

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

Date: Tuesday, March 03, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: City Council Chambers, 675 Wildwood Avenue, Rio Dell, CA

A. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council was called to order at approximately 6:00 PM.

B. ROLL CALL

Present:

Mayor Garnes
Mayor Pro Tem Carter
Council Member Woodall
Council Member Orr

Excused Absence:

Council Member Wilson

Staff Present:

City Manager Knopp
Streets and Water Superintendent Jensen
Chief Phinney
Wastewater Superintendent Moore
Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Garnes.

D. CEREMONIAL MATTERS

None.

E. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

Rick Pelren, 127 Metropolitan Heights Road, addressed the Council. He thanked the Council for their continued support of the community exercise group. He noted that the group has expanded beyond senior participants to include individuals recovering from injuries, and encouraged community members who have experienced injury to come and utilize the group to rebuild strength, mobility, and balance.

No other public presentations were made.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

No items were pulled from the Consent Calendar by staff, the public, or Council members.

ACTION: Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, seconded by Council Member Woodall, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried 4-0.

Items Approved:

- Approve Minutes of the February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting (Item 2026/0303.01)
- Authorize the City Manager to Amend a Contract for Professional Services with CSG Consulting for SB 1383 Compliance and Franchise Agreement Development in the Amount of \$19,844 (Item 2026/0303.02)
- Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Master Services Agreement with Hinderliter, de Llamas and Associates (HdL Companies) for Sales Tax Audit and Reporting Services Agreement (Item 2026/0303.03)

G. ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

H. REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

1. City Manager/Staff Update (Item 2026/0303.04)

City Manager Knopp provided the Council with a brief staff report beginning on page 33 of the agenda packet. A separate handout from Police Chief Phinney was also made available at the meeting. Key updates included:

- An upcoming abatement at 185 Douglas Street. The Council and staff were thanked for their work on this effort.
- A notification to the community that a burn pile would be taking place the following day on the corner of Columbus and First Street, at the empty lot near

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

the Community Resource Center, and would produce smoke visible in the center of the city.

- Emergency repairs had been completed in the Police Department for damaged flooring in a bathroom.
- Jessica Hill, the new City Clerk, was in attendance at the meeting and is expected to be onboarded on March 9, 2026.
- UC Davis researchers are scheduled to visit Rio Dell around March 23, 2026, to study North Coast and California wastewater facilities, including both treatment and collection systems. Staff expressed anticipation in hosting the researchers and discussing the challenges and opportunities associated with Rio Dell's wastewater infrastructure.

Council Comments on Staff Report:

Mayor Pro Tem Carter:

- Expressed interest in the UC Davis researcher visit and noted appreciation that the city would be able to showcase its wastewater infrastructure.
- Noted that no cats and only one dog had been transported to Miranda's Rescue, which she characterized as good news.
- Expressed appreciation for the upcoming abatement at 185 Douglas Street.
- Thanked all City staff for their ongoing efforts.

Council Member Woodall:

- Reported she had been out the prior day and observed that the city is looking well-maintained. She asked that thanks be extended to the two code enforcement officers for their work and the public works crew.

Mayor Garnes:

- Asked about the nature of a dog bite incident referenced in the Chief's report. Chief Phinney confirmed the incident was minor and involved a resident being bitten by their own dog.
- Welcomed incoming City Clerk Jessica Hill, who was present at the meeting, and expressed anticipation of her joining staff.
- Thanked City staff for their work.

No public comments were received.

I. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/STUDY SESSIONS

None.

J. SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Discussion and Possible Action Related to Distressed Trees at Memorial Park (Item 2026/0303.05)

City Manager Knopp introduced the item, noting that concerns exist regarding the condition of the trees located at Memorial Park. Staff reported the following:

- The trees are a species of poplar known for quick growth but a relatively short lifespan, typically 30 to 50 years, and susceptible to pest and disease at 25 years of age.
- Based on historical satellite imagery, the trees were likely planted during or shortly after 1983, placing their maximum age at approximately 43 years.
- In 2009, the trees experienced an unidentified pest infestation but recovered.
- In spring 2024, a new infestation was identified by the Humboldt County Agricultural Department as a satin moth, which defoliates or partially defoliates the trees. The trees did not appear to fully recover in 2025.
- In addition to the infestation, the trees are exhibiting visible cracking at the base trunks and significant lean—approximately 80 to 90% of the trees are leaning considerably. The tree services company retained by the City has recommended the trees most likely need to be removed.
- Streets and Water Superintendent Jensen reported that one tree is already leaning against a power pole, with PG&E expected to address it the following morning. He noted that the base trunks are beginning to separate, reflecting the combined effects of age and deterioration beyond the infestation alone.

Staff presented two options for Council consideration: (1) engage a professional arborist to evaluate the trees and provide an independent assessment, or (2) proceed with obtaining bids for tree removal and replacement with a more pest-resistant variety.

Council Comments:

Mayor Garnes:

- Acknowledged being a strong advocate for trees but recognized that the combination of age, cracking, and infestation presents a significant liability risk, particularly given public gatherings such as Wildwood Days held under and around the trees.

- Initially raised the possibility of planting Acer trees as replacements given their relatively quick growth.
- Ultimately noted that given the trees' age relative to their lifespan, it appears their time has come and a plan should be made for new trees.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter:

- Stated she first heard concerns about the trees from Chamber members decorating for Christmas who noted the trees appeared worrisome.
- Asked whether staff could pursue both options simultaneously—hiring an arborist and collecting bids for removal—and was advised by City Manager Knopp that this is possible.
- Expressed concern about the timeline given wind conditions and the proximity to the next Council meeting.

Council Member Woodall:

- Acknowledged she almost did not attend the meeting because of this item but spoke with the City Manager beforehand and recognized the liability.
- Expressed a preference for obtaining an additional arborist opinion before proceeding with removal, but indicated she could accept removal if an arborist concurs.

Council Member Orr:

- Noted he does not see reason to spend further funds on an arborist given the professional assessment already provided and stated he believes it is time to proceed with replacement.

Public Comment:

- Jessica Hill, a Rio Dell resident, suggested that if the trees are removed, it could be made into a community event to involve residents in revitalizing the park and making it more inclusive for the whole city.
- Rick Pelren, 127 Metropolitan Heights Road, supported tree replacement and cautioned against planting pine trees, referencing prior widespread problems with pine trees planted across the country that ultimately failed within 30 years.

Following discussion, the Council directed staff to proceed with obtaining bids for tree removal and replacement.

ACTION: Motion by Council Member Orr, seconded by Council Member Woodall, to authorize staff to acquire bids for tree removal and replacement at Memorial Park. Motion carried 4-0.

2. Authorize the City Manager to Acquire Bids for a Mobile Vehicle Barrier System (Item 2026/0303.06)

City Manager Knopp introduced the item, providing background on the Open Space Events Facility concept. The City currently holds approximately \$120,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) grant funds designated for the creation of an open space events facility. These funds must be expended by the end of 2026 or returned to the U.S. Treasury. Key points included:

- The open space events facility concept was developed during COVID-19 to provide a safe, open-air gathering space for community events such as Wildwood Days or a future farmers market.
- Sections of Wildwood Avenue, have historically been used for events. The facility concept would formalize the use between Davis and Side Streets as a method of minimally impacting north-south traffic, bus routes, and emergency services.
- Originally, the concept included the permanent installation of traffic bollards in the roadway. However, due to complexity, cost, and time constraints, staff is instead proposing the acquisition of a mobile vehicle barrier system.
- The proposed mobile barrier system can be set up by a single individual, can be configured for various uses, and can be stored in a trailer for use in public works, construction, or emergency situations.
- Staff noted the cost of the system is not yet known and will depend on bids received. Alternatives from the vendor will also be evaluated.

Council Comments:

Mayor Pro Tem Carter:

- Expressed strong enthusiasm for the concept and the schematic shared in the agenda packet, stating she would love to see an event of that nature come to fruition on Wildwood Avenue.

Council Member Orr:

- Stated support for the proposal, noting that standard road closure signs and tape are no longer sufficient to deter vehicles and that anything improving safety for outdoor events is worthwhile.

Council Member Woodall:

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

- Expressed support for the proposal.

Mayor Garnes:

- Expressed strong support and noted the added value of having a system usable for multiple purposes including community events and emergency response.
- Noted the importance of creating more opportunities for community gatherings.

No public comments were received.

ACTION: Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, seconded by Council Member Woodall, to authorize the City Manager to acquire bids for a mobile vehicle barrier system. Motion carried 4-0.

K. ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

L. COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter:

- Reported attending part of the Chamber of Commerce meeting the prior evening. The Chamber announced a St. Patrick's Day event at the Scotia Lodge on Sunday, March 15, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The event includes a catered dinner by CC Market. Tickets are \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door and may be purchased at DJ's Burger Bar, Scotia Lodge, Emerald Z, or via QR code on posted flyers and the Chamber's website.
- Announced the Chamber's annual April Bingo Blast on April 24th at the River Lodge at 5:00 p.m.
- Noted she would be attending the School Board meeting the following evening, which is a non-regular meeting.
- Informed the Council that the Fire Commission has changed its regular meeting time to the third Wednesday of each month at the fire hall at 5:30 p.m.

Council Member Woodall:

- Reported attending the Humboldt County Operational Area (OA) meeting, which she described as interesting and brief.
- Moved to reconsider the vote taken at the February 17, 2026 meeting regarding the adoption of the Regional Climate Action Plan. Council Member Woodall, who voted against adoption at the prior meeting, stated she wished to reconsider her

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

vote and requested the item be placed on the agenda for the March 17, 2026 Council meeting.

Mayor Garnes opened a vote on whether to place the item on the next agenda for reconsideration. Council Member Carter seconded the motion.

ACTION: Motion by Council Member Woodall, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, to place reconsideration of the Regional Climate Action Plan on the March 17, 2026 agenda. Motion carried 3-1, with Council Member Orr voting no.

City Manager Knopp clarified for the record that only those Council members who voted against the original motion—Council Member Woodall and Council Member Orr—are eligible to bring a motion for reconsideration. He noted that the reconsideration may result in approval, rejection, or a request for additional information or amendments at the next meeting.

Council Member Orr:

- No report.

Mayor Garnes:

- Reported an upcoming Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) meeting the following day.
- Noted upcoming meetings prior to the next Council meeting, including a Great Redwood Trail Agency meeting, the Seismic Safety Commission meeting (to which she was recently reappointed), and the Cal Cities meeting on March 13th.

M. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Motion to adjourn by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, seconded by Council Member Woodall. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:36pm. The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

APPROVED:

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**

Mayor Garnes

Date: _____

ATTEST:

Jessica Hill, City Clerk

**CITY OF RIO DELL
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES:
Tuesday, March 03, 2026**