

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

Mayor Garnes called the Special Meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 5:47 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

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Garnes called for public comment on matters not on the agenda. No public comment was received.

**SPECIAL MEETING MATTERS/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.

Councilmember Wilson removed items 1 and 2 from the consent calendar.

**ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR**

Authorize a 10% Temporary Pay Enhancement for the Water Superintendent for Wastewater Superintendent Activities

Councilmember Wilson commented that there should be provisions in the Employee Handbook to automatically authorize extra pay to an employee who is placed in a temporary position, rather than calling for a special meeting to authorize the pay enhancement. Since staff knew that the Wastewater Superintendent was leaving for weeks, the matter should have come to the Council at an earlier meeting.

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to authorize a temporary 10% pay enhancement for the Water Superintendent for Wastewater Superintendent activities. The motion carried 5-0.

Authorize the City Manager to Over-Hire One Wastewater Operator I-III

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that the Wastewater division currently has three (3) budgeted positions, including a Wastewater Superintendent, a Wastewater Operator I-III, and an Operator in Training (OIT). With the Wastewater Superintendent position vacant, there is one (1) Operator I and one (1) OIT. The two employees are hard workers, but could use some additional support with the 24/7 operation of the treatment

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plant and related systems. The total estimated maximum cost for one year was between \$105,356 and \$117,598, depending on qualifications and dependent status.

City Manager Knopp said that this item was brought forward following the recruitment of a new Wastewater Superintendent. The applicants interviewed were better suited for an Operator III position than a Superintendent. During the interim, the City of Ferndale has agreed to provide additional assistance to the department.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen commented that the wastewater department does not always have staff available, and they need to have another certified operator. He noted that one of the current employees wants to stay as a Grade I Operator and not advance further, and with no one willing to step up, the idea would be to hire a temporary employee to fill the gap until a Wastewater Superintendent is hired. He said that the City of Ferndale is willing to help on a short-term basis and pointed out the difficulty in finding licensed operators, not to mention a Wastewater Superintendent.

Councilmember Wilson commented that he felt this was a rushed decision and that he would like to have a better understanding of the request. He asked what the effects would be if a temporary operator were not hired immediately.

Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen said that with Ferndale helping out in the interim, they could probably wait a little while to hire a temporary operator.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed with Councilmember Wilson and said that she had no doubt the wastewater division needs extra help in the absence of a Wastewater Superintendent, but she would also like to take a closer look at the budget to see how this will work. She also thought that it might be a good idea if the new Wastewater Superintendent were involved in the hiring process for new wastewater positions.

A motion was made by Wilson/Carter to decline over-hiring a Wastewater Operator I-III and to bring the item back at the May 20, 2025, regular meeting with more information. Motion carried 4-1, with Councilmember Orr dissenting.

A motion was made by Wilson/Carter to move the last item on the agenda, a closed session for a performance evaluation of the City Manager, to the end of the regular meeting, closed session. Motion carried 5-0.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The special meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m. to the May 6, 2025, regular meeting.

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Debra Garnes, Mayor

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Karen Dunham, City Clerk