

**RIO DELL CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 18, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Rio Dell City Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Garnes.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Mayor Garnes, Mayor Pro Tem Carter, Councilmembers Orr, Wilson and Woodall

Others Present: City Manager Knopp, Finance Director Sanborn, Wastewater Superintendent Taylor, Chief of Police Allen, Water/Roadways Superintendent Jensen, Senior Fiscal Assistant Maciel, and City Clerk Dunham

Absent: Community Development Director Caldwell

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Garnes invited public comment on non-agenda matters. No public comment was received.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

Mayor Garnes 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 Woodall/Carter to approve the consent calendar including the following items:

- 1) Approve Minutes of the July 6, 2023 Regular Meeting;
- 2) Approve rejection of all Dog Park Bids, direct staff to meet with the Ad Hoc Committee to review bids, consider modifying the project and report back to Council;
- 3) Approve to remove Alonzo Bradford from the Nuisance Advisory Committee; and
- 4) Receive and File the Check Register for June.

Motion carried 5-0.

**REPORTS/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

City Manager/Staff Update

City Manager Knopp provided highlights of the staff update and reported that there was a fire near the infiltration gallery yesterday caused by juveniles lighting fireworks. Fortunately, there was no damage to city infrastructure but encouraged parents to educate their kids on the proper use of fireworks. He thanked the Rio Dell Fire Department for their quick response in getting out there and extinguishing the fire in short order.

**JULY 18, 2023 MINUTES**

He reported that the staff is working on the development of a Hazard Mitigation Grant application for Solar Energy at the City's Corporation Yard and said that staff is very excited about that potential. FEMA staff has been responding to staff and helping to make the grant as competitive as possible.

He said that staff hopes to have an update to the City Council at the next meeting on the Monument slip-out project which occurred during the 2017 winter storms. FEMA approved the project and the bids came back within budget however; FEMA is holding up the final approval. Staff is working with the County Public Works Department and Congressman Huffman's office to try and expedite the final approval.

City Manager Knopp then reported that new vehicle graphics are being rolled out for the Police Department, inviting everyone to take a look at the new graphics on the CSO vehicle.

Councilmember Woodall referred to the Finance Department update and asked staff about the logistics with Castle Tire for the tire drop off event.

Finance Director Sanborn noted that the event will be on Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Clean California through Caltrans will be advertising the event. The City just executed the agreement today so staff will be getting the word out soon. Castle Tire will be the company providing the two trailers where the tires will be received.

Councilmember Woodall commented that she saw the graphics on the CSO vehicle and that they look nice. She asked who did the design.

Chief Allen noted that a company in Seattle did the design.

## **SPECIAL CALL ITEMS/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### Conduct Public Hearing and Approve the List of Delinquent Sewer Accounts to send to the Auditor/Controller for placement on the tax roll

Finance Director Sanborn provided a staff report and said that on July 6, 2023, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 399-2023 which allowed the City to send delinquent sewer charges to the auditor-controller and add them to the tax roll as a lien.

He said that the City is required to follow protocol under the Health and Safety Code §5473 including holding a public hearing. During the hearing, the City must hear and consider all objections or protests to the written report referred to in the notice. If the City finds that the protest is made by owners of a majority of separate parcels of property described in the report, then the report shall not be adopted and the charges shall be collected separately from the tax roll and shall not constitute a lien against any parcel of land.

Upon conclusion of this hearing, the City may adopt, revise, change, reduce, or modify and charge or overrule any or all objections and shall make its determination upon each charge as described in the written report, which determination shall be final.

On or before August 10 of each year following the final determination, the clerk shall file with the county auditor a copy of the report as adopted by the City Council.

Staff's recommendation was to open the public hearing, receive public input, deliberate, close the public hearing, and approve the final list of delinquent sewer accounts to send to the auditor-controller for placement on the tax roll.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public comments. No public comment was received and the public hearing was closed.

Motion was made by Woodall/Carter to approve the list of delinquent sewer accounts to send to the auditor/controller for placement on the tax roll. Motion carried 5-0.

Receive Staff Update on status of the former Todd Property – APN 053-041-002 & 053-031-002 now owned by the State of California

City Manager Knopp provided an update on the status of the former Todd property located at the intersection of US 101 and Davis St. He said that the parcel is an 18 +/- acre largely undeveloped parcel that was recently acquired by the State of California Department of General Services for the use as the Humboldt/Del Norte Cal Fire regional headquarters facility.

He said that historically, the City has had an interest in seeing this parcel developed and stretches back decades with many different approaches and efforts for development including recently. On April 27, 2023, the property sold to the State for \$1,820,000. As such, the property is now under the control of the California Department of General Services (DGS).

He noted that Cal Fire has been interested in potentially three locations in or near the City of Fortuna; one of which was highly preferred by the local headquarters. For reasons that are still not entirely clear, they moved forward with the purchase of the Rio Dell location.

To date, staff has had two meetings with representatives from the Humboldt/Del Norte unit and what has been conveyed to the City is that Cal Fire intends to use the full 18 acres. They are beginning the design phase that is expected to last about two years with occupancy of the site as early as 2028 or 2030. According to local representatives of Cal Fire, the agency is looking at the next 100 years of expansion which means that all 18 acres will likely not be developed by 2030 but will be set aside for potential future development. They also indicated the possibility of co-location at the site with the U.S. Forest Service.

City Manager Knopp continued with an overview of potential benefits of Cal Fire coming to Rio Dell which included the following:

- Cal Fire is a significant employer.
- They would be providing an anchor for the site and the community.
- Cal Fire Headquarters would be an icon and central hub for community.

**JULY 18, 2023 MINUTES**

**Page 4**

- Employees on site would want access to lunch services and potentially want to move here.

Potential concerns included the following:

- The site would not be available for housing or any type of commercial development.
- The non-development for housing or commercial use creates a “hole” in the General Plan which potentially impacts the City’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) compliance.
- Rio Dell meets RHNA allocation for low-income with the Danco Project coming in but remain short on medium to upper-income housing which could impact future transportation funding.
- The development would be creating the “island” effect with independent utilities and cutting off connectivity between neighborhoods.
- It takes prime real estate for commercial and housing development and turns it over to the State which largely gets to bypass any local regulations, including local permitting processes and any method for the City to try and mitigate and integrate the design and process to the City.

City Manager Knopp noted that staff has also been doing some research and discovered that comparable Cal Fire headquarters throughout the State of California are sited on 5-7-acre plots so 18 acres is quite a large piece of land for a facility that currently sits on a 3-acre piece of land in Fortuna. He commented that this is certainly not the highest and best use of the land and potentially puts it into a situation where surplus land in the State of California could be turned over to the government for low-income housing. With the land being State-owned, there is no real local control so this potentially could happen as part of this plan or down the road 100 years.

He said that as the Council is aware, a thriving commercial core is really the lifeblood of any city. The ability for visitors to stay in a hotel and access needed services is what funds a city operation. Essentially what this project is doing, is taking 18 acres of prime property completely out of the economic equation for Rio Dell. Even if all of the CEQA rules applied to this development, it doesn’t cover the financial impact of proposed developments.

The cost to support the local police department goes up every year and we know that the city has to do something regarding economic development. The City Council developed an economic development plan and the Todd property was one of the central components of that plan. In the long term, there are some benefits to this proposed development but the reality is that staff, council members and members of the community believes that there has got to be a way to meet everybody’s needs with 18 acres. Cal Fire could get everything they need for their facility and still allow a portion of the parcel to be split for a housing and commercial development. This would make a better end product that integrates with the community and provides additional economic activity and long-term sustainable housing and commercial development. That is what staff has been trying to impress upon with Cal Fire representatives and local legislative leaders.

City Manager Knopp asked the Council for direction in terms of where they would like to see things go, whether it be to back off or continue to monitor the proposal including reaching out to the Department of Housing and Community Development, State Architect Department, State Lands and Public Works Commissions in addition to legislative outreach. He noted that staff has already reached out to Senator McGuire on this issue and continues to add to that advocacy. Staff also intends to start identifying potential impacts of this development and also making the broader public aware of the proposal to help identify those impacts.

He pointed out that this project would be abutting a neighborhood, creating potential traffic impacts, potential radio communications towers, drainage impacts, and interfacing with water and wastewater systems so there is a lot to look at here. Unfortunately investigating those potential impacts, comes at a cost to the City.

He said that staff is looking for general direction from the Council on how they would like staff to proceed.

Councilmember Orr said that he absolutely would like staff to pursue the issue and continue investigating. He said that the parcel is a huge chunk of land that could be utilized for new businesses, adding that the downtown has limited space for development.

Councilmember Wilson agreed with Councilmember Orr and said that it is disappointing that the State does not have to comply with the same rules everyone else has to. He asked what was entailed in Cal Fire having their own independent water system.

City Manager Knopp explained that according to the RFQ, it would essentially be the development of a private well on site. He pointed out that in mentioning this plan to the City Engineer, he indicated that it would be highly unlikely that they could produce any real results based on the composition of the ground. He said that it would not be cost effective for them to do anything but connect to the City's water system.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed to keep investigating and asked what the vibe seems to be in talking to local representatives.

City Manager Knopp said that our local representatives are fantastic and are heroes of the community. With an agency the size of Cal Fire, the decisions are being made at the top level and that involves the State bureaucratic process and also DGS which mostly serves internally State apparatuses and very much not a public interfacing agency.

Councilmember Woodall suggested pursuing all avenues.

Mayor Garnes called for public comment on the subject.

**Sharon Wolff** asked when the next time the RHNA calculations are done.

City Manager Knopp was not aware of the date but indicated that there is a process underway by the State to recalculate RHNA numbers in which case, the numbers will likely become larger rather than smaller.

#### Update from Mayor on Citizen Recognition for Earthquake Response

Mayor Garnes said that after the December and January earthquakes, the community came together to help distribute food and water and do whatever was needed to help with recovery efforts. However, three young men went over and beyond what most young men would do. They came out on their own without being asked and were there every day to help. She said that she felt that they should be recognized in some way to let them know that we see them and appreciate them for what they did. She said that rather than just presenting them with a Proclamation, she thought it would be nice to present them with a plaque during Wildwood Days with their friends and the community present to recognize them. She said that she had a conversation with the City Manager and the City Clerk and decided to get the City Council on board and come to the barbeque on Sunday where they each will be presented with a "Good Citizen Plaque." Hopefully this will encourage youth to become more involved in the community.

Councilmember Woodall asked if the plaques would be presented during the parade or the Fireman's barbeque. She agreed that kids need to be recognized for helping the community. She agreed to contact the Fire Department to arrange for the presentation of the awards at the Sunday barbeque.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter commented that the oldest of the three kids was at the Fire Hall to help from early morning to night for over a month.

Councilmember Orr said as a teacher witnessing the degradation of the youngest members of society, anything the City can do to honor those that help the community is a good thing.

Councilmember Wilson said that the City should do whatever it can to encourage more kids to get out there and help their community. These kids are likely the ones that will end up serving the community as adults and perhaps being the future Fire Chief or other leaders of the community. He agreed they should be thanked and acknowledged for stepping up to help the community.

Mayor called for public comment.

**Sharon Wolff** suggested in addition to presenting them with a plaque at the barbeque, to perhaps invite them to ride in the parade on the fire truck. She agreed that the kids need recognition and it is also good to show the community that there are these young people in our community. She said that it would be a good teaching opportunity to inform kids about what to do at home to prepare for disasters.

Councilmember Orr commented that in taking a holistic approach, he suggested notifying the Humboldt County Office of Education and letting them know what these kids did to help during the emergency.

## **ORDINANCES/SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Second Reading (by title only) and Adoption of Ordinance No. 400-title only) of Ordinance No. 400-2023 Amending Chapter 2.05.010 and 2.10.160(2) of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) changing the meeting time for Regular City Council meetings from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

City Manager Knopp provided a staff report and said at the last meeting, the ordinance was introduced changing the start time for regular City Council meetings from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. With passage of the ordinance, it would become effective 30 days after adoption and would be implemented beginning with the September 5, 2023 regular meeting of the City Council.

Mayor Garnes opened the public hearing to receive public input on the proposed ordinance. No public comment was received and the public hearing closed.

A motion was made by Carter/Orr to approve the second reading (by title only) and adopt Ordinance No. 400-2023 amending Chapter 2.05.010 and 2.10.160(2) of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC) changing the meeting time for regular City Council meetings from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.

## **COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

Mayor Pro Tem Carter announced that there would be a Nuisance Advisory Committee meeting at City Hall tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. and invited the public to attend.

She also reminded everyone that “Pints for Nonprofits” would be held at the Scotia Lodge on Friday, July 21<sup>st</sup> from 5-8 p.m. with a portion of the proceeds going to the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce. She invited everyone to come on out and have a beer and some food and enjoy the festivities.

She said that on Saturday, July 29th the Community Resource Center would be organizing a volunteer community clean-up event for a portion of Wildwood Avenue and would be providing buckets, gloves, vests and pickers for any volunteers willing to join in. Volunteers were asked to meet at the Community Resource Center at 8:30 a.m. for coffee and baked goods with the cleanup scheduled from 9-11 a.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter also reported that she would be attending a RREDC meeting on Monday.

Councilmember Woodall reported that she attended the Fire Department board meeting and one interesting thing they talked about was that the Shivley Bridge is getting put in so they would be able to take their larger equipment in to fight fires if necessary.

Councilmember Orr reported that he would be attending an HCAOG meeting on Thursday.

Councilmember Wilson reported that the last HWMA meeting was cancelled due to the lack of a quorum. He reminded the community that RCEA has a Community Action Committee (CAC) and there currently is an opening on that committee for a Rio Dell community member. He asked anyone interested to contact RCEA or him by way of City Hall and he would get their name submitted.

Mayor Garnes reported there would be a Long-Term Recovery Group meeting with Senator McGuire on Wednesday followed by a Seismic Safety Committee on Thursday at City Hall.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter announced that she would be teaching “Boot Scootin Boogie” lessons at the Fire Hall on Friday, July 21st and 28th from 10-11 a.m. in preparation for the Wildwood Days parade and invited everyone to join in.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Carter/Wilson to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m. to the August 1, 2023 regular meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

---

Debra Garnes, Mayor

Attest:

---

Karen Dunham, City Clerk