

---

*Rio Dell City Hall  
675 Wildwood Avenue  
Rio Dell, CA 95562  
(707) 764-3532  
cityofriodell.ca.gov*



May 19, 2026

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion and Possible Action Related to City Council Member Compensation

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Provide direction to staff regarding the establishment of a monthly stipend for members of the Rio Dell City Council, to take effect January 1, 2027.

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss and provide direction on the following questions:

- Does the Council wish to establish a monthly stipend for Council members?
- If so, what is the preferred monthly stipend amount?
- Should any additional benefits or reimbursement changes be considered in conjunction with a new stipend?

Upon receiving direction, staff will return with a draft ordinance for introduction at a subsequent Council meeting. Alternatively, the Council may direct that no ordinance be drafted.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

This item is brought forward for discussion by the City Manager. Service on the Rio Dell City Council requires a substantial commitment of time and personal resources. Council members regularly attend scheduled meetings, study sessions, and special meetings, as well as conduct individual preparation on agenda items, meet with constituents, participate in regional forums, and represent the City at various public events.

Currently, Rio Dell Council members receive no monthly stipend and are reimbursed only for actual representational, travel and training expenses for official City business. As the City continues to prioritize economic development, fiscal sustainability, and long-term planning, it is appropriate to consider whether the current compensation structure adequately supports the Council's capacity to serve and reflects community expectations for local governance.

Staff surveyed stipend practices among comparable cities in the region. The following table summarizes current Council member compensation across Humboldt County jurisdictions:

City	Monthly Stipend	Additional Benefits
Crescent City	\$610/month	Medical, Dental & Retirement (since 2009)
Eureka	\$500/month	\$350/month vehicle allowance
Fortuna	\$300/month	Actual expense reimbursement
Trinidad	\$50/month	None
Blue Lake	\$50/month	None
Ferndale	\$0	No reimbursements
Rio Dell (Current)	\$0	Travel/training reimbursement only

As illustrated above, Rio Dell is among only two jurisdictions in the region that offer no monthly stipend. Most area cities provide stipends ranging from \$50 to \$610 per month, with some also offering additional benefits or allowances. A number of special districts also provide district board members with stipends.

State law governs the compensation of City Council members in general law cities. Under Government Code Section 36516, cities with a population under 35,000 may establish Council member compensation by ordinance. Any increase in compensation may not exceed five percent per calendar year and must be adopted by ordinance.

Should the Council wish to establish a stipend effective January 1, 2027, staff would need direction no later than late summer 2026 in order to prepare and introduce the necessary ordinance, allow the referendum period to run, and complete adoption in advance of the proposed effective date.

Establishing a monthly stipend would acknowledge the significant time commitment required of Council members and bring Rio Dell into alignment with regional peers. It may also support the Council's capacity to engage in the expanded economic development and grant-readiness efforts identified as priorities for FY 2026–27.

Possible stipend amounts for Council consideration, based on the regional comparison, include:

- \$100 per month – A modest entry-level stipend that acknowledges service without significant budget impact (total annual cost: approximately \$6,000 for a five-member Council).
- \$200 per month – A mid-range option consistent with smaller comparable jurisdictions (total annual cost: approximately \$12,000).
- \$300 per month – Aligns with Fortuna (total annual cost: approximately \$18,000).

The above estimates are exclusive of any associated payroll taxes or administrative costs if the stipend is classified as taxable compensation.

///