

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 6, 2025**

Mayor Garnes called the regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 6:06 p.m.

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

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Chief of Police Phinney, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, City Clerk Dunham, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel and City Attorney Gans

Absent: Community Development Director Caldwell, and Finance Director Sanborn (excused)

ORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Garnes announced that the City Council adjourned the Special meeting and the last item on the agenda, "Closed Session – City Manager Performance Evaluation," will be taken up at the conclusion of the regular meeting.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters.

Kelsey Machado introduced herself and said that she and her family recently moved to Rio Dell, and she applied for the position on the Beautification, Walkability, and Pride Committee.

Alex Calderon, from Neighborhoods Barber Shop, addressed the Council and said that he would like to take advantage of the City's Façade Improvement Program for his building at 220 Wildwood Ave., but would like to see some of the other businesses encouraged to do the same, or get a slap on the hand.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Garnes asked if any council member, 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 Carter/Woodall to approve the consent calendar, including the following items:

- 1) Minutes of the April 15, 2025, Regular Meeting;

- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the Engagement Letter with Harshwal & Company, LLP to provide Financial Audit Services for FY ending June 30, 2025;
- 3) Approve the appointment of Kelsey Machado to the Beautification, Walkability and Pride Committee;
- 4) Authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with Bell and Associates, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$18,000 for SB 1383 and Franchise Agreement Analysis; and
- 5) Authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board in coordination with the City Attorney for the Painter Street Sewer Line Replacement Project of \$1,490,550.

The motion carried 5-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp highlighted the staff update and reported that there were two street projects coming up, including earthquake repairs on Eeloa Ave. and Riverside Dr. beginning May 12th, and repaving of Elm St. at the end of the month. He said that the staff is hoping that the Elm St. contractor will also have time to do some prep work on Center St. for the next slurry seal project.

He reported that he attended a Solid Waste Local Task Force meeting in Eureka, is working on the recruitment for a Wastewater Superintendent, and on a potential loan with the State Water Resources Control Board for the Water CIP project.

Mayor Garnes asked if the entire area of Elm Street from Pacific Avenue to Wildwood Avenue would be paved.

City Manager Knopp indicated that the entire street would be paved except for one small section that was recently paved, but the new paving would transition with that paved area.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked staff for everything they do and commented that over the past 3 weeks, zero cats were transported to Miranda's, which is amazing since it is feral cat season and in the height of new kittens being born. She said that they are busy trapping feral cats and getting them fixed to help reduce the cat population.

Councilmember Woodall mentioned the Police Department update related to the vandalized sinks at the Fireman's Park restrooms and asked if the restrooms were still being locked at night.

Chief Phinney noted that the vandalism occurred in the middle of the day and that the restrooms are locked at night. He said that they identified the juveniles and met with the

Fire Department and the families of the juveniles, and came up with a solution for restitution. The juveniles are each required to do 100 hours of community service for the fire department, which everyone agreed to.

Mayor Garnes commented that it is nice to be able to walk her dog around town, with fewer dogs running at large.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment on the staff update.

Kelsey Machado commented on the large number of cats around town and asked for an overview of the spay & neuter program.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter explained that the City of Rio Dell allocates funding to the Critters Without Litters organization to provide vouchers for spay and neuter discounts and pointed out that Rio Dell is the only City in Humboldt County and the entire State that does this.

Councilmember Orr asked what the current effects are of not hiring a temporary wastewater operator right away.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen said that with temporary assistance from Ferndale and Andres Lopez returning this week from paternity leave, it relieved some of the tension, so there are currently three people to spread out the workload, which helps.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Second Reading (by title only) and Adoption of Ordinance No. 414-2025 Amending Section 12.30 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) Pertaining to Trails and Further Establishing Fines

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report recommending adoption of Ordinance No. 414-2025 amending Section 12.30 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) pertaining to Trails and further establishing fines for misuse of the trail.

He said that with the Eel River Trail nearing completion, the site has received some abuse from motorized vehicles. The Ordinance was introduced at the April 15, 2025, regular meeting and is before the City Council tonight for its second reading and adoption.

City Manager Knopp said that there were some minor non-substantive edits to the ordinance from the first reading, changing the status of a violation from an infraction to a misdemeanor, allowing the Police Department greater authority to conduct investigations when a violation is not directly witnessed by an officer.

Councilmember Woodall asked for Chief Phinney's opinion on the edits to the ordinance.

Chief Phinney said that he agreed with the edits and explained that the current language in the proposed ordinance identifies a violation as an infraction, which means that an officer would have to witness it and write a citation. Changing it to a misdemeanor means they could use investigative leads to determine who the people are violating the regulations.

Mayor Garnes opened a public hearing to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance.

Kelsey Machado asked for clarification that motorized vehicles were prohibited from riding on the Eel River Trail, but could still ride on the river bar.

Mayor Garnes said that the prohibition of motorized vehicles only applies to the trail.

Alex Calderon said that non-licensed motorized vehicles are illegal to ride on City streets and asked how they get to the river. He indicated that he had pictures on his security camera of dirt bikes riding on the street.

Chief Phinney said that all non-licensed motorized vehicles are prohibited on City streets, but an officer must witness and stop them to issue a citation.

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to approve the second reading (by title only) and to adopt Ordinance No. 414-2025 Amending Section 12.30 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) Pertaining to Trails and Further Establishing Fines.

The motion carried 5-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Councilmember Wilson reported that he would be attending an HWMA meeting on Thursday and that they were working on their budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on recent meetings and events and said that she attended a RREDC meeting on April 28th where local fishermen were present to discuss the Offshore Windmill Project. She said that the Rio Dell Fire Commissioner's meeting, normally scheduled for Thursday, was rescheduled for tonight, but she would be attending the Rio Dell School Board meeting on Thursday. She said regarding the 7-1-1 committee that was formed to investigate the feasibility of relinquishing the Davis St. Park property, the committee wants more buy-in from the business community.

Councilmember Woodall reported that she attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting on Friday and said that Wally Coppini is sponsoring a cycling event during Wildwood Days, on August 2, 2025, featuring four courses, including the renowned Tour of the Unknown Coast. Approximately 200 cyclists are expected to participate, and they will be camping at the School with a free barbecue for participants on Saturday night.

She reminded everyone about the Annual Spring Clean-Up Event taking place on Saturday, May 10th, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Eagle Prairie Elementary School and asked Chief Phinney if CSO Clark had handed out flyers to all of the nuisance properties.

Chief Phinney said that flyers were distributed to those properties, and they posted a copy of the flyer at their front counter at the Police Department.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED IN CLOSED SESSION

Conference with Labor Negotiator – Agency Negotiator: City Manager – Employee Organizations: Rio Dell Employees Association, Rio Dell Police Officers Association, and all Contract Employees – Gov’t Code Section 54957

Public Employee Performance Evaluation – Title: City Manager - Gov’t Code Section 54957

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING CLOSED SESSION

No public comment was received.

RECESS INTO CLOSED SESSION

The Council recessed into a closed session at 6:30 p.m. with City Manager Knopp and City Attorney Gans to discuss the above-listed matters.

The Council reconvened into open session at 8:08 p.m.

Mayor Garnes announced that there was nothing to report out of closed session on either of the closed session matters.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carter/Wilson to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m. to the May 20, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

Karen Dunham, City Clerk