's billboard.

Jessie explained that it would not be feasible to utilize the billboard to welcome people into Rio Dell because it would face northbound but in the event of an emergency, he would allow the city to use the billboard. He said that what is needed is a rule change related to the setback of billboards.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that one of the billboards could be a city billboard and could be a potential source of revenue for the city.

Mayor Garnes said that she is not in favor of more commercial billboards but would be in favor of a community billboard for use by the city and the chamber of commerce as a welcome to Rio Dell.

Wally suggested instead of the city motto of "The Warm-Hearted City" it be "Small Town with a Big Heart."

Orr/Wilson made a motion to direct staff to update the Request for Proposals (RFP) and solicit proposals, amend the zoning regulations to rezone three small portions of the City's wastewater disposal site to Industrial Commercial (IC) and amend the sign regulations to allow signs in this area.

The motion carried 4-0.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Approve Resolution No. 1651-2025 Authorizing the Execution of a Financing Agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board and Complying with California Government Code Section 5852.1 in an Amount of \$3,476,083.01 Including Principal and Interest

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City Manager Knopp provided a staff report recommending approval of Resolution No. 1651-2025 authorizing the execution of a financing agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board and complying with California Government Code Section 585.1 in an amount of \$3,476,083.01 including principal and interest.

He explained that the city has been working on the Water Capital Improvement Program (CIP) since 2015 and received over \$10 million in grant funding from the State Water Resources Control Board DWSRF for the project. Despite the impressive level of grant funding for the project, several items were left out of the original project to meet the available grant funding budget. The city anticipated increasing the grant amount, however, requests to the SWRCB were not successful.

He said that staff have since been working with the SWRCB on a low interest loan to cover the additive items that were left out which would allow for additional work on Eeloa, North, Rigby, Painter, Walker, Berkeley, Davis and Center including several hydrants, meters and valves in addition to piping and service lines.

The principal amount of the loan would be \$2,345,806 at an interest rate of 1.9% taking the total debt service to \$3,476,082.01 over a 42-year term.

City Manager Knopp said the other option would be to not proceed with the loan, leaving the capital needs remaining although the cost would be much greater down the road. He said that this is the optimal time to enter into the loan agreement with the existing water system loan set to expire in July 2029. After a brief overlap period before the existing loan is retired the debt service would be approximately \$52,000 a year less than the current obligations.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen recommended the city proceed with the loan agreement as presented.

Mayor Garnes asked if the additive items to be completed under the loan would be part of the current project.

City Manager Knopp said that the additive items would be incorporated into the current Water CIP project.

Carter/Orr made a motion to Approve *Resolution No. 1651-2025 Authorizing the Execution of a Financing Agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board and Complying with California Government Code Section 5852.1 in an Amount of \$3,476,083.01 Including Principal and Interest.*

The motion carried 4-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATION

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Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on recent and upcoming meetings and events and said that she attended the school board meeting and that the board is in full support of extending the lot line for the Davis St. Park into the baseball field as proposed. They agreed to add the item to their November agenda for formal approval.

Related to Halloween, the Wildwood Witches Ride will occur on Saturday rain or shine beginning at CC Market at noon and continuing to Scotia, and on October 31st, there will be little kids trick or treating downtown at 1:00 p.m., followed by a Halloween Dog Costume contest at 3:30 p.m. and the Trunk or Treat Event at Fireman's Park from 6-8 p.m. In addition, the school kids treat or treat through town beginning at 9:00 a.m.

She announced the next Chamber of Commerce meeting would be on November 3, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Resource Center and extended a heartfelt message to Councilmember Woodall wishing her well.

Councilmember Orr asked what the logistics would be for putting a message on a billboard that says, "Next Services 500 Miles."

Councilmember Wilson reported on his attendance at the last Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) meeting and said that the Trump administration pulled back funds that were previously approved for expansion of the electrical grid so the configuration will need to be changed, or the tribes will have to come up with an additional \$80 million.

Mayor Garnes announced the passing of a very dear friend today, Nancy Kurtz, at the age of 97.

ADJOURNMENT

Carter/Orr made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m. to the November 4, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

Karen Dunham, City Clerk