

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 3, 2025**

Mayor Garnes called a special Rio Dell City Council meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Councilmembers Orr (excused)

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Police Chief Phinney, Community Development Director Caldwell, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel, and City Clerk Dunham

Absent: Finance Director Sanborn and Wastewater Superintendent Kelly (excused)

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

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

SPECIAL MEETING MATTERS/STUDY SESSIONS

"Traffic Regulations" Related to Commercial Vehicle and Truck Parking

City Manager Knopp provided a staff Discuss and Consider Revisions to Chapter 10.05 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) report recommending the City Council receive a presentation from staff, open and receive public comment, close the public comment, deliberate, and give direction to staff on possible revisions to the Traffic Regulations related to Commercial Vehicle and Truck Parking.

He reviewed the recent meetings of the Nuisance Advisory Committee and the Traffic Committee where the issue was discussed before referring the matter to the City Council for consideration.

City Manager Knopp continued with a PowerPoint presentation on Commercial Truck Parking. In providing a background summary, he said that the last update of the Traffic Ordinance (Section 10.05.020 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code) was adopted in 1983 and the definition of what is a "commercial truck" is lacking. The current code disallows commercial truck parking in residential districts for longer than 5 hours, with some exceptions for loading and unloading.

Section 10.05.790 prohibits certain vehicles from parking in the Central Traffic District which is defined as Wildwood Avenue from the bridge to US 101. The prohibition is from

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7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on any day with certain prohibitions excluding garbage trucks and vehicles carrying building materials.

City Manager Knopp pointed out that the existing code has not been enforced by the Police Department for a long but unknown amount of time as the code pertaining to Commercial Trucks is unclear and unenforceable by staff.

He noted that at the last Traffic Committee meeting on January 23, 2025, when commercial Truck Parking was discussed, it was determined that the historical lack of enforcement and poor code language created a situation that exceeded the duties of the Traffic Committee. Because of fundamental policy decisions that are the domain of the City Council, the matter was referred to the City Council to develop broader language.

City Manager Knopp said that no formal written complaints were on record for truck parking over the last two years however, there were some verbal complaints from citizens. Legitimate issues related to truck parking were safety-related, including visual line of sight and roadway width, and infrastructure issues, including damage to infrastructure or roads. When a heavy truck parks on an unimproved shoulder, it can damage the road, the water line, or other utilities.

Next were comparisons of parking and truck regulations with other jurisdictions.

Three basic options were presented for City Council consideration which included the following:

- 1) Remove all or most commercial truck/trailer traffic regulations and allow parking.
- 2) Adopt a middle ground.
- 3) Ban all or most commercial truck/trailer traffic regulations and ban parking.

Staff recommended the following “middle ground” proposal:

- 1) Explicitly allow parking on Northwestern Avenue for up to 72 hours.
- 2) Explicitly ban parking on Wildwood Avenue for longer than 2 hours.
- 3) Allow parking in all other areas (including residential) by Police Department issued permit.
 - A. Permits to be signed by the Chief of Police and Water/Roadways Superintendent.
 - B. Considerations would be safety (road width and sightline impact), and Infrastructure (damage to a water line or other public property – damage billable to permittee or establish requirements for site improvements).
 - C. No fee for the permit.
 - D. Permit would be revocable based on complaint and/or emergent safety or Infrastructure considerations.

The next steps included the following two options for potential City Council direction to staff:

Option 1: Refer the item to the Traffic Committee to work out language specifics for a new proposed Ordinance to be presented at a future date for Council consideration and potential adoption.

Option 2: Direct staff to work on the new proposed Ordinance and return to the Council at a future date for consideration of the language or for potential adoption.

City Manager Knopp explained that the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) requires at least two public meetings for adoption of an ordinance at a regularly scheduled meeting. Once adopted, the ordinance goes into effect after 30 days. The purpose of this meeting is to get general direction from the Council.

Mayor Garnes thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the process for public comment. She noted that anyone wishing to address the Council must complete a speaker card and limit their comments to 3 minutes. The total public comment period was limited to 40 minutes.

Bridget Vaile, said that at the last Traffic Committee meeting, the public was told that this meeting would be a brain-storming study session with inter-active discussion between the City Council, staff, and the public.

Mayor Garnes explained the protocol and said City Council meetings must be conducted under the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that because this is an official City Council meeting, there are rules that must be followed but encouraged the public to use their 3 minutes to voice their opinions. Having the proper seating arrangement doesn't change the public's ability to brainstorm with the Council.

Bridget Vaile addressed the Council and said that her husband is a truck driver who received a courtesy notice from the City that was not dated. She submitted a Public Records Act (PRA) request to the City for copies of all complaints with a total of six complaints submitted since June 2024. She commented that for this issue to blow up to this extent for 6 complaints is ridiculous. She said that truck parking on Painter Street is not an issue and there were no visibility obstructions or complaints by anyone. She pointed out that these truck drivers are all working taxpayers of the City and objected to the recommended "middle ground" option and with the parking on Northwestern Avenue due to no lighting or security.

She said that she asked Officer Landry if the City had 24-hour police coverage and was told there was no 24-hour coverage. Regarding the potential for damaged infrastructure, if

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a truck damages it they are responsible for repairing it. She said if that is the option the City is looking at, she would suggest that the City first look at the infrastructure to make sure there is no damage now. With six courtesy notices issued and five police reports that were recorded

In September 2024 but not written up until January 28, 2025, they were done because of the PRA request. She asked the City to not punish the truck drivers for the job they do.

Cliff Whitchurch said he moved to Rio Dell two years ago, purchased a house here, and has had problems from the beginning. He suggested that rather than issuing courtesy letters when a complaint is received, why not send an officer out to check and see if the truck is parked legally? He suggested getting rid of the parking regulations and if a truck or any vehicle is illegally parked, write them a ticket. He asked if the City would be responsible for trucks parked on Northwestern Avenue 24 hours/day, 365 days/year if something happens to them. He commented that trucks are already parking on City infrastructure and nothing has been damaged. He said there is a difference between parking a truck on the street or just dropping the trailer and if the truck or trailer damages the street, the owner is responsible for the repair. He said that truckers should be able to park at their residence so they can be in charge of their own vehicle.

Travis Wildgrube agreed that a lot of the truck parking issues started with Imperiale Trucking in the 80's. He said that they did take advantage of the City, had a shop on Wildwood Ave, and parked up and down Wildwood Ave. He said that if the City is trying to increase revenue, maybe it should work on nuisances and condemn and sell houses rather than chasing down truck drivers about a parking spot. He questioned the number of accidents resulting from truck parking. He expressed safety concerns with trucks being required to park off-site noting that there are valuable items kept in trucks not to mention the fuel. Chasing truck drivers out of town is a bad idea and the City should be fair to the working-class people here. He suggested the City pursue grant funding to fix the streets. He pointed out that Rio Dell is a lot smaller than Eureka where many of the trucks in Eureka are trucks making deliveries whereas the trucks in Rio Dell are working people.

Michael Vaile asked how long it was going to take to resolve this issue and commented that it's wasting a lot of time for people coming to these meetings; it's like "beating a dead horse."

Fati Griffith asked why some of the other comparator cities have no restrictions and if in fact there were no restrictions or staff didn't take the time to check.

City Manager Knopp said that in doing cursory checks of regulations in other jurisdictions, it wasn't always explicit which doesn't mean they didn't have restrictions but may have been implemented through resolutions or other means.

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Fati Griffith stated for clarification that she is not married or related to anyone who drives a truck but feels that the way the local truckers are treated is not right. These are people who pay taxes and are trying to make a living and we don't want them to get upset and leave.

Sharon Wolfe addressed the Council regarding the process and said that the Nuisance Advisory Committee meetings and the Traffic Committee meetings are all posted online for anyone to view and listen to the people who spoke. She said that the reason a study session

versus a special meeting was so important to them, was because at each of the prior meetings, the committee didn't make any decisions but referred the matter off to another committee or City Council. The purpose of the study session was to drill down on the issues and have a back-and-forth discussion. She said that the Council is taking public comment and will debate the issues, then decide on the policy. That policy decision is where the public would like to have the interaction before it is made.

She pointed out that the City needs these folks and said that there is no problem on Painter Street with truck parking. Mr. Diaz parks safely off the road where there is no visibility issue. There could be some more gravel there but the location is safe and he is off the road. Rio Dell should continue to be the bedroom community for the working class it has always been.

Jose Flores commented that he was fairly new to trucking noting that from what he sees, the parking ordinance should not be heavily regulated because Rio Dell is comparing itself to Eureka which is much larger with more lenient regulations. Rio Dell is a fairly industrial town and was founded on that. He commented that the truck drivers are tired of getting off work to attend these meetings to have them flopped back and forth between the committees and the City Council. He pointed out that parking in town is much safer than Northwestern Avenue.

There being no further public comment at this time, Mayor Garnes turned the discussion back to the City Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said she understood why the truckers were frustrated, annoyed, and even angry at what's been going on for the past couple of months. She apologized for their frustration and thanked everybody for remaining respectful, civil, and level-headed through this process. She said that it was never the Council's intent to crack down hard on gainfully employed contributing members of society. There are definitely more important problems in the City but the City Council wants to make the community better for everybody.

She supported Option 2 to adopt a common ground regarding the regulations and said that it doesn't mean that people would be required to park trucks on Northwestern Avenue, only

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that it would be an option. She said that truck parking in residential districts needs to be handled on a case-by-case basis to be fair. She added that she was proud to have blue-collar workers in our town and that it was important for everybody to have a voice.

She commented that it may be a good idea for the group to select one or two people to attend the meetings and report back to other truckers so no one has to miss work. She clarified that the City would not create any additional revenue as there would be no fee for the parking permits. She commented that Option 1 or 3 would not be fair to anyone.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that until the City Council gets it together and adopts new regulations, there doesn't need to be any enforcement.

Councilmember Woodall thanked Jose Flores for bringing it to light. She said that she attended the previous committee meetings and listened to what everyone had to say. She talked to several truckers regarding parking out of town and said that it is not the trucker's fault that the City Council doesn't have their "ducks in a row." She commented that she had no idea there were so many trucks in town and would like regulations that work for everyone.

Councilmember Wilson noted that the Traffic Ordinance is over 40 years old and there weren't any real problems with truck parking until someone put it in motion by parking a trailer in the wrong direction. He agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Carter with Option 2 to adopt common ground and that removing all regulations won't work as people would try and park on narrow streets. Also, Option 3 is absurd. He thought that trucks should be able to be parked in residential areas provided the street is wide enough. He said he supported the truckers and that regulations that work for everyone are needed using common sense.

Mayor Garnes called for a 5-minute recess at 7:03 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:08 p.m.

Mayor Garnes agreed with finding common ground and said that trucks moved from residential districts to Wildwood Avenue at the request of the police department which potentially created a safety issue. She commented that the Gateway into town was enhanced to improve the aesthetics of the City but with trucks parked up and down Wildwood Avenue it looks like a truck stop. She said that the middle ground is to allow trucks to continue parking in residential districts with inspection and sign-off by the Chief of Police and the Water/Roadways Superintendent, and parking on Wildwood Avenue restricted to no more than two hours. Parking on Northwestern Avenue is only an option.

She recommended the City Council refer the matter back to the Traffic Committee to come up with language for new traffic regulations, and direct staff to bring forward a draft ordinance for the Council to consider with the required public hearings prior to the adoption. She suggested one of the public members be appointed to serve on the Traffic

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Committee and noted that they should have a voice if they are direct recipients of the Ordinance.

The consensus of the Council was to have a public representative appointed to the Traffic Committee.

Travis Wildgrube asked how often the Traffic Committee meets. He said that the only problem he sees with Option 2 is that if you have a “Karen” running around looking at things to complain about because they don’t like trucks is not fair.

City Manager Knopp said that the committee meets on an as-needed basis, typically only once or twice a year.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked if it was faster to refer the matter back to the Traffic Committee or City staff.

City Manager Knopp said that it depends because ultimately if it goes to City staff, the draft ordinance would still need to return to the Council for consideration and potential adoption. The theory with the Traffic Committee is that the language would be spelled out and referred to the City Council as a first reading with a public hearing which could also be amended at that time.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter then reviewed the process for moving forward.

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to approve Option 2 “middle ground” and refer the matter to the Traffic Committee for specific language of the Traffic Ordinance.

Councilmember Wilson asked for clarification that as it stands now, “middle ground” would force truckers to park on Wildwood Avenue until the issues are resolved.

Mayor Garnes explained that truckers would go back to parking where they were parked before (in residential districts) as long as it was safe.

Chief of Police Phinney clarified that until the new regulations are adopted, there would be no enforcement of the existing ban on truck parking in residential districts other than typical State parking laws.

The motion then carried 4-0.

Mayor Garnes encouraged the truckers to park where they parked before and to not park on Wildwood Ave. for more than 2 hours.

Councilmember Wilson thanked the group for coming together to get the parking issues resolved.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m. to the February 4, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

Attest:

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Karen Dunham, City Clerk