

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 1, 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 Wilson and Woodall

Absent: Councilmember Orr (excused)

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

Absent: Finance Director Sanborn (excused)

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter invited public comment on non-agenda matters. There was no public comment received.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Pro Tem Carter 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 June 17, 2025, Regular Meeting; and
- 2) Approve the Execution of a Three-Year Contract with Nichols Consulting for State Mandated Reporting and Reimbursement.

The motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp reported on recent meetings and activities and said that he attended a SCORE board meeting on June 20, 2025, and noted that they are undergoing research on Perimetric Earthquake Insurance. This would insure the policyholder against specific events by paying a set amount based on the magnitude of the earthquake as scientifically measured. He explained that it has some pre-determined triggers, which in this case would be ground acceleration data. He said that

as the Council is aware, the 2022 earthquakes had the third-highest ground acceleration reported in State history. Some of the advantages of Perimetric Earthquake Insurance are very quick payouts with payments to the City within 30 days, and the payment could be made to the City using the science objective rather than using the magnitude rector scale data. Some of the advantages are that funds could be used for immediate expenses for business interruption and would not count against any traditional earthquake insurance with regard to any reimbursement from FEMA or the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). He noted that this could be a useful tool in the future if or when there is another major seismic event.

He reported on two ongoing projects occurring in the City, which are the Water Improvement CIP Project and the Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study Project, Close Circuit TV Pipeline Inspection Project. He said that NorCal Pipe is here to camera and clean the wastewater collection system and warned residents of potential discolored water or possible bubbling toilets at homes that do not have the required backflow prevention device installed.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter announced that once again, zero animals were transported to Miranda's Rescue.

Councilmember Wilson asked for clarification on the comment from the City Manager regarding the 2022 earthquake having the 3rd highest ground acceleration rate in the State.

City Manager Knopp explained that the acceleration rate is the actual shaking force during an earthquake. He commented that the information was reported by Lori Dangler, a professor from Cal Poly Humboldt. Traditionally, you look at the epicenter, but the ground acceleration rate is very different from locality to locality. He pointed out that although the epicenter of the 2022 earthquake was closer to Ferndale, Rio Dell sustained more damage.

Councilmember Woodall thanked the Police Department and the Community Service Officer for promptly addressing the nuisance at 255 Wildwood Ave.

Mayor Garnes referred to the staff update from the Community Development Director, and asked for clarification on one of the update items that said: "Open refer Margro Properties VDU, CUP, identify 300's, prepare staff report, resolution."

Community Development Director Caldwell explained that Margro Advisors at 105 Wildwood Ave. applied for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to establish two (2) vacation rental units in the Margro building. The discretionary review requires a notice to be sent out to various referral agencies, as well as all properties located within 300 feet of the property.

SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/STUDY SESSIONS

Receive Update from GHD on the Water Capital Improvement Project (CIP) and Authorize the City Manager to Execute the Change Order

City Manager Knopp provided a brief staff report and said that the Water Capital Improvement Project is continuing to progress. Three change orders have been approved to date, with a net reduction in construction costs. He said that he wanted to bring this to the City Council as it is a material change to the contract. He noted that there is a little more than a million dollars set aside in contingency, which is standard for an infrastructure project of this size, using roughly 36% of the contingency for this change order. He said that staff is recommending approval of Change Order #4 for \$363,351.66 to cover a change in the tank design to meet the current seismic design standard that was identified after the bid went out. He explained that the tank is required to be taller to allow for sloshing issues in the event of an earthquake.

He recommended approval of the change order to avoid possible changes in steel prices and a delay in moving the project forward.

He then introduced Michelle Davidson from GHD, on Zoom, to provide the engineer's update on the project. She noted that the seismic design parameters changed after the plans were initially developed, requiring the tank supplier to update the design. She said that one of the major components is thicker-gauge steel. She explained that the benefit to the City covers three key points: 1) increased capacity, providing the City with an additional 120,000 gallons; 2) cost efficiency, reducing the cost per gallon from \$3.43 a gallon for a 500,000 gallon tank to \$3.03 per gallon for the larger tank; and 3) this does not affect the hydraulic compatibility of the two existing tanks.

She said that the engineer's recommendation is to proceed with the change order and noted that while it is expensive, it will never be more cost-effective to add to the tank capacity and will provide additional benefit to the City and mitigate the seismic issues.

Mayor Garnes called for questions from the Council and opened it to public comment. No questions or comments were received.

A motion was made by Carter/Wilson to authorize the City Manager to execute Change Order #4 for \$363,351.66 for the Water Capital Improvement Project. The motion carried 4-0.

ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Introduction and first reading (by title only) of Ordinance No. 415-2025 Amending Chapter 17, "Zoning" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) to Update the City's Density Bonus Ordinance to Reflect Changes Made in State Law, Establish Accommodations Request and Single Room Occupancy Regulations, and Amend the Town Center and Residential Multi-Family Designations to Allow Single Room Occupancy Uses

Community Development Director Caldwell provided a staff report explaining that this is a text amendment to the current zoning regulations, mandated by the State of California. The City's density bonus regulations were last updated in 2014, and a number of changes have been made since then. He noted that all three of these components of the ordinance were identified in the Housing Element, as part of the implementation program. The Department of Housing and Community Development recently reached out to the City on the City's progress in implementing some of the required programs.

He then reviewed the three recommended text amendments, including Density Bonus, Reasonable Accommodations, and Single Room Occupancy Units. He noted that the amendments will bring the City into compliance with these State mandates.

He said that Reasonable Accommodations requires the City to make reasonable accommodations, typically regarding setbacks, and explained that if someone with a disability wanted to install a handicap ramp to their house, and it extended into the front or side yard setback, instead of requiring them to go through the variance process, this provision would allow the Planning Director to approve it administratively.

He said that the other amendment has to do with Single Room Occupancy Units, which is another State mandate. He explained that single room occupancy means a facility providing six (6) or more dwelling units where each unit has a minimum floor area of 150 square feet and a maximum of 400 square feet. These dwelling units are typically converted motels and may have a kitchen or a bathroom but are not required, and are offered on a monthly basis or longer.

In addition, a Single Room Occupancy facility with ten (10) or more units must have an on-site manager, and facilities with fewer than ten (10) units must provide a management office onsite.

He noted that the likelihood of having Single Room Occupancy units in Rio Dell any time soon is unlikely.

Community Development Director Caldwell recommended that the Mayor open the public hearing, receive public input, deliberate, and continue the second reading and adoption of the ordinance to the meeting of July 15, 2025.

Councilmember Woodall asked if new Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units could be built in the City, and if so, where would they be allowed.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that they could be built in the Town Center (TC) zone or the Residential Multi-Family (RM) zone; however, most of those areas are built out. He said that these units are typically seen in converted motels.

Councilmember Wilson asked if an SRO's could be part of a single-family residence.

Community Development Director Caldwell said that they could not be part of a single-family residence, and those would be considered an Accessory Dwelling Unit or Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit. He pointed out that SRO's are similar to a college dorm room.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public input on the proposed ordinance amendments. There being no public comment, the public hearing was closed.

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to approve the introduction of Ordinance No. No. 415-2025 Amending Chapter 17, "Zoning" of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) to Update the City's Density Bonus Ordinance to Reflect Changes Made in State Law, Establish Accommodations Request and Single Room Occupancy Regulations, and Amend the Town Center and Residential Multi-Family Designations to Allow Single Room Occupancy Uses, and to continue the second reading and adoption of the ordinance to the meeting of July 15, 2025.

The motion carried 4-0.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATION

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on recent meetings and events and said that she attended a RREDC meeting last week and learned about the Golden Mussel, which is a new invasive mussel that is from Southeast Asia and is now in the Bay Area and spreading north and south through river systems. She said that the biggest risk here are the local lakes and warned the community of the extra inspection stations at the recreational facilities, particularly Ruth Lake.

She then commented that the Rio Dell river bar was very popular this weekend, and what she observed was people showing up and being amazed by the area. She said that she went down during the day and again at night to pick up trash, and it was minimal. She noted that she went by Proper Wellness and learned that they also did very well over the weekend with sales. She said that she had also received a lot of positive feedback from people from out of town about the Eel River Trail, so it seems that the City has some momentum there and needs to keep it going.

Councilmember Wilson reported that he attended an RCEA meeting and they are trying to bring into the board, two native American tribes and allow them to vote on the Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) process. There is a discrepancy as to whether it is legal because the State says that you must be a city or county to vote on the rule. He said if anyone is interested, they can go online and read the resolution.

Councilmember Woodall reported on current activities around town and said that the Fire Department is painting the library and is making progress on re-doing the Bocce Ball courts. She urged everyone to support the Fire Department by purchasing fireworks from

the Fire Department and announced that the new business next to the Barber Shop called Emerald Z is having its grand opening on July 5th at 1:00 p.m. and urged everyone to attend. She thanked residents for cutting their weeds and tall grass and said that she was also down at Proper Wellness, and there was a lady from Fortuna there shopping, and she complimented the City for keeping the median green. She also commented that she was in DJ's Burger Bar and there was a couple there from Fortuna who said they came down to Rio Dell to have lunch and walk the new trail, which was nice to hear.

Mayor Garnes reported that she had received a lot of positive feedback from the community regarding the video of the grand opening of the Eel River Trail and said that she attended the opening of the Humboldt Bay Trail, which begins north of the Adorni Center and ends at the Arcata Marsh. She said that there were a lot of people at the celebration and on the trail, which was very positive. She noted that the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) will be releasing an Electric Bike Voucher Program in the next two weeks and asked everyone to spread the word and check out the website for more information.

She commented that she attended a Humboldt Crabs game with Senator McGuire, who is still very enthusiastic about Rio Dell and hopeful that things will work out with regard to economic development opportunities.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carter/Woodall to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m. to the July 15, 2025, regular meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

Karen Dunham, City Clerk