



RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – 6:00 P.M.
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026
City Council Chambers
675 Wildwood Avenue, Rio Dell

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

B. ROLL CALL

Present:

- Mayor Garnes
- Mayor Pro Tem Carter
- Council Member Woodall
- Council Member Orr (arrived at 6:37PM)
- Council Member Wilson

Staff Present:

- City Manager Kyle Knopp
- Finance Director Travis Sanborn
- Chief of Police Josh Phinney
- Wastewater Superintendent Moore
- Water Superintendent Jensen
- City Clerk Jessica Hill
- Sr. Fiscal Assistant Rosa Maciel

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Council.

D. CEREMONIAL MATTERS

1. Proclamation in Honor of Older Americans Month (Item 2026/0519.01)

Mayor Garnes presented the Proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Older Americans Month, with this year's theme of "Champion Your Health." The Proclamation recognized the Area 1 Agency on Aging (A1AA) for bringing more than \$3 million in state and federal funding to Humboldt and Del Norte counties to support programs promoting prevention, wellness, and affordable access to quality health care, including the Volunteer Driver Program, SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life), Bingocize and Tai Chi classes, Meals on Wheels, and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, among others.

Andrea, representing the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program under the Area Agency on Aging, thanked the Council for the recognition and spoke briefly about the program's advocacy work on behalf of residents in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities throughout Humboldt and Del Norte counties. She noted that while Rio Dell does not have long-term care facilities, many Rio Dell residents and their family members utilize these services. Mayor Garnes also recognized Mayor Pro Tem Carter for her leadership of the City's Silver exercise class. The representative thanked the Council and departed.

E. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Garnes opened the public presentations portion of the meeting, inviting comments on matters not listed on the agenda and within the Council's jurisdiction.

Jay Carmona addressed the Council regarding the ongoing investigation into Miranda's Rescue. She expressed grief and anger over allegations that animals had been cruelly killed at the facility, which billed itself as a no-kill shelter. She asked the Council for accountability, requesting a public accounting of any complaints previously received, oversight and site visit reports related to the City's contract with Miranda's Rescue, and information on how many Rio Dell animals may have been affected. She also asked for a community memorial for animals lost and urged the Council to discuss how to better protect animals going forward. She requested that the matter be placed on a future Council agenda.

No other public comments were received.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Garnes announced that Item 2 under Special Presentations/Study Sessions — Discussion of Possible Actions Related to City Council Member Compensation — was being pulled from the agenda. It was noted that if any Council member wished to place it back on, it could be addressed during Council Comments.

Items on Consent:

1. Approve Minutes of the May 4th, 2026 Special Meeting
2. Approve Minutes of the May 5th, 2026 Regular Meeting
3. Receive & File the Check Register for April 2026
4. Discussion of Cost Recovery for the Abatement of 185 Douglas St
5. Approval of Resolution No. 1667-2026 Adopting a List of Projects for Fiscal Year 2026–27 Funded by SB 1 – The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017
6. Adoption of Facade Improvement Program Round No. 4
7. Authorization to Transfer General Fund Surplus Cash to the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF)
8. Adopt List of City Council Priorities for FY 2026–27

No items were removed from the Consent Calendar.

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

Motion carried 4–0. (Council Member Orr not yet present.)

G. ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR

No items were removed from the Consent Calendar.

H. REPORTS / STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

1. City Manager / Staff Update (Item 2026/0519.10)

City Manager Knopp reported the following:

- Long-term City employee and Senior Fiscal Assistant Susie Townsend has announced her retirement. The City is currently recruiting for a Fiscal Assistant position, and interested applicants were encouraged to visit the City's website.
- The City's application for a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for Davis Street Park acquisition was denied. City Manager Knopp noted that the park is currently owned by the school district and that the City has been exploring a purchase for future rehabilitation. He indicated that additional grant opportunities would be pursued.
- Staff submitted documentation for a possible Zero Emission Vehicle Grant, which could potentially be used to replace a Public Works truck with an electric or hydrogen-powered vehicle.
- Staff met with PG&E regional and government liaison representatives to discuss City and regional issues.
- The Solid Waste Franchise agreement process remains on hold pending final numbers from Recology.

Mayor Garnes thanked Susie Townsend for her years of service and congratulated her on her retirement.

Mayor ProTem Carter noted her appreciation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant effort and expressed confidence that better-suited grant opportunities would be identified.

Council Member Woodall noted that, from the police department's staff report, the Rio Dell Police Department handled 525 incidents between April 1 and May 5, 2026, including 287 calls for service, 238 officer-initiated contacts, 14 arrests, and citations issued for traffic offenses.

The Council also acknowledged the visit by kindergarten students from Eagle Prairie Elementary School to the Police Department for a tour and educational experience. Council expressed enthusiasm for continued engagement with school-age residents. Chief Phinney confirmed that a second kindergarten class visit was scheduled for the following week.

No public questions for staff were received.

I. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS / STUDY SESSIONS

1. Fiscal Year 2024–25 Audited Financial Statements (Item 2026/0519.11)

City Manager Knopp introduced the item and thanked the Finance Department and all City staff for their work in support of the annual audit. Finance Director Travis Sanborn provided a brief introduction, noting that the City's independent auditing firm, Harshwal & Company, LLP, was present to deliver the formal presentation.

Albert Hwu, CPA with Harshwal & Company, presented the results of the fiscal year 2024–25 audit via a PowerPoint presentation. Key points from the presentation included:

- An unqualified (clean) opinion was issued, meaning the City's financial statements are fairly presented as of June 30, 2025, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).
- Total assets were approximately \$44.1 million, with the largest components being cash and investments (\$8,318,078) and depreciable capital assets (\$26,693,184). Total liabilities were approximately \$6.1 million, resulting in a total net position of approximately \$38 million.
- Total governmental activities expenses were \$2,987,255, with program revenues of approximately \$2.3 million and general revenues of \$1,909,685.
- Total business-type activities (sewer and water) expenses were approximately \$2.8 million, with program revenues of approximately \$5 million.
- Total assets for all governmental funds were approximately \$5 million, with a total fund balance of approximately \$3.9 million.
- Cash and cash equivalents for enterprise funds at year-end were approximately \$4.5 million, representing a net decrease from the prior year beginning balance of \$4,843,817.
- There were no audit findings or questioned costs identified during the fiscal year 2025 audit.
- No significant difficulties were encountered during the audit, no unusual transactions were identified, and the firm confirmed its independence in all respects.

No questions were received from Council members or the public.

Mayor Garnes and City Manager Knopp thanked Mr. Hwu and the Harshwal & Company team. Mr. Hwu, in turn, expressed appreciation to Finance Director Sanborn, Joanne Farley, Susie Townsend, and the finance team for their cooperation and hard work throughout the audit process.

Finance Director Sanborn also recognized Rosa Maciel and the broader finance team for the significant effort involved in preparing for and completing the annual audit.

Note: Item 2 — Discussion and Possible Action Related to City Council Member Compensation (Item 2026/0519.12) — was pulled from the agenda prior to the meeting and was not presented.

J. SPECIAL CALL ITEMS / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS / PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Discussion and Direction on the Chamber of Commerce’s Proposed Community Oriented Billboard (Item 2026/0519.13)

City Manager Knopp presented the staff report, reminding the Council that at the May 5, 2026 regular meeting, the Council had directed staff and the Rio Dell–Scotia Chamber of Commerce to return with one revised sign design concept based on the preferred concept from that meeting, narrowed to three primary features: river access, fuel, and dispensary. The proposed sign is to be located on the City’s wastewater disposal parcel adjacent to Highway 101, with the intent to attract highway travelers and encourage exits into Rio Dell.

Wally Coppini, representing the Rio Dell–Scotia Chamber of Commerce, provided an update on project development. He reported that the Chamber has access to utility poles and has submitted a grant application to the Humboldt Redwood Lodging Alliance for approximately \$5,000. He noted that the project would not move forward until funding is secured, at which point the Chamber would return to Council. Total project cost was estimated at approximately \$5,000–\$6,000 if materials are donated, a significant reduction from an earlier estimate of approximately \$25,000. He also noted that Alan Beard had been verbally retained to serve as the project engineer once financing is in place.

During discussion, Council members and Mr. Coppini referenced feedback from an informal community poll conducted via Lost Coast, which indicated that the public generally supported river access, fuel, food, and lodging on the sign, but did not favor including dispensary/cannabis. Multiple Council members and Mr. Coppini expressed agreement that dispensary should be removed from the sign. Discussion touched on whether to include lodging, with some members noting that limited lodging availability in Rio Dell could mislead travelers.

By consensus, the Council gave the Chamber leeway to finalize the sign’s content along the lines of river access, fuel, and food — with “fun” also mentioned as an option — reflecting the alternative sign concept shown on page 179 of the agenda packet. The Council agreed to remove dispensary from the sign, consistent with community feedback. The Chamber will return to Council when funding is secured and a final design is ready for approval.

Mayor Garnes and other Council members thanked Mr. Coppini and the Chamber team for their continued dedication to the project.

No public comments were received on this item.

K. ORDINANCES / SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS / PUBLIC HEARINGS

No ordinances, resolutions, or public hearings were presented.

L. COUNCIL REPORTS / COMMUNICATIONS

Prior to Council Reports, Mayor Garnes recognized long-time community members Rich and Laura, who were departing Rio Dell after approximately 44 years. The Mayor and

Council members expressed gratitude for their sustained presence and engagement at City Council meetings.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported that she had been recovering from an illness since the last meeting and had no formal report to present.

Council Member Orr reported that he had a HCOE (Humboldt County Office of Education) meeting scheduled for Thursday.

Council Member Wilson reported that he had a special meeting scheduled with HWMA (Humboldt Waste Management Authority) on Wednesday, at which the agency would be working on organic processing cost structures in coordination with Recology. He also noted an upcoming CDA meeting.

Council Member Woodall reported that a nuisance abatement hearing was scheduled for the following day (Wednesday) at 3:00 PM in the Council Chambers. She also noted that she had been keeping up with gardening activities. had no report.

Mayor Garnes reported that she had a DRTA / Great Redwood Trail meeting scheduled for Thursday.

M. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion carried 5–0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 PM until the next regular City Council meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

APPROVED:

Debra Garnes, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jessica Hill, City Clerk