

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2026**

Mayor Garnes called the regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 4:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: (Closed Session) Mayor Garnes, Mayor Pro Tem Carter, Councilmembers Wilson and Woodall, City Manager Knopp, and City Attorney Gans

Present: (Regular Meeting) Mayor Garnes, Mayor Pro Tem Carter, Councilmembers Orr, and Wilson

Absent: Councilmember Woodall (excused)

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Chief of Police Phinney, Finance Director Sanborn, Wastewater Superintendent Moore, City Clerk Dunham, and Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel

Absent: Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen and Community Development Director Caldwell (excused)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED IN CLOSED SESSION

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

RECESS INTO CLOSED SESSION

The Council recessed into closed session at 4:30 p.m. to discuss the above listed item.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

The Council reconvened into open session at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Garnes announced that there was nothing to report from the closed session.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes invited public comments on non-agenda matters.

Rick Pehlren addressed the Council and thanked them for being cognizant of the needs of seniors in the community and for their support of the senior exercise group. He also commented that he had concerns about the water diversion from Lake Pillsbury and expressed interest in knowing how that is going and perhaps being involved in the conversations.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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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.

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

- 1) Approve Minutes of January 6, 2026, Regular Meeting,
- 2) Adopt Resolution No. 1656-2026 Approving Appointment of Representatives to Small Cities Organized Risk Effort (SCORE),
- 3) Adopt Resolution No. 1657-2026 Approving Designation of Representatives to the PACE JPA Board of Directors,
- 4) Authorize the City Manager to Draft and Execute a One-Year Extension of the On-Call City Engineering Agreement with GHD, Inc.,
- 5) Adopt Resolution No. 1659-2026 Authorizing the Early Order of One (1) Police Patrol Vehicle Due to Operational Necessity and Extended Manufacturer Lead Times,
- 6) Adopt Resolution No. 1661-2026 Authorizing the City Manager to Execute Certificate of Acceptance for Sewer Easements for the Painter Street Sewer Line Upsizing, and
- 7) Receive and File Check Registers for November and December 2025.

The motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and commended the police department and the Community Service Officers (CSO's) for the recent nuisance abatement of 520 First Ave.

He then reported that the Parametric Earthquake Insurance coverage for the city is expected to commence on July 1, 2026. Related to the solid waste franchise agreement, he reported that negotiations are moving forward with the expectation to see significant progress made over the next two weeks. The July 1st date for implementation of the new franchise agreement is questionable but is not a concern to Rio Dell since the city is not under any corrective action plan with Cal Recycle as are the other jurisdictions. Also, the city's current franchise agreement remains in effect until the end of 2026.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that there were zero cats, 1 dog and 9 ducks transported to Miranda's Rescue over the past two weeks.

SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Adopt Resolution No.1658-2026 Authorizing the Chief of Police to Submit a Grant Application to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Authorizing the Chief of Police to Execute all Related Documents

Chief of Police Phinney provided a staff report and said that the proposed resolution authorizes the Chief of Police to submit a grant application to the California Highway Patrol for funding under the Cannabis Tax Fund Grant Program (CTFGP) to obtain \$160,000 for projects that address driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, including cannabis. The grant funding will support enforcement activities in addition to officer training, prevention efforts, and equipment directly related to impaired driving enforcement. He noted that there is no grant match of funds by the city.

Councilmember Wilson asked if officers would be required to go away for training or if it would occur locally.

Chief of Police Phinney said that there is a wide variety of cannabis and other drug- based trainings available to officers, most of which are out of the area, but this grant provides funding for training and travel related expenses.

Councilmember Wilson said in 2016 when cannabis was legalized, he recalled funds being allocated for training and equipment to identify cannabis impairment.

Chief of Police Phinney explained that currently there is no state identified threshold established for the level of THC in someone's system. He said that a blood test will measure how many parts per million of THC exist but as far as what that is and how it affects a person's ability to operate a vehicle comes down to the officer's observance of the level of impairment. The grant will provide additional training to officers so they will know how to better identify impairment.

Mayor Garnes called for public comments on the resolution.

Rick Pehlren commented that it seems that it would be hard to enforce without having the criteria for accessing the level of impairment noting that people react differently to cannabis. Establishing uniform criteria for determining the level of impairment would be beneficial.

Chief of Police Phinney commented that the more training officers have, the better equipped they will be to judge impairment.

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A motion was made by Carter/Orr to adopt Resolution No.1658-2026 authorizing the Chief of Police to submit a grant application to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and authorizing the Chief of Police to execute all related documents. The motion carried 4-0.

Authorize the City Manager to Award the Eel River Trail Accessibility Ramp Project to Hooven & Co. for \$680,835.70 and Authorize the City Manager to Enter into a Construction Agreement with Hooven & Co., in Coordination with the City Attorney and Authorize the City Manager to Execute Change Orders up to a Total Not to Exceed \$1,200,000, and to Execute Scope of Services with GHD for an Amount of \$120,611.00
City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that on August 28, 2025, the California Wildlife Conservation Board awarded \$1,200,000 to the City of Rio Dell for the Eel River Trail Accessible Ramp Project. The ramp was originally part of the original scope of the Clean California Grant, but it had to be removed due to the bids coming in over budget.

He said that the resolution, if approved will authorized the award of the project to the low bidder, Hooven & Co., in the amount of \$680.835, and also approve GHD to oversee the construction management, inspection and environmental services needed for the project to be completed. He pointed out the importance of the timing of the project as the contractor will need to begin prepping the site before the 2026 bird nesting season which begins in March, to reduce the probability of delays and cost increases.

Mayor Garnes asked if there was a design provided for the project.

City Manager Knopp indicated that the design of the accessibility ramp was included in the original scope and explained that the design is a hybrid between ramps and stairs.

Mayor Garnes called for public comments on the proposed project.

Rick Pehlren asked if the trail is part of the Great Redwood Trail.

City Manager Knopp said that the trail is seen as a spur of the Great Redwood Trail but that the trail was constructed on this side of the Eel River as the bluff side of the river is tricky to navigate. He said that continuation of the Great Redwood Trail would likely come through the Rio Dell proper.

Mayor Garnes commented that she can't guarantee that there will never be a trail on the bluff side of the river.

A motion was made by Carter/Orr to authorize the City Manager to award the Eel River Trail Accessibility Ramp Project to Hooven & Co. for \$680,835.70 and authorize the City Manager to enter into a Construction Agreement with Hooven & Co., in coordination with the City Attorney and authorize the City Manager to execute change orders up to a total not to exceed \$1,200,000, and to execute Scope of Services with GHD for an amount of \$120,611.00.

The motion carried 4-0.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Second Reading (by title only) and Adoption of Ordinance No. 420-2026 Amending Section 15.05.020 "Building Codes" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) to Reference the 2025 California Building codes and the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and explained that it is a standard requirement by State mandate to adopt the new building codes every three (3) years. Staff recommended approving the second reading (by title only) and adoption of Ordinance No. 420-2026.

Mayor Garnes called for public comments on the proposed ordinance. No comments were received.

A motion was made by Carter/Orr to approve the second reading (by title only) *and adoption of Ordinance No. 420-2026 Amending Section 15.05.020 "Building Codes" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) to Reference the 2025 California Building codes and the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code.*

The motion carried 4-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATION

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on upcoming meetings and events and said that Wildwood Days planning is already underway, and they are looking for community input on a theme for this year's event. She encouraged anyone with an idea to go to the Chamber of Commerce website and complete the survey and express ideas for a theme.

She reported that she would be attending a Cal Cities Community Services Policy Committee meeting in Sacramento on Thursday, announced there would be a Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting here tomorrow at 3:00 p.m., and later next week she would be attending the Community Organization Active Disasters (COAD) retreat.

She then gave a shoutout to Sarah Reback and the Community Resource Center for all the wonderful services they provide to the community and encouraged anyone who has not stopped by the Resource Center to do so as it is a light in the darkness for a lot of people.

Councilmember Orr jokingly thanked staff for getting the vicious ducks off the streets.

Councilmember Wilson reported that he would be attending a Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) meeting on Thursday and said it will be interesting to hear about the

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meeting with Congressman Huffman regarding the funding for windmill projects. He noted that the current administration is not in favor of windmills.

Mayor Garnes reported on her attendance at the Seismic Safety Commission meeting in Sacramento last Thursday and said that it was a 50th anniversary celebration at the State Capitol where they presented the commission with a resolution and said that she spoke about Rio Dell.

She said that she would be going to Ukiah on Thursday to attend a Great Redwood Trail board meeting, and then onto Sacramento for a Cal Cities Environmental Quality Committee meeting. She also reported that the Executive Director of Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) will be retiring in May and the Deputy Director would be assuming that role.

ADJOURNMENT

Carter/Orr made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m. to the February 6, 2026, regular meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

Attest:

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Karen Dunham, City Clerk