

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 5, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mayor Garnes.

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

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Chief of Police Allen, Finance Director Sanborn, Wastewater Superintendent Taylor, Wastewater Superintendent Kelly, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel, and City Clerk Dunham

Absent: Community Development Director Caldwell

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Garnes announced that Agenda Item 2023/1205.07 – *Introduction of Ordinance No. 401-2023 Establishing a Rental Housing Inspection Program* was removed from the agenda and continued to the January 2, 2024 regular meeting.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters.

**Peggy Patmore** thanked the City Council and staff for their dedication and all of the extra hours spent in the aftermath of the earthquakes. She expressed concern about the Emergency Preparedness Plan for the City's food supply. She said that as a lifetime resident of Humboldt County and the City of Rio Dell for the past 26 years, she understands the importance of being well prepared for potential disasters. She said that addressing issues with the current emergency plan is crucial in securing the safety and well-being of the community. She mentioned the food supply issues that could arise during and after a disaster. In the event of a major disaster, access to food could be severely limited or cut off because of road and bridge damages. She commented that it is essential that our community is adequately prepared to handle this challenge to avoid hunger, especially with our most vulnerable citizens.

She proposed Council considerations for the enhancement of the City's Emergency Preparedness Plan with the focus on the food supply. She suggested establishing food storage facilities and strategically locating them to ensure that essential food items are readily available to residents in the aftermath of an emergency. She pointed out that many households don't have adequate space to stockpile emergency food supplies. She noted that these food facilities could be shipping containers equipped to store non-perishable food items and easily accessible to members of the community upon designated situations. She proposed that each household that chooses to participate to

gather their own non-perishable items and bring to the food bank for initial storage then for annual rotation for shelf life. She said that if the City would purchase stackable storage totes which could be labeled with the resident's name and address and if the City would purchase shipping containers for food banks, the community would be a safer and more self-efficient community in the event of an emergency.

She also encouraged and supported local initiatives that promote food resilience such as community gardens and local food production. She noted that these programs can play a crucial role in supplementing food supply during emergencies, inflation and in fostering community collaboration.

She commented that public education and awareness is also important and said that the Emergency Preparedness Faire at the Community Resource Center was a valuable event to enhance public awareness. She thought that more campaigns to empower individuals and families is important and essential to better navigate post-emergency scenarios. She said that the Rio Dell Volunteer Fire Department had an instruction sheet on preparing a well-stocked emergency kit and a pamphlet on *Living on Shaky Ground* which is an excellent resource for residents.

She stressed the need for collaboration between the City of Rio Dell, the Rio Dell Fire Department, the Rio Dell School, the Community Resource Center and every resident which can keep the City safe and functioning.

She added that she understands the many responsibilities of the City Council but felt that addressing the food supply issue in the Emergency Preparedness Plan would help significantly in enhancing the overall safety and well-being of the community.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

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

A motion was made by Woodall/Carter to approve the consent calendar including the following items:

- 1) Minutes of the November 21, 2023 Regular Meeting;
- 2) Resolution No. 1594-2023 Amending the FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget to Increase Appropriations for Code Enforcement in the Police Department

Motion carried 5-0.

## **REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

### City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and said that there would be a meeting at 2:30 p.m. tomorrow in Fortuna and said that the Rohner Community

Recreation and Park District and LAFCo are potentially looking at some options for the annexation of the recreation district to follow the Fortuna High School boundaries that would include Rio Dell and Scotia as well as some outlying areas. He said that the purpose of which would be to potentially build a community swimming pool. There is not only the capital expense associated with building a pool but also the ongoing maintenance costs. He noted that staff along with Mayor Garnes and Mayor Pro Tem Carter will be attending the meeting to gather information on the proposal and hear about potential advantages to the City.

He said that Chief Allen was a panelist on the Substance Abuse Town Hall in Eureka yesterday and thanked him for participating and the City of Eureka for hosting the event.

He also reported that there was some emergency crack sealing occurring on Blue Slide Rd., Belleview, and Monument which should be completed by the end of the week.

Councilmember Wilson asked for clarification that the proposed annexation was only for the recreation district.

City Manager Knopp said that it is just for the recreation district and staff will learn more about what that means and the process in moving forward after the meeting.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/STUDY SESSIONS**

#### Presentation and Update from GHD, City Engineer

City Manager Knopp said that the City has a number of big-scale projects that are coming up for 2024 aside from the earthquake related projects and GHD continues to be on point for much of the work. He introduced the GHD staff; Steven Pearl, Rebecca Crow, and Hannah Gidanian who were present to provide the presentation.

Rebecca Crow said that they would be covering four major areas they are currently working on for the City which included transportation, drinking water, wastewater and earthquake engineering support.

She then turned the presentation over to Steven Pearl to talk about active transportation projects.

Steven explained that he represents the City on the Transportation Committee at HCAOG which is a group of people that come together and review and approve projects countywide which are all part of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with the main source of funding coming from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). He said that every city has a list of projects that are in the Regional Transportation Plan that can be developed into a project study report and submitted to TAC for funding.

He said that he worked with the City Manager on an example list of projects that are readily available to submit for STIP funding, for the Council to consider. Active projects included the following:

- 2019 Rio Dell Safe Routes to School Project
- 2022 Eel River Trail Project
- 2023 Neighborhood Pedestrian Connectivity Improvements

He said that the Safe Routes to School was funded, they completed the environmental documentation, would begin on the design in the new year, and be ready for construction in the summer of 2024.

He noted that the Eel River Trail Project was also scheduled to begin construction in 2024 along with the Neighborhood Pedestrian Connectivity Improvements.

Steven said that with regard to upcoming projects, no projects have been brought before the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for STIP funding. Examples of potential projects to present included:

- Citywide Street Improvements (With preparation of a Project Study Report - PSR)
- Citywide Maintenance Paving and Overlay and PSR

Suggested street improvements included PSR's for Belleview Ave., Spring St. to Creek St., and Blue Slide Rd. to Creek St.

The PSR for citywide maintenance paving and overlay included 8 streets throughout the City for a 2" overlay, select road reconstruction, drainage improvements, and slurry seal to recently paved streets.

Councilmember Wilson referred to the road reconstruction and drainage improvements on Ogle Ave. and asked if there was grant funding available for that work.

City Manager Knopp said that there is no grant funding for that project and what Steven presented was a list of possible projects. Staff will be working with the Council to narrow in on specific projects and provide more detail. This list is illustrative only and explained that part of the problem is that in terms of paving projects, the City has tried to pick relatively simple projects with only minor drainage modifications.

What the City is starting to get into, are the significantly costlier projects that exceed the ability of the City to undertake, in addition to maintaining the existing infrastructure. The first component is to get the streets up to an acceptable level, and then to maintain them. He pointed out that sinking all of the funding into one expensive project would solve one section of the city streets but there is obviously a broader system to maintain. As such, the City will need to be very proactive in terms of pulling down grant funding and other sources to help hold off some of these major reconstruction projects. He said that the drainage component for Ogle Ave. is approximately \$900,000 and that doesn't include street resurfacing.

Steven explained that STIP funding is the primary funding source for the entire county for these transportation projects. He said that the amount of STIP funding coming to Humboldt County is increasing each year but it is unknown how long the funding will be available.

Rebecca Crow continued with review of the Water Distribution System Upgrade Project. She said that they have been working with the City on this project since 2018. They did a preliminary engineering report along with some design work. The final design will be funded with a 100% grant from the SWRCB Clean Water State Revolving Fund Grant for \$12,862,989. She said that they were able to leverage the State Board funds to increase the amount of data on the system to ensure they understand what is going on in the ground. They conducted GIS surveying of the existing water system and storm drains for field conflicts, including some drone imaging throughout the city. The 95% design package was submitted to the State on November 17, 2023 and they are on target to finish the design in January to keep the project moving forward. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.

Rebecca continued with review of the Eel River Crossing Pipeline Retrofit Project. She explained that the City currently has a pipeline in the Highway 101 southbound bridge across the Eel River. GHD worked with the City in 2020 and submitted a hazard mitigation grant, with funding coming through again this year for the preliminary design. She noted that there will need to be some approvals from FEMA and CalOES so things will move a little slower but they did look at several different scenarios considering potential conflicts with Caltrans as well as future maintenance of the pipeline. The preferred alternative under scenario 1 routes the pipeline around the existing Caltrans area, from the north end of Eeloa Ave. across the river with directional drilling.

Next was review of the Wastewater System. Rebecca reported that GHD has been working on a Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study (SSES) with the attempt to leverage planning funds to address some of the City's key issues; one of which is compliance with disinfection byproducts. They conducted some initial analysis and testing and it looks like the disinfection system will bring the City into compliance.

She said that there are some other components and are asking the State for additional funding to finalize the areas that were proposed for improvement. One of the things they were able to leverage funds for was to put together a construction application to replace and upsize the Painter Street line. They completed the preliminary design and did some additional field work and should have the report on that done by the end of the week. The project was expected to be funded and move forward in 2024.

The last item to review was Earthquake Engineering Support. Rebecca said that they are looking at putting together Damage Survey Reports (DSR) required by CalOES. She said that they completed the evaluation on the contact basin, and the Metropolitan Wells and are in the process of evaluating the lift stations and analysis on the infiltration gallery which is almost complete. She noted that they are also looking at some of the water line crossings which can be a little difficult since they are underground. She added that they are also accessing damage to the Painter St. Tank. Once CalOES approves the DSR's,

GHD will be moving forward with the designs.

Presentation – Review of Street Planning and Street Work

City Manager Knopp provided an update on the 5-year Street Improvement Plan. He said that fundamentally in moving forward, a lot of the City's projects that have been funded in the past included a General Fund contribution. In moving forward, the City has a lowered sales tax rate and also increasing costs and demands on the General Fund, noting that the costs in the Police Department continue to increase and are expecting that trend to continue. He noted that the City also needs to maintain healthy reserves in the event of further economic distress or catastrophes. He added there is an over-arching issue related to the earthquake reimbursement that puts some constraints on City finances.

He said that there are some funds in the City's streets fund where some projects can be done in the coming years but the Council will need to prioritize the projects. During the last initiation of the 5-year plan, the City Council directed staff to identify projects that would not require immediately tearing up the road in anticipation of the Water Capital Improvement Project (CIP). Those were the streets that were paved and had only minor paving modifications.

He said that earlier this year, the City's PCI index went from one of the lowest in the County of Humboldt to one of the highest so there has been a tremendous amount of progress made to streets over the past few years.

The City is now getting into projects that far exceed the General Fund's ability to cover those costs so the City will need to get more creative in pulling down grant funding and having realistic goals in utilizing those grant funds. He noted that low-traffic streets are not necessarily great candidates for grant funding which is certainly a constraint on some of the bigger projects.

With completion of the Water Capital Improvement Project (CIP), several new streets will open up for some of the lower cost basic maintenance paving projects. Some of the other streets have multiple issues such as Second Ave. with significant drainage improvements that need to be done as well as sewer lines that need to be addressed in that corridor.

For Ogle Ave., the water line on that stretch of road will be replaced under the Water Capital Improvement Project (CIP) however; what remains to be corrected is the drainage. He said that Whitchurch Engineering performed a study on the Ogle Ave. drainage and the estimate came in at roughly \$1 million not including the paving. The overall estimate to complete that project is \$1-3 million which exceeds forecasted General Fund revenue and the allotment for capital projects.

City Manager Knopp said that there are other streets that may be more competitive for grant funding such as the designated truck route that runs beside City Hall down Davis St. to the freeway. He said that while that road is in fair condition it will need some work over the next few years. This is also a project that is potentially attractive for regular STIP maintenance funding.

He said that the two components here are expensive reconstruction and maintenance and the focus should be also include maintenance because when you look at the streets as a whole, many are in good condition but they need to be maintained. He pointed that there is a nexus between economic development and people's perception of a community including the cleanliness of the streets.

He drew the Council's attention to the Draft 5-Year Streets Improvement Plan and said that something the Council might want to consider is the purchase of a street sweeper.

He noted that slurry seal goes a long way in extending the life of a street and reviewed the list of potential streets for slurry seal and prep work in the next 5-year plan. He said that for this construction season, the plan is to take a little pause because of other projects although there will be some maintenance work done on Elm St. and some related earthquake work at random locations.

He said that staff will come back to the Council in January or February to dive into the details and do some additional cost projections and come up with the next 5-year plan.

Mayor Garnes referred to the end of Ogle Ave. and Second Ave. and asked if there is anything the City could do to help make those streets even a little bit better for the time being. She said that making those streets gravel roads would probably not be acceptable but hoped that something could be done to make those areas better.

City Manager Knopp said that several years ago, the idea of de-asphalting some of the roads and having them revert back to gravel was considered but there was not a lot of support. Although there would be benefits cost wise, the deficiency is obviously dust and ongoing maintenance as the City does not have proper equipment to maintain gravel roads.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen said that there is also the noise issue with gravel.

City Manager Knopp said that one potential option would be to prep the streets and do a thick layer of slurry seal however, it would affect the drainage and possibly become a liability issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that she would love to see Second Ave. be a priority to the extent it can be but also understands the City's limitations.

Councilmember Woodall referred to the staff report where it said that staff recommends issuing a project study report with the engineers to provide a preliminary cost estimate and thought it was a good idea. She said that Second Ave. has needed major repairs for many years and said when the City finally fixes it, she wants to make sure it is fixed right.

She also questioned the responsibility of the County versus the City to maintain Pacific Ave. since it is the designated truck route.

City Manager Knopp explained that it is still the City's responsibility to maintain.

Councilmember Woodall said that the City explored the possibility of purchasing a street sweeper several years ago but in looking into it, it was determined that there wasn't enough street mileage to warrant the purchase.

City Manager Knopp agreed that the lane mileage for sweeping is fairly small so the idea would be to purchase a smaller more affordable street sweeper. A couple of years ago, the City received a demo on a small sweeper which was more on the scale of what the City needs; having a larger sweeper would not justify the cost.

Councilmember Wilson agreed that Second Ave. should be a priority although the cost is high so was not sure how to get over that hurdle.

He also expressed concern about Blue Slide Rd. and potential for failure of that section of roadway with the slide.

City Manager Knopp said that the slide area is the result of a slide decades ago that was rip rapped and repaired. Failure of that would depend on the situation where there is a catastrophic event. Staff took a look at that area, had some discussions with the city engineer and inspected the culverts which are actually in good condition. That repair was on the original list for the 5-year CIP and what the City is doing is trying to demonstrate that maintenance is being done on the road. The last crack sealing went all the way up to City limits and on Friday the contractor will be completing the last of the earthquake crack sealing repairs.

Mayor Garnes asked if the purchase of a street sweeper was planned for this year or sometime in the future.

City Manager Knopp indicated that the proposal would be to include it in the next 5-year CIP and said that the cost could be spread out in a lease-purchase agreement such as with the purchase of the backhoe. This could be a conversation for staff and the City Council after the new year.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment regarding the streets update. No public comment was received.

### **SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### Provide Staff Direction on Possible Cancellation of the December 19, 2023 Regular Meeting

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that the last regular meeting in December is sometimes canceled, particularly during non-election years and asked for Council direction.

Consensus of the Council was to cancel the next regular meeting scheduled for December 19, 2023 unless something comes up before then requiring Council action.

**COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

Councilmember Woodall commented that the annual tree lighting event held on Saturday, December 2 was very nice despite the rain. She then wished Wastewater Superintendent good luck as this would be his last City Council meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that she was very impressed with the Police Department and the Community Resource Center for making the Annual Tree Lighting Event a great small-town event. She reminded everyone of the annual Christmas decorating contest sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and encouraged residents as well as businesses to participate, noting that there will be prizes given in each of the two categories ranging from \$100-250 offered by the Rio Dell Volunteer Fire Department.

She reported that she attended the Chamber of commerce meeting on Friday with the main topic of discussion being the removal of Christmas decorations after the holiday. Volunteers were invited to help.

She also reported on her attendance at the last RREDC meeting where the main topic of discussion was on the benefits and challenges of Regional Housing Trust Funds.

She then announced that the Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for December 20, 2023 was cancelled due to the holidays and said that she would be attending the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District Board meeting in Fortuna tomorrow afternoon.

Councilmember Wilson said that he did not have an HWMA board meeting and that the RCEA meeting was moved up a week so had nothing to report.

Mayor Garnes reported that she would be attending an HTA meeting tomorrow morning and also attending the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District meeting in Fortuna in the afternoon.

She then reminded everyone of the Humboldt Holiday Food Drive taking place on Thursday, December 7 at Safeway in Eureka from 3-6 p.m. Senator McGuire once again teamed up with Food for People, KHUM radio, and six local high schools to put the food drive together to provide food for low-income households. The community was invited to stop by and donate much-needed non-perishable foods and/or funds to help those in need.

She then thanked Wastewater Superintendent Taylor for his service and said that he did a tremendous job for the City. She also thanked the Police Department for decorating a vehicle for the truck parade on Saturday and said that they would also be participating in the Fortuna and Eureka Lighted Truck parades.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. to the January 2, 2024 regular meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

Attest:

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Debra Garnes, Mayor

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Karen Dunham, City Clerk