

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**

Mayor Garnes called the regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: 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, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, City Clerk Dunham, and Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel

Absent: Community Development Director Caldwell (excused)

### **CEREMONIAL MATTERS**

Proclamation Designating September 17-23, 2025, as Constitution Week

Mayor Garnes read the proclamation and presented it to Catherine Culver from the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Eel River Valley Chapter. Catherine addressed the Council and said that they were grateful to the City for issuing the proclamation. She said that we are at a time where people consider the constitution a political instrument, but it is not and stressed the importance of people reading and understanding the constitution. She thanked the Council for its willingness to issue the proclamation.

### **PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Garnes invited public comments on non-agenda matters.

**Laura Berrey**, 590 View Ave. addressed the Council regarding an ongoing drainage problem in her neighborhood. She said that her house was built in the 1950's and was the first house on the block. The city installed a curb and sidewalk in the 1980's which has created a situation where all the storm water from the street flows into their yard. She said that because they live on a hill, the water not only floods their property, it impacts the neighbors as well. Despite their efforts to install a makeshift drain to divert thousands of gallons of water each year, they still see several inches of standing water in their yard during light and heavy storms. She commented that this affects the value of all the homes in the neighborhood and needs to be corrected.

She presented two solutions; 1) install a collection box and connect it to the existing storm drain at the corner of View & Kelly or 2), install a small asphalt curb or berm to direct the storm water toward the drain. She said that with the current water line project occurring in that area, it would be the perfect time to address this issue.

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 MINUTES**  
**Page 2**

She urged city staff and council members to visit their property to see the situation firsthand.

**Patrick Knight**, 590 Pacific Ave. addressed the Council regarding the same issue and said that View Ave. has been neglected and in need of major repairs for years. He indicated that there is a major drainage issue and most of the road slopes and drains onto 590 View Ave. He said that the situation has become worse with the construction company digging up the road for the watermain project creating more dirt and gravel that will drain onto that property when the rainy season starts. He asked the Council to take the time to look at the situation and asked that the issue be added to the next City Council agenda for further discussion.

He pointed out a few issues regarding the contractor working on the water line project. He said about a month ago they broke a water line and did not notify residents so when they got home, they found brown water and gravel coming out of their faucets. He said that for almost a week, they left a hole in the street near one of the neighbors' mailboxes where there were small children. In addition, they used a neighbor's water to rinse off their tools without permission.

**Tommy Norton** addressed the Council regarding water rates and said that he is the owner of 18 properties in town as well as part owner of a property on Dinsmore Plateau and the owner of Shotz Coffee. He said that the current water and sewer bill for Shotz Coffee in Rio Dell is over \$700.00/mo. with approximately 200 customers a day compared to \$400.00mo. for the Fortuna Shotz with approximately 500 customers.

He said that he understands there are a lot of needed water system improvements that drive up the rates but thought the city should apply for more grants to help keep the rates down. He commented that high utility rates put stress on current businesses and discourage new businesses from coming into town. He noted that he owns a vacant lot on Wildwood Ave., where he plans on building a restaurant, but it doesn't make sense to invest in a new business with rates continuing to increase. He asked that the water rate issue be placed on the next agenda for further discussion and a possible solution.

**Brittany Massaro**, a local licensed cannabis cultivator, addressed the Council regarding cultivation taxes and asked the Council to consider lowering the current cultivation taxes. She noted that the cannabis market is collapsing and wholesale flower prices have dropped to historic lows. She said that the legal licensed cultivators are continuing to compete with the unregulated market. In addition to statewide challenges, operators in Rio Dell face unique burdens. The cost of maintaining Dinsmore Ranch Road, including grading, repairing and keeping it safe is all on the Dinsmore Plateau operators. She commented that these are infrastructure costs that cut into their profits and at the same time, cannabis farmers have no access to equity grants or other support programs that help offset costs. She said that local cultivation taxes are now the breaking point and pointed out that if the farmers can't survive, the

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 MINUTES**  
**Page 3**

City will not only lose tax revenue but will lose jobs, economic activity and the assurance that cannabis is grown in compliance with community standards. She noted that other cities and counties in California have already lowered or suspended local cultivation taxes because they recognize sustainability must come before short-term revenue. She said that Rio Dell has the chance to take the same proactive step to keep operators in the regulated system and preserve the long-term benefits for the city.

She respectfully urged the council to place this issue on a future agenda and work with the cultivators to establish a fair tax structure that allows them to survive and continue contributing to Rio Dell in a regulated system.

### **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.

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

- 1) Approve Minutes of the August 29, 2025, Special Meeting;
- 2) Approve Minutes of the September 2, 2025, Regular Meeting;
- 3) Approve Resolution No. 1647-2025 Amending the Safety Element to Incorporate the 2025 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan;
- 4) Approve Resolution No. 1648-2025 Designating Voting Delegates for the Cal Cities Annual Conference and Expo pm October 5-10, 2025;
- 5) Authorize the City Manager to Execute a 2-Year Service Agreement with Petersen CAT for the Inspection and Maintenance of the City's Backup Generators;
- 6) Approve Resolution No. 1650-2025 to Implement the City of Rio Dell's Last, Best, and Final Offer with the Rio Dell Employees Association for Terms and Conditions of Employment;
- 7) Receive and File the check Register for August; and
- 8) Approve Resolution No. 1646-2025 Accepting the City's Updated Annex to the Humboldt Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The motion carried 4-0.

### **REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

#### City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp highlighted the staff update and said that the PG&E project rerouting the gas line across the river was expected to close October 27<sup>th</sup> but has been extended to mid-November due to multiple issues.

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 MINUTES**  
**Page 4**

He also reported that there would be a Nuisance Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. followed by a Traffic Committee meeting here on Thursday at 4:00 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter referred to the animal control report and said that there were two kittens in foster care and one dog transferred to Miranda's Rescue.

Councilmember Wilson thanked Chief Phinney for following up with Fish and Game regarding the bear issue and said that the State is basically placing the responsibility on the city.

**SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Resolution No. 1649-2025 Approving a Budget Adjustment for the Purchase of Four (4) Shield 12 speed Display Signs from All Traffic Solutions, Inc. for \$20,393.26

Chief Phinney provided a staff report recommending approval of the purchase and implementation of four (4) Shield 12 Speed Display signs in the amount of \$20,393.26 and the associated budget amendment.

He explained that the city received a grant and deployed a speed display sign on the 600 block of Wildwood Ave. He said that a Speed Effectiveness Report conducted between September 3-11, 2025, demonstrated that the sign successfully reduced vehicle speeds across all categories, with more than 50% of vehicles slowing down during nearly every hour of monitoring speed effectiveness. He noted that this measurable reduction highlights the effectiveness of speed display technology in encouraging voluntary compliance with posted speed limits. He said that given the proven effectiveness of the speed sign, recommended expanding the program by purchasing four (4) additional signs to be strategically placed throughout the city in areas with high traffic volumes and frequent complaints of speeding. He added that this is a cheap and effective way to evaluate speed trends and support targeted enforcement.

He suggested that one (1) speed sign be placed at the south end of Wildwood Ave, one on Davis St. at Ireland Ave, and one on each end of Belleview Ave. He commented that the signs are operated on cellular signals and can be moved around when needed.

Chief Phinney then referred to the Speed Effectiveness Report showing an example of the data collected and said that this is just one of many reports that can be generated.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the speed sign could only display speed results or if messages could be placed on the sign.

Chief Phinney said that as far as messages, the options were limited.

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 MINUTES**  
**Page 5**

Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed that speeding traffic coming into Rio Dell from the south end of town is a problem.

Mayor Garnes commented that there is also a problem with vehicles speeding on Painter St. and agreed that problem areas need to be the focal point for the signs.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment on the subject. No public comment was received.

Carter/Wilson made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 1649-2025 Approving a Budget Adjustment for the purchase of four (4) Shield 12 Speed Display Signs from All Traffic Solutions, Inc. for \$20,393.26.

The motion carried 4-0.

**ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

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

City Manager Knopp 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 explained that the current regulations allow for two (2) accessory dwelling units and 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, with relaxed setbacks and parking requirements.

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.

He commented that the Rio Dell Planning Commission met on August 26, 2025 and approved the recommended amendment and adoption of the ordinance implementing SB 1211.

Mayor Garnes opened a public hearing to receive public input on the proposed ordinance. There being no public comment, the public hearing was closed.

Carter/Orr made a motion to approve the second reading (by title only) and adoption 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 4-0.

## COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATION

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on recent and upcoming meetings and events and said that the Touch a Truck Event was successful, the utility box near the bridge was prepped and ready for the art work this week, announced there was a seat open on the Rio Dell School Board, and said that there will be a concert at Fireman's Park on September 27<sup>th</sup> from 1-9 p.m.

She then reported on the Davis St. Park and said that the school board has declared the area in question as surplus property. There is, however, a problem with the lot lines as they don't line up the way they should, so she is requesting an item on the October 7<sup>th</sup> City Council agenda to discuss the matter further. Consensus of the Council was to agendize the item for the next meeting as requested.

Mayor Garnes announced that she had a LAFco meeting tomorrow and a Great Redwood Trail meeting on Thursday.

Councilmember Orr thanked the police department for effectively handling the rash of crimes on Edwards Dr. despite being short staffed.

Councilmember Wilson announced that he had a Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) meeting next week and they will receive an AI report and how it will affect the power grid and rates.

He asked if there was a consensus from the Council to bring back the matter of water rates as requested as well as the View Ave. drainage matter. The consensus of the Council was to agendize both matters for the October 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mayor Garnes agreed to also bring back the matter regarding the cannabis cultivation tax.

## ADJOURNMENT

Wilson/Carter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m. to the October 7, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

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Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

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Karen Dunham, City Clerk