

**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.

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.

Community Development Director Caldwell left at the conclusion of the study session.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

The Council reconvened into open session at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter invited public comment on non-agenda matters.

Joe Timmerman, 223 Ogle Ave. addressed the Council regarding the earthquake recovery efforts and the struggles with funding. He said that his house was red-tagged and when he reached out to Supervisors Bushnell and Bohn related to the \$1 million of County earthquake relief funding, Supervisor Bohn assured him that he could begin the repairs and still get reimbursed. He later was told that he didn't qualify for funding because he had already started the repairs.

He said that he called the County and got no satisfaction so, through a Public Records Act request, obtained a copy of the County's MOU and found out where the million dollars came from. He said that he also got a copy of the red, yellow, and green tagged homes and went around and talked to people to find out that no one received any funds from the million dollars and were forced to use savings or apply for SBA loans for to repair their homes.

He commented that he also contacted Habitat for Humanity and learned that they received \$250,000 but he didn't qualify because they were only allowing funding for rental units with a rent limitation agreement. He indicated that he also did not qualify for USDA funding or even the Brace & Bolt Program.

Joe said that he would be attending a County Board of Supervisors meeting requesting an accounting of where the million dollars was spent and requested a letter of support from the City.

City Manager Knopp asked Mr. Timmerman to meet with him after the meeting to discuss his concerns.

Joe Timmerman then addressed the City Council regarding the bathrooms at Fireman's Park and the constant vandalism that has been occurring. He indicated that he had asked the Police Department to help with locking the bathrooms at night and unlocking them in the morning. In light of the current staffing situation in the police department he reached out to Public Works and was told that they could do it but they would have to lock them at 4:30 p.m., when their shift ends and unlock them at 8:00 a.m.

City Manager Knopp said that he would discuss it with him after the meeting.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Garnes asked if any councilmember, staff or member of the public would like to remove any item from the consent calendar for a separate discussion. Councilmember Wilson removed Item 4 from the consent calendar (Award of bid to Wahlund Construction for the Water Infrastructure Improvement Project).

A motion was made by Woodall/Orr to approve the consent calendar including the following items:

- 1) Minutes of the April 16, 2024 regular meeting;
- 2) Approve Establishment of a Parks Master Plan Adhoc Committee and appoint Mayor Pro Tem Cater and Councilmember Woodall to the Committee;
- 3) Approve Award of Bid to Mobley Construction for the Eel River Trails Project in the amount of \$1,373,644;
- 4) Adopt Façade Improvement Program Round 2 – FY 2024-25; and
- 5) Receive and File Check Register for April.

Motion carried 4-0.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR

Approve Award of Bid to Wahlund Construction for the Water Infrastructure Improvement Project in the Amount of \$10,027,410

Councilmember Wilson referred to the bid summary for the project showing the Wahlund Construction, Inc, bid amount of \$11,936,620 compared to the bid award amount of \$10,027,410 and asked for clarification on the difference.

City Manager Knopp explained that the larger amount was inclusive of additive items. Since the available construction budget did not cover the full bid amount, some of the additive items had to be removed. He reviewed the bid breakdown beginning with the base bid amount of \$7,485,610 and additive items in the amount of \$2,541,811 including installation of fire hydrants, valve replacements and a trenchless water line.

He pointed out that the project is 100% grant funded through the SWRCB with zero cost to the ratepayers.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter called for comments from the Council followed by public comment. No comments were received.

Motion was made by Wilson/Orr to approve the Award of Bid to Wahlund Construction for the Water Infrastructure Improvement Project in the amount of \$10,027,410. Motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and said that PG&E has been doing some undergrounding work and staff has had multiple discussions with them regarding the status of the substation project and upgrades to the distribution lines to make sure there are no conflicts with the City's water infrastructure project.

He reported that he attended the Humboldt Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD) quarterly meeting, and that staff submitted a response to the Notice of Violation the City received for the Sanitary Sewer Collection System. He noted that the enforcement division of the SWRCB said that the violation may actually spur State funding for the Painter Street Upsize Project.

COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Councilmember Woodall asked if the Police Department would be locking and unlocking the bathrooms at Fireman's Park as well as locking and unlocking the gate to the river, when they go back to full staff.

Chief Allen said that they have been locking and unlocking the gate and that he would schedule the locking and unlocking of the bathrooms.

She then asked Joe Timmerman if they had security cameras at Fireman's Park.

Joe said that they can't legally have cameras in the bathrooms but they have talked about installing a camera to see who is coming and leaving the park.

Councilmember Orr announced that it was Teacher Appreciation Week, shouting out appreciation to Rio Dell teachers.

Councilmember Wilson said that he would be attending an HWMA meeting on Thursday and would be attending a special pre-budget meeting with RCEA. He said that 30 members of the county would be going back to New Jersey and/or Massachusetts to look at windmills and that the offshore windmill project in Humboldt County was gathering momentum noting that windmills are becoming a controversy throughout the nation.

Councilmember Woodall said that she drove by the tennis courts and there were a whole group of kids there which was nice to see.

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Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked Water Superintendent Jensen for helping her load the backboard from the tennis courts so she could get rid of it.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter reported on her attendance at the Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting, the Beautification, Walkability and Pride Committee meeting, Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC) meeting, the COAD meeting and the League of California Cities Redwood Empire Division meeting that was hosted by the City. She said that the City will also be hosting the next RREDC meeting here.

She said that the highlight of her last two weeks was going to Monument Middle School and meeting with the whole group of 7th graders and talking to them about local government and getting them excited about being involved in influencing the community. She got two 7th grade students involved in the Parks Master Plan and will be appointed to the Adhoc at the next council meeting. She gave a shout out to Councilmember Orr and all of the teachers at Rio Dell school in recognition of Teachers Appreciation Week.

She reported that she would be attending a Fire Commissioners meeting on Thursday, followed by a Rio Dell School Board meeting.

Regarding upcoming events, she announced there would be a Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast on Sunday at the Rio Dell Fire Hall, a Garden Party hosted by the Community Resource Center on Saturday at the community garden and a Ribbon Cutting ceremony on May 24th for the Eel River Trails Project.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Woodall/Orr to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. to the May 21, 2024, regular meeting. The motion carried 4-0.

Attest:

Amanda Carter, Mayor Pro Tem

Karen Dunham, City Clerk