

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 18, 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, Wilson, and Woodall

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Police Chief Phinney, Community Development Director Caldwell, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Wastewater Superintendent Kelly, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel, Senior Fiscal Assistant Townsend, and City Clerk Dunham

Absent: Finance Director Sanborn (excused)

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters.

Albert Houghton, 940 Curtis Lane addressed the Council and asked when Curtis Lane was planned to be swept; asked if all of the fire hydrants in town had been checked; and invited everyone to show up for the ribbon-cutting for the new barber shop at 220 Wildwood Ave. on Saturday, March 1st at 1:00 p.m.

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 February 3, 2025 Special Meeting;
- 2) Minutes of the February 4, Regular Meeting;
- 3) Receive & File 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report;
- 4) Receive & File FY 2025-26 Operating and Capital Budget Calendar; and
- 5) Receive & File Check Register for January 2025.

Motion carried 5-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and gave a special shout-out to

FEBRUARY 18, 2025 MINUTES
Page 2

Wastewater Superintendent Kelly and her staff. He said that it has been very rainy the past couple of months resulting in many challenges associated with the collection system and the team has done a great job. He noted that part of the City's NPDES permit through the California Water Board requires the City to pass a chronic toxicity test. In the past the test was related to the Water Flea then it graduated to the Fathead Minnow test which the city passed, noting that it is a difficult test to pass.

He then announced that there would be a Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. In addition, there would be "Coffee with the Chief" event on Monday, February 24th from 9-11 a.m. at Shotz Coffee and invited the public to come and meet the Chief.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter pointed out that zero cats were transported to Miranda's for the second staff update in a row which is good, likely attributed to the spay and neuter program.

Councilmember Orr referred to the test requirement on live Minnows and jokingly asked if the report is sent on stone tablets.

Councilmember Woodall extended special thanks to Finance Director Sanborn for doing a great job keeping on top of everything for the city.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/STUDY SESSIONS

Total Compensation Study Draft Report

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that 5 years ago, the City endeavored in a similar compensation study to provide information on appropriate compensation levels based on market conditions across all salary classifications in the City. He noted that the study completed in 2020 was done by Koff & Associates which is now the Gallagher Group.

In October 2024, the City engaged the Gallagher Group to conduct a current comprehensive Compensation Study. The idea behind the study is to ensure the City maintains competitive compensation that enables recruitment and retention of high-quality staff while remaining fiscally responsible.

He explained the study evaluated base salaries and total compensation packages across 32 city classifications, using 18 benchmark positions for market comparison against 13 comparable agencies.

He introduced Debbie Owen, the project manager from Gallagher, and her team who were present via Zoom to provide a PowerPoint presentation on the Total Compensation Study Draft Report and answer any questions the Council may have.

FEBRUARY 18, 2025 MINUTES
Page 3

A project team member began the presentation and said tonight's goal was to review the methodology used to compile the report and the proposed recommendations.

He reviewed the 13 comparator agencies, the total compensation study process, the base salary results, benchmark classifications, and range placements for all 32 city classifications based on benchmark total compensation.

Under the base salary results with 16 benchmark classifications, 14 were below the market median and 2 were above the market median. When considering the total compensation results, only 7 were below the market median and 9 were above the market median.

Overall, the differences between the base salaries and total compensation indicated that the City's benefits placed Rio Dell at a more competitive advantage. Further analysis indicated that, on average, classifications were 10.5% below the market median but when considering benefits, the City gained a 10.5% competitive advantage. Much of the gain was attributed to the City's contribution to the 457 deferred compensation plan, intended to balance its lack of a defined PERS plan.

They concluded the presentation and offered to answer any questions from the Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked them for providing an overview of the study and said she would be interested in staff's recommendation.

City Manager Knopp explained that the recommendation would be based partially on labor negotiations which the City Council would discuss in closed session and the other part would be through the open budget process. He said that the study provides information for the Council when considering the compensation plan for the City. He asked the Council to bear in mind that the City has a very fixed income and the recommendation must fit into the overall umbrella of existing resources while considering the long-term sustainability of the City. One of the points in the study was to get salaries to a competitive rate of 95-105% of the market median, and the ultimate conversation to have with the City Council.

Councilmember Wilson said as with the last study, he has concerns with the comparator agencies, noting that many of the 13 agencies don't compare to Rio Dell, particularly those located along I-5 and in the valley and the agricultural district whereas, Ferndale, Fortuna, and Crescent City relate more to Humboldt County. He said he realizes it is difficult to find exact comparators to Rio Dell and noted in one of the previous studies, that the chosen comparator agencies had to have a police department as one of the main components of the criteria.

He pointed out that there is a big swing between the base salary comparisons and the comparison with the full benefit package. He asked if the study had a breakdown of which

job classifications were below or above the market median. He was referred to the "Market Compensation Results Summary" table which represented the percentage above or below the top monthly salary market median and total compensation market median for each job classification.

City Manager Knopp explained that staff could schedule a call with the Gallagher Group if the Council has additional questions regarding the study.

Councilmember Woodall said she had asked the City Manager about employees who wear multiple hats and how those job classifications are determined.

City Manager Knopp explained that it was factored into the study and noted that in small cities it is very common for employees to wear multiple hats. For example, the Chief of Police is also in charge of Code Enforcement, the City Manager is also the Public Works Director and the Community Development Director is also the Building Inspector.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Introduction and First Reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 411-2025 and Resolution No. 1630.2025 Amending the Industrial Commercial (IC) Zoning Regulations and the General Plan Land Use Element

Community Development Director Caldwell provided a staff report recommending amendments to the Industrial Commercial zoning regulations and the General Plan Land Use Element. He referred the Council to the Land Use Matrix previously developed by the Planning Commission identifying the use types in the various zoning designations.

He explained that the Zoning Regulations for the principal zones often refer to other zoning designations to determine allowed uses which is cumbersome. The intent of the proposed zoning amendment would identify all use types for the Industrial Commercial Zone under that zoning designation to avoid flipping back and forth between the other commercial zones to determine the various use types.

Community Development Director Caldwell said the use types identified in blue on the Land Uses Matrix are uses that are currently allowed in the Industrial zone; the use types identified in black are use types recently identified by the Planning Commission as being compatible land uses in the Industrial Commercial zone. The idea is to get the uses under one source, starting with the Industrial Commercial zone, and then moving on to the other zoning designations.

He then referred to the zoning map identifying the two areas in town that are designated Industrial Commercial; the Humboldt Rio Dell Business Park (former Eel River Sawmill site), and a few parcels on Eeloa Ave. He pointed out there are several constraints related

to development at the Humboldt Rio Dell Business Park. One is that it is located in the flood zone and two is that there are no sewer services available at that location. Although all these uses may be allowed, the fact that they are in a flood zone may preclude the use. He said that there is a chance the flood map may be revised because in the past the reason there was flooding there was that there were a lot of mills, which no longer exist, and the logs created check dams causing the water to back up.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that the Planning Commission removed grocery stores as a use type in the Industrial Commercial zone and thought the use type would be more compatible in the Town Center, the Community Commercial, or the Neighborhood Commercial zone. He noted that although the Planning Commission did not remove the Artisan/Craft Product Manufacturing use type, they recommended encouraging the use type in the Town Center, predicated on the fact that the City at one time, talked about creating the Town Center as an artisan type village. The Planning Commission also thought Retail/General should be focused in the Community Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial zones.

He pointed out that this is the first reading of the ordinance and encouraged councilmembers to review the list of use types, identify any uses they think are not suitable in the Industrial Commercial zone, and let staff know before the March 4th regular meeting.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance. There was no public comment and the public hearing closed.

Councilmember Orr asked for clarification if the zoning boundaries were changing or just the allowed use types.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that only the allowed use types were changing.

Community Development Director Caldwell pointed out that all Industrial Commercial development is required to go through the Design Review process which requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) with all neighbors located within 300 feet of the perimeter of the property to be notified along with various referral agencies, so a lot of these uses would be vetted through that process.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter referred to the Principal Permitted Uses with a Use Permit, (b) "Child Care" and asked if it could be considered in the Community Commercial or Neighborhood Commercial zones.

Community Development Director Caldwell indicated that the City Council could allow child care in other commercial zones either as a principally permitted use or a permitted use with a use permit. He noted that childcare is already allowed in residential zones under certain restrictions.

FEBRUARY 18, 2025 MINUTES
Page 6

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that streamlining the process will make it easier for staff and the public.

Mayor Garnes referred to Automotive Repair being allowed in the Industrial Commercial zone but questioned how it was allowed to occur in other zoning designations.

Community Development Director Caldwell explained that Automotive Repair is allowed in other commercial zones with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

A motion was made by Carter/Orr to approve the introduction and first reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 411-2025 and Resolution No. 1630.2025 Amending the Industrial Commercial (IC) Zoning Regulations and the General Plan Land Use Element and continue the second reading and adoption of the Ordinance to the meeting of March 4, 2025. Motion carried 5-0.

Introduction and First Reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 412-2025 Establishing Section 12.30 "Trails" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RCMC) Pertaining to Regulations for Trails

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that with the completion of the Eel River Trail nearing, staff is recommending the establishment of regulations for the use of the trail. He said that since this is Rio Dell's first official dedicated non-motorized path, the language as proposed only impacts the Eel River Trail. The language specifically prohibits the use of any motor-driven vehicle on the Eel River Trail, with exceptions for personal mobility devices for the disabled, electric-powered baby carriages, or vehicles in service of the City. He noted that electric bicycles may use the trail provided the bike is powered off.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public comment on the proposed ordinance. There was no public comment and the public hearing closed.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked about the use of remote-control vehicles on the trail.

City Manager Knopp referred to the definition that *"No person shall drive or ride any motor-driven vehicle on the Eel River Trail"* and said that he would assume that a remote-control vehicle would be included, although it could be left to the discretion of the department.

Councilmember Orr expressed concern about the increased use of motorized scooters and Segways and that we may be limiting those although scooters can be foot-driven like bicycles. He mentioned the need to bring visitors or potential businesses to town.

City Manager Knopp commented that he would want to review the grant language to make sure the regulations are consistent with the grant. He noted that electric bikes can travel at 16 or 20 mph potentially harming a pedestrian. He said that there is some controlling state

language that he would like to check. The other option would be to allow those types of vehicles with a restricted speed limit of perhaps 5 mph.

Councilmember Woodall asked if staff would be returning at the next meeting with responses to the questions and concerns presented tonight.

City Manager Knopp said that staff could come back at the next meeting with options for the Council to consider along with the second reading and potential adoption of the ordinance.

Mayor Garnes supported the trail as a non-motorized walking path and asked if there would be signage for the rules of the trail.

Councilmember Woodall commented that the trail would be difficult to patrol.

City Manager Knopp said that there would be regulatory signage on the trail.

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to approve the introduction and first reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 412-2025 Establishing Section 12.30 "Trails" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) Pertaining to Regulations for Trails and to continue the second reading and adoption of the ordinance to the March 4, 2025 regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter announced that Rio Dell School was ranked 5th in the State for growth in language arts and technically tied for 4th which is amazing. She provided a brief update on the Davis St. Park and said that the Rio Dell School Board voted to form a 711 Committee which weighs in on whether or not the Davis St. Park is surplus property. She invited the public to apply if interested in serving on the committee. They are hoping to have the committee portion of the issue wrapped up by August.

She reported that she would be attending a meeting of the Humboldt Skate Collective on Thursday. She said that they are the organization that helps build pump tracks noting that the track in Fortuna didn't cost the City anything to build.

She then reported on the success of the Spay & Neuter Program and said to date they have helped to spay or neuter 3 cats and 16 dogs.

Councilmember Woodall reminded everyone about the Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting tomorrow at 3:00 p.m.

Councilmember Wilson announced that he had an HWMA meeting regarding garbage and SB1383 compliance and said that Rio Dell got a deferment on implementation of SB 1383. The board issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) on the requirements for establishing an

organic disposal site in Humboldt County so the waste doesn't have to be trucked out. In the discussion regarding the future of garbage in Humboldt County, no agencies, which includes all of the cities in Humboldt County have a franchise agreement for garbage services. How Recology goes about implementing SB1383 and organic waste disposal depends on the franchise agreements. He noted that Rio Dell and Ferndale have deferments on implementation so they are ahead of the game leaving Fortuna, Eureka, and Arcata as the bigger culprits. Rio Dell only has 700 tons of garbage a year so the City is a minuscule piece of the process. He expressed concern that garbage services could get very expensive in Rio Dell and encouraged the community to get involved and pay attention to what is going on regarding garbage.

Mayor Garnes reported on the last HTA meeting and said things are going well. They will be having hydrogen buses and are in the process of redesigning the HTA yard to build a state-of-the-art hydrogen fueling station. She noted that the buses are going from here to the Bay area through the multiagency express route with a single-pay method available which can be booked through the online app.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. to the March 4, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

Karen Dunham, City Clerk