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May 20, 2025

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion to Develop Priorities for FY 2025-26

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Receive a presentation from staff and discuss top priorities for the City over the coming year.

If the Council would like more time for this discussion, it is recommended that a special study session be scheduled between now and May 28th.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

This is an opportunity for the Council to discuss individual priorities and develop the collective priorities of the City Council for the coming year. Councilmembers are asked to eventually develop a list of five such priorities that are then collectively arranged and presented to the Council at the following meeting for approval.

Attached are the minutes from last year's prioritization that serves as a good summary of those discussions. Below is the summary chart of the priorities from the last five years.

Priorities				
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Street Planning & Work	Economic Development	Economic Development Plan Implementation	Economic Development Implementation	Public Works
Code Enforcement	Code Enforcement	Measure U/J Extension	Community Development	Public Safety Staffing
Public Safety	Staff Turnover Reduction	Personnel	Public Works - Underground Infrastructure	Economic Development
Economic Development	Cannabis Expansion	Todd Property	Personnel	Street Planning & Work
Personnel	SB 1383-Organic Waste	Infrastructure	Public Safety	Parks & Youth

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**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 7, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Pro Tem Carter.

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

Absent: Mayor Garnes (excused)

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

STUDY SESSION – 5:00 P.M.

City Council Priority Setting Session for FY 2024-2025

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report explaining the prioritization process and said that senior staff was present to answer any questions the Council may have. He noted that the purpose of the priority setting session is to allow the Council the opportunity to discuss individual priorities and develop the collective priorities of the City Council for the coming year.

Attached with the written staff report were minutes from the last year's prioritization representing a summary of those discussions.

City Manager Knopp reviewed the summary chart of the priorities from the last five years and said that this year's priorities are a bit clouded due to outstanding earthquake related repairs. In addition, on tonight's agenda is a request for the City Council to approve the bid award for the Water Infrastructure Improvement Project which will take care of most of the water capital projects with the exception of the Painter Street water tank which is not on the list. He said that staff is looking forward to closing some of these projects so staff can focus on earthquake related issues.

He said that he spoke with staff earlier today regarding potential priorities and one of the items that consistently came up was related to public facilities including ADA accessibility in City Hall, update of Public Works facilities and the Police Department and upgrades to the City Council chambers audio/video equipment. He said that not having ADA compliant restrooms in City Hall is problematic in terms of hosting events including City Council meetings. He noted that a significant amount of ADA improvements was done in terms outside accessibility but nothing on the inside of the building.

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The individual priorities for FY 2024-2025 were as follows (in no particular order of importance):

Mayor Pro Tem Carter

- Police Department/Public Safety Staffing
- Long-Term Plan for the Avenues
- Public Works Underground Infrastructure
- Code Enforcement
- Parks/Open Public Space

Councilmember Woodall

- Police Department Staffing (more Officers)
- Earthquake Related Infrastructure
- Economic Development Downtown
- Nuisance Abatement
- Façade Improvement Program

Councilmember Orr

- Police Department Staffing/Retention
- Clean-Up of Wildwood and the Avenues
- Parks & Recreation Space
- Public Engagement and Education
- Promote Potential Business Opportunities

Councilmember Wilson

- Survive as a City with a Police Department
- Business Recruitment
- Second Ave. Improvements
- ADA Compliance
- Façade Improvements

Mayor Garnes (Submitted Remotely)

- Staff Retention
- Police Department Recruitment
- Economic Development
- Public Works Infrastructure
- Streets/Roads

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Councilmember Woodall asked where the City stands with regard to earthquake reimbursements.

Finance Director Sanborn explained that the City currently has a handful of pending claims with the State estimated at \$500,000. He reminded the Council that the City is guaranteed to receive 75% reimbursement then applies to the State for the additional 25%. He noted staff did apply to the State for the remaining 25% reimbursement but has not heard back on the status. He noted that there are several million dollars in future projects which will be presented in the budget presentation at the next meeting.

Community Development Director Caldwell pointed out that the City Council previously set aside \$300,000 for the Façade Improvement Program with only approximately \$40,000 expended to date. He said that another option the City Council may want to consider is to offer low-interest short-term loans to entice new businesses to come to town.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that one common thread is to survive as a City and enticing people and businesses to come here. She pointed out the importance of supporting the Chamber of Commerce by attending Chamber of Commerce mixers and ribbon cutting events as a City Council and leaders of the community.

Chief Allen said that his decision to leave his position had nothing to do with the City. He said that he loves Rio Dell and what it came down to was that Cal Poly offered him lifetime medical coverage which is something that he could not pass up. He said in moving forward, the department was almost fully staffed but is now down three positions. He commented that all agencies are going through the same thing. He said that the City has one local candidate for police officer going through the academy and another candidate from Ferndale. For the third position, the hope is to recruit a lateral officer; someone that can start immediately.

He said as far as filling the Chief position, there has been some interest which is good. One of the candidates is a personal friend and he thinks he would be an excellent fit for the position.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked the Chief for helping with the recruitment process for a new Chief of Police.

City Manager Knopp said that the Police Department is the single biggest added value the City is able to provide to the community noting that the department has had some big successes over the past several years, including taking on a major homicide investigation.

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He said that the City Council also identified Code Enforcement as one of the legs to the stool for improvements to the community and have had stable staffing related to code enforcement. Many of the legacy issues have been taken care of and most of the comments he has been getting are generally positive.

He commented that the City hosted the League of California Cities Redwood Empire Division meeting here on Friday with members coming as far as Cloverdale and the City received a lot of praise for the progress that has been made. He said that all of this ties into the preservation of the City.

City Manager Knopp explained that with regard to Public Safety, some of the options that potentially could be on the table down the road would be contracting out for law enforcement services. There are many successful examples of that in metropolitan areas where there is competition and a lot of resources but here the options are very limited. The City would lose control over costs associated with it and would certainly lose that local touch related to officers that really know the community. From staff's perspective, local law enforcement is a high priority and has been for many years.

He said that some of the other items brought up were related to grants and one of the avenues staff would like to start having conversations with the Council on, is how to redirect general fund dollars toward big projects while preserving a healthy fund balance.

He commented that the City potentially has a \$50 million investment coming into the city with the new Cal Fire facility to be located on the 18+ acre parcel known as the "Todd" property. At this time, the parcel is exclusively for the use by the State of California and the development is out of the City's hands. He said that it is not the worst thing that could happen as there will be some benefits. The City is fine-tuning what to do to meet the reality of what is happening in the community which is important.

Regarding Parks & Recreation, creating areas for parks and safe places is an important ingredient to attract people to move into the community and retain the people who currently live here. Public education and engagement are also important and perhaps social media could be a useful tool in getting the message out.

Councilmember Orr emphasized the importance of education and engagement and working with the school student government to encourage kids to come to Council meetings and share their ideas.

Councilmembers written priorities were gathered by the City Manager and placed on a priority board under the appropriate heading which will be presented to the Council at the next regular meeting for approval.

The Study Session ended at 5:45 p.m.