

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 2, 2025**

Mayor Garnes called the regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 5:00 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,
Community Development Director Caldwell,
Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Community
Service Officers Clark and Wolfe, City Clerk Dunham,
and Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel

Absent: Finance Director Sanborn (excused)

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

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING CLOSED SESSION

No members of the public were present to comment.

RECESS INTO CLOSED SESSION

The Council recessed into closed session at 5:00 p.m. with City Manager Knopp.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter left the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

The Council reconvened into open session at 6:00 p.m.

ORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Garnes announced that the City Council was in closed session to discuss the above-listed matter and had nothing to report from the closed session.

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 member of the public would like to remove any item from the consent calendar for separate discussion. No items were removed.

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

- 1) Approve Minutes of the August 19, 2025, Regular Meeting;
- 2) Approve Renewal of the Senior Home Repair Grant Program Contract with Humboldt Senior Resource Center and Authorize a Reduced Allocation of \$2,500;
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement with J & G Lawn and Garden to Renovate the Flower Beds at Blue Star Park; and
- 4) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rio Dell Police Officers Association (POA).

The motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp highlighted the staff update and said that he and Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen met with Hank Seeman from Humboldt County Public Works to discuss the Potter Valley Project and the City's concerns. He said that the decommissioning of the Scott Dam has a lot of unintended consequences, potentially for the City, but feels the City is on a good track in terms of making sure the City's issues are raised with PG&E through the Federal process.

He then reported that he attended the Wildlife Conservation Board meeting on Thursday, August 28, 2025 (virtually) and was happy to announce that the City's \$1,200,000 grant for the ADA extension of the Eel River Trail was approved. Staff will be working with the city engineers to get the project out to bid.

He said that he attended the Redwood Empire Division meeting in Fortuna on August 22, 2025, and received a great presentation from Yana Valachovic, Forest Advisor and County Director, UC Extension on fire and its connection to homeowners' insurance. He noted that some important building design criteria are starting to be adopted statewide related to fireproofing homes to make homes more resilient to fire and transmission of embers from long distances.

Councilmember Wilson commented that he keeps seeing posts on social media related to bear sightings in Rio Dell, and asked if there is anything the city could do, perhaps contacting the Department of Fish and Game for assistance.

Chief Phinney said that he could contact the Department of Fish and Game to see what their criteria are for relocating bears.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter rejoined the meeting at this time, 6:08 p.m., and announced that once again, there were no cats transported to Miranda's Rescue.

SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing on the Cost Recovery for the Abatement of 530 Third Ave.

Community Service Officer Clark provided a staff report and said that this serves as the public hearing on the cost recovery for the abatement of 530 Third Avenue. She said that the abatement took place on May 20, 2025, and the City's costs for the abatement were determined to be \$4,054.54.

Staff's recommendation was to receive any testimony concerning the cost recovery for the abatement, close the public hearing, deliberate, and approve the Findings and Order Confirming Accounts and Assessment for the abatement of 530 Third Avenue.

The public hearing was opened at 6:12 p.m. No public comment was received, and the public hearing was closed.

Carter/Woodall made a motion to approve the Findings and Order Confirming Accounts and Assessment for the abatement of 530 Third Avenue. Motion carried 5-0.

Authorize the City Manager to Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Annual Landscaping Maintenance Services

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that the City currently utilizes the Public Works utility crew for grounds maintenance activities in addition to specialized utility operations in water and wastewater that require technical expertise and regulatory compliance.

He said that over 10 years ago, the City issued an RFP for landscaping services, but the proposals came in too high, and the concept was dropped in favor of continuing to use the utility crew for grounds maintenance.

He commented that in discussions with senior staff, trying to access some of the differences between Rio Dell's operations and some of the other cities, and what would be the best situation for public works employees related to job functions, the topic of revisiting the issue of potentially contracting out landscaping services was discussed.

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He noted that Wildwood Avenue, which is the City's main roadway, has some very nice features, including the median and City Hall grounds, but they are very time-intensive to maintain. He said that it could be advantageous to explore contracting out landscaping services as a potential method to make the utility worker positions more inviting, sustainable, and less physically exhausting, and to boost the morale of the Public Works Department. He noted that other benefits may include more specialized expertise in grounds maintenance and additional time for the City's utility crew to focus on training for water and wastewater operations.

City Manager Knopp pointed out the potential downside and said that adding a contractor for this function without reducing costs in other areas will result in a net cost increase to the City. He explained that theoretically, there would be an increase in the water and wastewater operations funds because more of the time of the utility crew would be focused on those functions.

He added that weighing the pros and cons of this approach is difficult to estimate, but recommended that staff seek out proposals from licensed landscape maintenance companies to better understand the overall costs, so staff can better analyze an approach to the operation of the public works department.

Councilmember Woodall asked if the landscaping contractor would be maintaining the Blue Star Park as well as the Wildwood Avenue median.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen said the idea would be for the landscape contractor to maintain the north and south sections of the gateway and anything along Wildwood Ave., including City Hall grounds, Memorial Park, and Blue Star (Triangle) Park.

Councilmember Woodall asked if the contractor would maintain the grounds at the Davis Street Park, to which the response was that the Davis Street Park would not be included.

She expressed support for the concept of issuing an RFP for landscaping services to see if it is feasible, so public works utility workers would be free to focus on other duties.

Councilmember Wilson asked how many utility workers are currently utilized for mowing and landscaping functions.

City Manager Knopp said that typically, three utility workers share that responsibility.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen pointed out that currently, there is only one utility worker.

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Councilmember Wilson asked if the contract would include maintaining the Dog Park. Water/Roadways Superintendent said that the Public Works Utility crew would still mow the Dog Park.

Councilmember Wilson supported the idea of issuing an RFP to see what the costs would be.

Councilmember Orr commented that contracting out some of the landscaping services would allow public works employees more time to focus on more vital services.

Woodall/Carter made a motion to authorize the City Manager to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for annual landscaping maintenance services. The motion carried 5-0.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Introduction and First Reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 418-2025 Amending the City's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Regulations to Incorporate State Mandated Changes Pursuant to SB 1211

Community Development Director Caldwell provided a staff report and said that this item involves another state mandate that compels the City to amend its Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations. He referred to the four (4) bullet points on page 57 of the packet, which summarized the areas of non-compliance.

He explained that the current regulations allow for two (2) accessory dwelling units; one is called an accessory dwelling unit, the second is called a junior accessory dwelling unit. Under the new changes, based on the number of existing units, that number of units could double on a parcel, up to a maximum of eight (8) units.

He explained that the City could not require additional parking, even if the ADU displaces parking according to the State mandate. He said that a lot of the state mandates are based on more urban areas with mass transit opportunities. The City currently has the ability to waive parking requirements, provided the unit is within 0.5 miles of a bus stop. That does not apply to the avenues due to the parking problem in that area, and that will not change

He further explained that the City's regulations also need to include the definition of "livable space," and the new state law reinforces a ministerial review process for ADU permits, which means the City must approve a qualifying application without a Conditional Use Permit.

Councilmember Orr asked if "livable space" means that they have to have a bathroom.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that they must have access to a bathroom, but the ADU could share a bathroom with the primary residence. He noted

that 95% of the time, junior ADU's are attached to the primary residence and may or may not have a separate entrance, but must have access to a bathroom.

Carter/Orr made a motion to approve the introduction and first reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 418-2025 Amending the City's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Regulations to Incorporate State Mandated Changes Pursuant to SB 1211. Motion carried 5-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATION

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on upcoming meetings and events and said that she attended the CalCities Redwood Empire Division meeting in Fortuna on August 22nd and said they received a presentation on homeowners' insurance and fire risk.

She said that she attended a RREDC meeting on August 25th and they heard from "Start Up Humboldt," which is similar to a Shark Tank competition with a prize of \$200,00 to the winner. She said that she would be looking into the contest to get more information and urged everyone to look at their website.

She also reported that the Community Resource Center is hosting the "Touch a Truck Event" at the Fire Hall on September 6th, which is fun for adults as well as kids.

Councilmember Orr reported on his attendance at the last HCAOG meeting, where there was a slew of presentations, two of which were the implementation of the Safe Streets website, which categorizes streets as far as safety, and the other one was a breakdown of housing counts for the next state assessment and how to reach exemption status on some.

Councilmember Wilson reported on his attendance at the RCEA meeting and said that one of the things they will be talking about at the next meeting is the use of AI power. There was a discussion on the pullback of funding from the federal government related to the Offshore Wind Energy Project, and funding from the tribes for putting power back into the grid.

Councilmember Woodall reported that there would be a Chamber of Commerce meeting on September 8th at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Resource Center and that she would be attending an HTA meeting tomorrow for Mayor Garnes.

She requested that the City, at some point, consider purchasing a bench to be installed halfway down the Eel River Trail so people, especially older people, would be able to sit down.

Mayor Garnes addressed the issue of truck parking on Wildwood Ave. and asked if the discussion would need to go back to the Traffic Committee before coming before the City

Council, or if the Police Department could issue parking citations to the trucks not adhering to the 2-hour truck parking on Wildwood Ave.

ADJOURNMENT

Carter/Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:32 p.m. to the September 16, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

Karen Dunham, City Clerk