

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 3, 2023**

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

ROLL CALL: Present: Mayor Garnes, Mayor Pro Tem Carter, Councilmembers Orr, Wilson, and Woodall

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Chief of Police Allen, Finance Director Sanborn, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Waste-water Superintendent Taylor, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel, and City Clerk Dunham

Absent: Community Development Director Caldwell (Attended Remotely)

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters.

Joyce McHenry, 483 Second Ave. addressed the Council regarding needed repairs to Second Ave. between Davis St. and Columbus St. and asked that the matter be revisited and placed on the October 17, 2023 regular meeting agenda. She asked for assurance that the item would be on the next agenda.

Mayor Garnes was not able to provide an exact date and said that staff would look at the upcoming agenda calendar and make that determination. Consensus of the Council was to revisit the item on a subsequent agenda.

Kim Jones, 1109 Tyme Ct. addressed the Council regarding building permit fees and asked the Council to reconsider reducing fees for earthquake-related repairs. She asked why Rio Dell's building permit fees were higher than those in Fortuna and Eureka.

Mayor Garnes explained that the matter was discussed previously with the City Council and a decision was made to not reduce or refund building permit fees for earthquake-related damage.

City Manager Knopp explained that the Council cannot discuss matters that are not on the agenda noted that there is support available and encouraged Ms. Jones to contact the Disaster Case Managers through the County of Humboldt. He offered to provide her with the phone number at the end of the meeting.

Frederick Breckenridge began by stating that he comes from a long line of politicians and said that it has come to his attention that Mayor Garnes won the Democrat of the

Year Award. He presented her with a painting of Barack Obama and congratulated her for receiving the award.

Sharon Wolff, 3 Painter St. warned everyone of a test of the nationwide emergency alert system to take place on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, at 11:40 a.m. hitting cell phones, radios, and tvs. This is a coordinated effort between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Angelina Lasko, 223 Belleview Ave. addressed the Council and said that she has been working with the earthquake recovery group for 6 months now and mentioned that she saw on the agenda that there would be a presentation on the matter tonight and had some questions she would like addressed.

Mayor Garnes explained that this time was for the public to speak on matters, not on the agenda, and invited her to present her comments during the discussion of that item.

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. Mayor Pro Tem Carter removed consent calendar No. 6 related to the Wastewater Superintendent position.

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

- 1) Minutes of the September 5, 2023 regular meeting;
- 2) Update on address changes in the Avenues Neighborhood;
- 3) Resolution No. 1590-2023 accepting the ABC-OTS Grant awarded to the Rio Dell Police Department;
- 4) Repair of Sludge Dryer by O & M Industries in the amount of \$18,019.00;
- 5) Authorizing the Mayor to sign correspondence to Governor Newsom related to Little Hoover Commission Report on SB 1383 implementation;
- 6) Check Register for August.

Motion carried 5-0.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR

Receive and File Update on Wastewater Superintendent Position

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented on the upcoming retirement of Wastewater Superintendent Derek Taylor and thanked him for his service. She said that this past winter has been horrific for everyone and said that he was out in the dark, along with other workers in the pouring rain. She wanted it noted that these workers were out in the storm babysitting the infrastructure which are things that we don't always think about during disastrous times.

Motion was made by Carter/Woodall to receive and file the update on the Wastewater Superintendent position. Motion carried 5-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and reminded everyone of the ongoing auction of City vehicles and equipment which is linked on the city's website and can be accessed at Govdeals.com.

He reported that staff held a mandatory pre-bid meeting on the Gateway Landscaping project with prospective contractors with one bid received. Staff will work with the AdHoc committee and bring that item back to the Council, potentially at a special meeting to further the project.

He noted that staff has been doing a lot of job advertising and recruiting, reviewing and discussing plans for the Eel River Trail and ADA compliance, having continued meetings with CalOES on earthquake disaster recovery, and mentioned there was a new section included in the staff update related to Code Enforcement.

Councilmember Woodall commended the Police Department for doing a good job thanked Community Service Officer Clark for providing the update, and sent best wishes to Officer Liam Burns with his new job at Arcata Police Department.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/STUDY SESSIONS

Presentation – Humboldt Area Foundation & Wild Rivers Community Foundation on Resiliency and Recovery in the Eel River Valley following the December 20, 2022 Ferndale Earthquake

City Manager Knopp provided a brief introduction of representatives from Humboldt Area Foundation and Wild Rivers Community Foundation who have been important partners in the earthquake response and recovery efforts from day one. In addition, they have been involved in the preparation work for disasters and community organizations getting things mobilized and channeling philanthropic donations. He noted that they are a critical hub for the earthquake recovery effort. The numbers demonstrate that there have been some improvements with 45 of the 64 red-tagged structures in Rio Dell repaired.

Amy Jester, Director of Policy Leadership Advocacy with Humboldt Area Foundation said that they were present to talk about the foundation's support for earthquake response and recovery. She was joined by Program Officer Ali Lee (via Zoom) Jarad Petroske, Director of Marketing and Communications, and Linda Stansberry, Project Manager.

She began the presentation by thanking and acknowledging everyone for the ongoing leadership and incredible commitment that the City and numerous other organizations have provided in dealing with the immediate response to the earthquake and the recovery process through these challenging times.

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She provided some background on what the Foundation does and explained that its role in a disaster is to fill in gaps where other resources are lacking. They connect community leaders and organizations working on response efforts to other resources and also to

advocate for the region in partnership with community leaders and organizations to ensure that governments outside of our community know what the needs are here. The other thing is to relay those needs to philanthropic organizations outside the area. Additionally, they established the Disaster Response and Resilience Fund which is activated immediately upon a disaster to be able to get resources out the door noting they were able to approve grants the second day after the earthquake hit.

She commented that they are also engaged in disaster preparedness and support COAD across the county service area and advocate with State and Federal agencies to talk about how the response could be improved when disasters hit a local area.

She turned the presentation over to Jarad to continue talking about the local disaster fund.

Jarad explained how the Disaster Response and Resilience Fund (DRRF) was established and what it does. The fund was set up in 2021 on the heels of the devastating wildfires but responds to multiple types of disasters.

He noted that all of the donations that come into the fund, have zero fees charged on them, and no fees are taken on gifts from individuals, or on any donations under \$10,000. Since the inception of the fund in 2021, they provided \$3.28 million through 152 grants.

He continued with grant highlights from January-September 2023 which included the following contributions:

- January 2023 - \$50,000 to Humboldt Made
\$2,489 to the Mattole Valley Resource Center
\$5,000 to Pay it Forward Humboldt (Motel vouchers, food, etc.)
- February 2023 - \$13,000 to Pay it Forward Humboldt (Critical needs for vulnerable)
- April 2023 - \$360,000 to Hope Crisis Response Network for reconstruction of Owner-occupied homes damaged by the earthquake.
\$30,000 to the Humboldt Eel River Valley Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG) to support recovery efforts.
- May 2023 - \$388,000 to the Arcata House Partnership to support the organization's bi-lingual (Spanish-English) Disaster Case Management Team.
- September 2023 - \$25,000 for the Humboldt Community Organizations Active in a

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Disaster (COAD) to support the group's disaster resilience efforts.

- \$3,000 to the Humboldt Eel River Valley LTRG to administer and manage the \$30,000 building and permit fee incentive program funded by the North Coast Grantmaking Partnership.
- \$10,000 to the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce for the Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG) to meet unmet individual needs.

He noted that the DRRF is not made up of any government monies but comes from individual donors and philanthropies as charitable contributions. There are limitations to the recipients as they cannot grant funds to individuals so they must go to organizations, government agencies, tribal entities, and other organizations that support the community. Those organizations are not required to report on how those funds were used for 1-year.

Linda Stansberry continued with a review of the Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG) and said that it was established as part of the best practices for disaster recovery resilience based on what they learned from philanthropic partners and other communities experiencing disasters. She explained that it was formed due to lack of FEMA funding, and the need to address unmet individual needs in the community. This is accomplished with collaboration with the Earthquake Disaster Case Management Team.

She continued with an explanation of Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) versus the Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG) and explained that COAD focuses on the big picture for the community during the response and recovery of a disaster and does not focus on individual assistance or case management, which is what the LTRG does. The LTRG is made up of a lot of community partners and their goal is to bring the community back to pre-disaster conditions by providing unmet individual needs assistance.

Mayor Garnes thanked the group for everything they had done and for the quick response to the emergency. She said that everyone has been amazing and expressed the City's heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reiterated the special thanks to everyone and said that as a member of the community it is easy to say that progress on the recovery must have stopped so it was nice to receive the presentation to show the community that progress has not stopped. She acknowledged that there are a lot of people working hard to help the community and the community is very lucky to have all of these wonderful organizations stepping up to help.

Councilmember Wilson thanked the group for their efforts and said he looked forward to working with them in the future.

Councilmember Woodall also thanked them for the presentation and said that people tend to forget that there is still a lot going on and it was good to let the community know that progress is being made.

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Councilmember Orr noted that there are still a lot of people struggling financially with repairs and fees and looked forward to seeing the help continue.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment on the matter.

Angelina Lasko addressed the earthquake response efforts and said that she is thankful for any help she can get but feels that the group lacks a lot of knowledge about what the community has experienced. She said that there are a lot of unmet needs and that she has been doing the same thing over and over for the past 6 months just to get a water heater replaced. She said that she is not even talking about the larger items and was told by the Unmet Needs Committee that only claims less than \$5,000 are being approved. She commented that the 19 remaining red-tagged homes are not included on that list.

She said that it is discouraging when trying to get estimates or loans for the repairs noting that she applied for a USDA grant five times and has still not heard whether she was approved. She said that the process should not be this complicated and that it needs to be scaled back and for the group to be more transparent. She indicated that her home was not red or yellow tagged yet she has no heat in her home. Others can't even go into their homes. She added that residents feel like nothing is happening and although she has seen every brochure and handout, nothing is a case study.

She commented that we can't change fault lines and avoid earthquakes but more information can be provided to know what is happening and to be better prepared for future events. She said that she was told that no one received help from Habitat for Humanity and is unaware of anyone receiving a USDA grant. She said that clear direction is needed on what residents need to do and said that she is hoping to organize a round table discussion through the Community Resource Center so everyone can come together and talk about individual unmet needs so they can better understand how to address those needs.

Supervisor Bushnell stated to the general public that Humboldt Area Foundation is not the organization Angelina should be complaining to. She said that she has received a lot of calls from Rio Dell constituents and as a result, she has asked that Habitat for Humanity provide a full report at their Board of Supervisors's meeting on October 27, 2023, showing specifically where the funding is going. She said that she hopes to get some answers at that time.

Frederick Breckenridge commented that global warming and the increase in the pressure system are causing more violent earthquakes. He asked if there was an opportunity to volunteer for these organizations.

Amy Jester indicated that there perhaps would be an opportunity to volunteer for COAD the LTRG or even some of the other organizations provided on the list.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked Angelina for coming and sharing her story and said that it is important to hear what is going on in the community. She said that she has spent a good amount of time at the Resource Center with the Disaster Case Manager and has

heard various stories from residents experiencing the same frustrations as well as those who have been patient and worked through the process and were successful. She noted that awareness is key and encouraged everyone to work through the process.

Linda Stansberry stated for clarification that the case management process is confidential so details about individual cases cannot be shared.

Amy Jester added that the Humboldt Area Foundation is one of many organizations including Humboldt Made, Changing Tides, Arcata House Partnership, Family Resource Center and others that she is sure would be happy to come and provide a presentation to the City Council if they are interested and thanked the Council once again for the opportunity to provide the presentation.

SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Unmet Transit Needs Public Hearing

Steven Luther, Associate Planner from HCAOG was present via Zoom to provide a presentation and context and information about the state of the regional transit system. He explained that the public hearing is about the use of the local transportation funds which is the major source of funding for public transit. He reviewed the approved amount allocated to the Rio Dell over the past two fiscal years and the amount used for streets and roads which was \$88,000 out of \$142,000 representing 62% of the allocation used for streets and roads, with no reasonable needs to meet presented.

He noted that the Humboldt Transit Authority is the largest transit provider for Rio Dell with 446,000 passengers utilizing the transit system annually.

He reviewed service efficiency standards, and cost effectiveness and productivity standards.

Some of the new developments included HTA doing a brand update to brand the various services such as bus tickets and individual looks under the brand "Ride Humboldt." This will make it easier for people to choose transit and to transfer between the different lines. One of the ways this will be possible is through credit card validators that are on all of the HTA buses. It allows riders to use a debit or credit card with a "tap to pay" feature and pay \$2.00 to ride over the next two hours including transfers to other buses under the same \$2.00. They also offer a \$50 monthly all-services pass.

He said the other new development is Micro-transit which works similarly to Uber or Lyft and opens up dial-a-ride services to the general public. Other new services include service from Valley West to Cal-Poly and the Redwood Coast Express which will be a direct service from Eureka to Ukiah anticipated to start in January 2024.

Some of the known transit needs included a more frequent service, Sunday rides, and later rides on Friday and Saturday nights. These needs were determined reasonable to meet so they are working with HTA to fund those requests.

Another request was to have earlier and later rides on weekdays. The basic need for this would be to hire more drivers and encouraged the public to check out the job description. He also reminded the public that anyone unable to attend the public hearing and would like to comment on an unmet transit need to go to the form linked at the project page <https://hcaog.net/documentsts/unmet-transit-needs> or visit the survey directly at <https://bit.ly/humboldttransit>.

Mayor Garnes commented that this week is “Don’t Drive Your Car Week” and pledged not to drive. She said that she was scheduled to attend an HTA meeting tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. but the bus that leaves Rio Dell comes too late to make it to the meeting on time so she will be attending the meeting via Zoom. She said that establishing earlier routes is one of the things that is very important to a lot of people. Also, having a way to better reach out to the community, perhaps with flyers or a poster on the bus letting the community know about the public hearings to address unmet transit needs. She said that a lot of people don’t know that they have a voice.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public comment on unmet transit needs.

An unidentified member of the public said that she would love to use the transit system but she would have to leave Rio Dell at 6:00 a.m. to get to her job in Eureka. Now that gas is so high, she spends approximately \$250.00 a month to drive to work. She said that it would be nice to be able to catch the bus at a decent hour to be able to get to work. If the buses could travel more than once every hour, she would be less likely to drive to work thus saving gas. She commented that she loves riding the bus and, in the past, rode it every day from Arcata to College of the Redwoods to go to school.

There were no further public comments and the public hearing closed.

Staff was directed to forward comments from the public hearing to HCAOG.

Authorize the Proposed Location for Gateway Outdoor Exercise Equipment

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that the outdoor exercise equipment which was part of the Clean California Grant, was intended to be installed at Memorial Park. In working with the architect on the project and trying to find the exact correct location, it was determined that there are no viable locations for the exercise equipment in Memorial Park due to tree roots, overhead power lines, and other limitations.

In a meeting with the AdHoc committee members Mayor Garnes and Mayor Pro Tem Carter, they discussed some of the alternate locations and agreed on the location at the “Triangle Garden Park.” The City requested and was approved for a scope change since this location is outside of the original grant perimeter.

He said that the staff is proposing to relocate the exercise equipment to this location and receive Council input. One of the options would be to move the Blue Star Memorial rock to Memorial Park or to leave it at its current location. He said that the staff is eager to get the final design to the architect and the project out to bid.

Mayor Garnes commented that she and Mayor Pro Tem Carter met with the City Manager to discuss potential locations for the equipment and moving the site to the Triangle Garden Park seemed to be the best solution. They also discussed whether it would be disrespectful to relocate the Blue Star Memorial Rock or if it should remain at its existing location.

Councilmember Woodall commented that the Garden Club members went through a lot to put the memorial rock there and it's a great location because cars often stop in front of the park, see the memorial then walk over to the Shell station. She said that people did a lot to get the rock there and was not in support of relocating it. She asked if the location for the exercise equipment could be moved back away from the memorial rock and flowers or to the right of the proposed location.

City Manager Knopp explained that the map represents a rough approximation and can easily be moved to the north although would not recommend moving it further south or too much to the west because of the existing trees. He said that it could be moved northwest and back away from the flower garden. Rather than the ADA access going through the current location at the Blue Star Rock, it could wrap around the side.

Councilmember Woodall commented that Jenny Gillam does a lot of work on her own time making the garden look nice and would rather not have the exercise equipment located right behind the flowers.

Councilmember Orr agreed that the Blue Star Memorial Rock should not be moved and said that relocating the exercise equipment away from Memorial Park would make some kids and residents in that area very happy.

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

A motion was made by Woodall/Carter authorizing the relocation of the exercise equipment to the Triangle Garden Park as proposed. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion on Management Analyst Position and Possible Changes to the Personnel Allocation in the City

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said that staff is looking at possible changes to the personnel allocation in the City. This includes a possible recommendation to alter or eliminate the management analyst position and create a similar position that is more focused on public works projects and departmental management. He said staff has been looking at the workload over the next couple of years in terms of earthquake recovery as the City has multiple infrastructure projects including in wastewater and roads in addition to ever-increasing requirements in public works in general. Whether it is related to

regulatory wastewater compliance or in other areas, there is definitely the need for additional resources in this area.

He noted that the management analyst position is an important position to have to help push economic development but with a little bit of moving around existing staff resources, we can still maintain forward momentum on the economic development plans.

He said that staff is still investigating the best option in moving forward which includes potential changes in public works staffing or potentially contracting out specific functions to well-qualified labor-specific jobs across the spectrum of various diverse projects that need to be accomplished across the board; not necessarily just in public works.

Councilmember Wilson questioned the cost of creating the new position.

City Manager Knopp indicated that it would be net neutral since the management analyst position was already allocated in the current budget.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the intent is to create a new full-time position in public works.

City Manager Knopp explained that currently there is an unfilled management analyst position so the idea is to determine the most efficient use of resources and pointed out that there is no full-time Public Works Director with a large amount of work that needs to be accomplished.

Councilmember Wilson commented that part of the City Manager's job is to serve as Public Works Director and is tasked with performing administrative functions for public works. He said that the City has a Water/Roadways Superintendent and a Wastewater Superintendent and adding another full-time position with full benefits for short-term projects which would go on in perpetuity doesn't seem as cost-effective as contracting out for individual projects. He said that he doesn't have a problem with eliminating the management analyst position and keeping those funds in the budget to be used to contract out for short-term projects.

Councilmember Woodall asked if it would be cheaper to contract out projects.

City Manager Knopp said that it might not necessarily be cheaper but some of these projects are time-limited that would not require a full-time position.

Councilmember Woodall said that she would like to see a job description and the required qualifications for the new position before deciding which way to go.

City Manager Knopp noted that the City Council would approve the new job classification.

Mayor Garnes asked if the idea is to have staff continuity.

City Manager Knopp agreed that continuity is important but at the same time, resources are restricted so there is no perfect solution where there is additional staffing and additional expert contract assistance. He pointed out that the need is not necessarily exclusive to public works so staff needs to be applying for additional grants.

He said that there are advantages and disadvantages to both sides and it will be a challenge to find the perfect fit. He said that it may be time to re-think the strategy in terms of focusing on the more near-term 2-3-year time frame to accomplish projects.

Staff will bring the item back for further discussion at a subsequent meeting.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on her attendance at the Cal Cities Annual Conference and said that she learned a lot of things and also commented on a lot of things. She said that she used the opportunity to spread Rio Dell's story to anyone who would listen about the earthquakes and storms because a lot of people from larger cities don't know what we have been going through.

She said that she also participated in the river clean up on Saturday put on by the Scotia-Rio Dell Kiwanians and thanked them for sponsoring the event.

She announced that she would be attending a Chamber of Commerce meeting on Friday at noon where they would be discussing plans for the Christmas holiday. In addition, on October 14, 2023, she will be representing the City of Rio Dell at a Great Redwoods Trail event from 11-3 at the Dyerville exit 663. She said that they are still looking for a couple of volunteers to help manage parking so if anyone is interested in volunteering, to let her know.

Councilmember Orr reported that the September HCAOG meeting was canceled so had nothing to report until the next meeting at the end of the month.

Councilmember Wilson said that he attended an HWMA meeting and said that the board approved sending the letter to Governor Newsom expressing support for the Little Hoover Commission report regarding SB 1383 implementation and awarded transportation and organics processing services to Cold Creek Compost.

Mayor Garnes reported that she also attended the Annual Cal Cities Conference and that she also learned a lot and talked a lot about what is going on in Rio Dell. She said that she would be attending the Great Redwood Trails event and would be attending an HTA meeting here tomorrow via Zoom. She thanked all of the people who volunteered for the river clean-up event.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. to the October 17, 2023 regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Attest:

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Karen Dunham, City Clerk