



RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING – 6:00 P.M.
TUESDAY, October 5TH, 2026
City Council Chambers
675 Wildwood Avenue, Rio Dell

A. CALL TO ORDER

The special 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 Wilson

Staff Present:

- City Manager Kyle Knopp
- Wastewater Superintendent Moore
- RDPD Chief Phinney
- Community Development Director Caldwell
- Sr. Fiscal Assistant Rosa Maciel

Excused:

- Council Member Orr
- Council Member Woodall

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Council.

D. CEREMONIAL MATTERS

1. 2026/1005.01 – Proclamation in Honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Mayor Garnes read into the record the proclamation recognizing October 2026 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and celebrating Humboldt Domestic Violence Services' (HDVS) 49 years of effort to improve community safety by breaking the cycle of domestic and intimate partner violence. The proclamation was presented to a representative of HDVS, who thanked the Council for recognizing the organization's work, noting that HDVS has served Humboldt County for nearly 50 years, that the need for its services has not diminished, and that the nonprofit continues to provide vital services to people in the most desperate need. Katie Garrison thanked the Council and the community, noting that Humboldt Domestic Violence Services recently held its first bingo fundraiser, thanked the Rio Dell residents who attended, and invited the community to attend again next year.

E. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Michael Panis raised concerns regarding traffic safety on Riverside Drive, stating that vehicles, including motorcycles, routinely travel at two to three times the posted speed limit along the long, straight stretch near the park where children frequently play. He requested that the Traffic Committee convene to consider installing speed humps along Riverside Drive and possibly nearby streets, noting that neighborhoods in Ferndale with speed humps do not experience similar speeding problems. Mayor Garnes stated that the matter would be referred to the Traffic Committee and that the meeting would be publicly posted so that interested residents could attend and provide input.

Margaret, a neighbor of Mr. Panis, spoke in support of his request, noting that many young children in the neighborhood play together and cross the road, and suggested that removable speed bumps could be an option. Mayor Garnes thanked her and encouraged residents to attend the Traffic Committee meeting to share their suggestions.

No other members of the public wished to address the Council, and no hands were raised on Zoom. Mayor Garnes closed public presentations.

F. CONSENT CALENDAR

- 2026/1005.02 – Approve Minutes of the September 15th, 2026, Regular Meeting
- 2026/1005.03 – Receive and File Check Register for August 2026
- 2026/1005.04 – Painter Street Tank Earthquake Damage Repair Project — Award of Construction Contract to Wahlund Construction, Inc. in the Amount of \$2,159,925.00, and Approval of Amendment No. 1 to the GHD Inc. Agreement for Construction Support Services in the Amount of \$175,899

No items were removed from the Consent Calendar.

ACTION: Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, seconded by Council Member Wilson, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried 3–0, Council Member Orr and Woodall absent.

G. ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR

No items were removed from the Consent Calendar.

H. REPORTS / STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

1. 2026/1005.05 – City Manager/Staff Update (RECEIVE & FILE)

City Manager Knopp reported that the Governor declared a state of emergency on September 21, 2026, ahead of what is reported to be one of the strongest El Niño events on record, which may bring increased rainfall this winter. He encouraged the public, Council,

and staff to sign up for County emergency alerts through the links available on the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office and Office of Emergency Services websites.

City Manager Knopp reported that community sandbag and flood readiness workshops will be held throughout the County, with additional dates to be announced, and that the nearest community flood and evacuation forum will be held at Ferndale City Hall on November 17, 2026, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. He reported that the County maintains a sandbag resource list and is developing a new website, findsandbags.org, listing locations where sandbags are available, and that the City is ordering additional sandbags and will operate a sandbag station behind City Hall, in its usual location, for most of the winter. He also reported that staff will attend the Department of Water Resources pre-season flood coordination workshop in Fortuna on November 3, 2026.

City Manager Knopp reported that County OES will test its emergency alert system as part of the Great ShakeOut at approximately 10:45 AM on Thursday, October 15, 2026, allowing residents to verify that alerts are working for them. The written Staff Highlights report was included in the agenda packet.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked about the 32 animal-related calls for service listed in the Police Department report; staff responded that the calls were largely neighbor complaints, including barking dogs, rather than stray dogs. Mayor Pro Tem Carter thanked City staff for their work.

Council Member Wilson expressed appreciation that the animal kennel project is moving forward, noting that residents have contacted him about it. He also noted recent social media and news coverage regarding a tax measure in Fortuna, and stated that, to his knowledge, Rio Dell is the only jurisdiction in Humboldt County to have lowered its tax rate, by one-quarter percent, a couple of years ago. He thanked the City Manager and staff.

Mayor Garnes thanked the City Manager and staff, stating that the City is in a good position while recognizing that challenges lie ahead, and that the City is planning for the future with the understanding that finances are tightening.

I. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS / STUDY SESSIONS

No items were presented.

J. SPECIAL CALL ITEMS / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS / PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. 2026/1005.06 – Housing Element Update (RECEIVE)

Community Development Director Caldwell presented an update on the 7th Cycle Housing Element for the 2027–2035 planning period. He explained that the Housing Element is one of seven mandatory elements of the General Plan, along with the Land Use, Circulation, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety Elements, and that it identifies existing and projected housing needs and establishes goals, policies, and programs to accommodate those needs, including the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) determined by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). He noted that RHNA does not require the City to build the assigned units, but requires the City to demonstrate that adequately zoned sites, policies, and programs are available to accommodate them.

Director Caldwell reviewed the five-step Housing Element process: community engagement, data collection and analysis, policy and program development, draft and public review, and adoption and submittal. He reported that two community meetings have been held to date, the first attended by approximately 15 people, roughly twice the attendance at the first meeting of the prior cycle, and that a housing survey was distributed with the assistance of the Community Resource Center. He reported that the State recently released the demographic data required for the Housing Element, and that he anticipates presenting that information to Council at approximately the first meeting in November. He noted that the Housing Element must be certified by July 2027, and that the City would not be eligible for certain grants until it is certified.

Director Caldwell reported that Humboldt County’s population has decreased by approximately 5,000 people since 2020 and Rio Dell’s by approximately 30 people (about 1%), yet Rio Dell’s RHNA has increased from 51 units in the 6th Cycle to 95 units in the 7th Cycle, including a new Acutely Low Income category. The allocation consists of 7 Acutely Low, 11 Extremely Low, 6 Very Low, 16 Low, 10 Moderate, and 45 Above Moderate income units, with 55 of the 95 units in the Moderate and Above Moderate categories. He noted that the Humboldt County median household income is \$97,100 for a family of four, while Rio Dell’s median household income is \$42,753, less than half the County figure, and that approximately 76% of Rio Dell households are estimated to fall within the Acutely Low through Low income categories.

Director Caldwell presented examples of housing types, including new single-family construction, a duplex, and a 700-square-foot accessory dwelling unit (ADU) built in southern Oregon at substantially lower cost than in Humboldt County, and a mixed-income apartment complex in Medford in which approximately 25% of units are reserved for lower-income households and integrated throughout the development. He attributed higher local housing costs in part to constraints from mountains, rivers, and flood, seismic, and fire hazards. In response to a Council question regarding how income levels are assigned in

mixed-income developments, he explained that units are allocated by household size and that rents for income-restricted units are based on approximately one-third of household income, with the balance subsidized.

Director Caldwell presented conceptual development scenarios, prepared for illustration only, for several potential housing sites: an 18-lot rural subdivision on the Dinsmore Plateau (APN 205-071-044), which lacks sewer service and would rely on on-site mound systems, noting that a prior traffic study limited development on the plateau to approximately 75 units absent a secondary access; a site on Rigby Street off Painter Street (APN 052-291-004), currently for sale, with conceptual multifamily units fronting Rigby Street and approximately 32–38 single-family lots; an 11-lot single-family subdivision on Belleview Avenue (APN 052-011-002); and a 28-unit multifamily concept off Painter Street (APN 052-162-065). He noted that the Dinsmore Plateau and Rigby Street sites alone could accommodate the 55 Moderate and Above Moderate income units, and that the State requires only identification of sites and their realistic development capacity rather than detailed site plans. He also noted that under current State law, projects within one-half mile of a public transit stop are not required to provide parking, although the City would encourage developers to provide it.

Director Caldwell compared approximately 222 new homes for sale in the Grants Pass, Medford, and Ashland area of southern Oregon, a region with a population similar to Humboldt County, to zero new homes for sale in Humboldt County, attributing the difference in part to the County's contracting population.

Director Caldwell reviewed the Housing Element survey results as of September 18, 2026, based on 50 responses. Highlights included: 20 respondents have lived in Rio Dell more than 20 years; 16 identified as senior households and 24 own their homes; the most frequently cited housing issues were lack of affordable housing (25) and housing maintenance and code enforcement (19); 19 respondents were somewhat concerned and 13 very concerned about their ability to afford housing; the most-favored housing types were single-family homes (27), senior housing (20), and apartments (18); vacant properties within City limits (28) and existing residential neighborhoods (20) were the most-favored locations for future housing; affordability (33), safety (25), and walkability (22) were the most important housing features; more employment opportunities (26) and sidewalk and street improvements (25) were the most-cited community improvements; and lack of financing (19) and construction costs (19) were the most-cited barriers to development. He also noted State efforts to streamline housing development, including the extension of tentative subdivision map life from 24 to 48 months beginning January 2027, CEQA streamlining, and SB 9.

Director Caldwell outlined the next steps: data collection and analysis in September–October 2026; policy and program development in November–December 2026; release of the draft Housing Element for public review by March 15, 2027; and Council adoption and submittal to the State for certification by July 15, 2027. In response to a Council question, he confirmed that the Council will adopt the Housing Element, and stated that he plans to bring its components to Council incrementally, beginning with the demographic information in November followed by the goals, policies, and programs, so that the Council is familiar with its contents prior to adoption.

Council Member Wilson asked for confirmation that the RHNA unit counts by income category are determined by the State; Director Caldwell confirmed that they are determined by HCD. Council Member Wilson commended the presentation and expressed concern with the approach taken in Eureka, including the development of housing on public parking lots without parking and the installation of bike lanes with bollards, and stated he was glad the City is not proposing a similar approach. Director Caldwell noted that Eureka is relying on public transit, including its planned regional transit center, and that its circumstances differ from Rio Dell's. Council Member Wilson also emphasized the need for economic development at the County level, noting that communities with anchor institutions, such as Ferndale and Arcata, are better positioned for economic growth.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated she had no questions, noted that she completed the survey, and commended staff for making the survey available at the Community Resource Center and in both English and Spanish.

Mayor Garnes asked whether the RHNA numbers provided by the State are arbitrary. Director Caldwell responded that there is a methodology behind them, but that it is puzzling that the RHNA numbers for the County and all seven cities increased this cycle despite the population decline. He reported that the City of Eureka appealed its RHNA determination unsuccessfully, and that a group of local jurisdictions is being organized to send a joint letter to the Legislature asserting that the RHNA methodology is flawed, which the City has been asked to consider joining. Mayor Garnes thanked Director Caldwell for the thorough presentation.

The Council received the presentation. No action was taken.

K. ORDINANCES / SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS / PUBLIC HEARINGS

No items were presented.

L. COUNCIL REPORTS / COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Pro Tem Carter:

- Reported that she and Police Chief Phinney will present to the Fortuna Rotary later in the month on the animal kennel project and the Spay/Neuter Program to build support for those efforts.
- Reminded the public that the Halloween decorating contest hosted by the Rio Dell Chamber of Commerce is underway, with full details and entry information available on the Chamber's website and Facebook page, and thanked the Community Resource Center for the Halloween decorations installed in the center medians.
- Reported that she will attend the school board meeting on Wednesday, October 7, at 6:30 PM, and the Fire Commissioners meeting on Wednesday, October 21.
- Reported Community Resource Center statistics for September, including 368 people served through commodity distribution, 139 people provided emergency food, 15 bus passes, 12 instances of housing assistance, 8 instances of career assistance, 3 laundry vouchers, 237 participants in senior exercise, 54 participants in First 5 playgroups, and 4 Spay/Neuter Program vouchers issued.
- Reported that the Community Resource Center, in collaboration with the UC Cooperative Extension, will hold a free, hands-on jam-making workshop on Tuesday, October 6, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM at the Resource Center.
- Reported that the Food for People Student Weekend Bag Program has resumed for the school year, serving 25 students at Rio Dell School and 15 students at Scotia School.

Council Member Wilson:

Reported that the Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA) will meet this week and is working to manage tipping fees, cautioning that garbage costs are expected to rise due to the County's declining population and reduced waste volumes, as well as new competition following the expiration of a non-compete agreement. He reported that the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) will meet in a couple of weeks.

Mayor Garnes:

Reported attending the Cal Cities Annual Conference, September 22–25, where she served on a panel on natural disasters. She reported that she will attend the Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) meeting by Zoom on Wednesday, as she will be attending a Seismic Safety Commission meeting at Stanford University in Palo Alto on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday. She thanked the City Manager and staff for their work in keeping the City running and looking good.

M. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Motion to adjourn made by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, seconded by Mayor Garnes. Motion carried 3–0, Council Member Orr and Woodall absent.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:02PM. The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20th, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

APPROVED:

Debra L. Garnes, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jessica Hill, City Clerk