

**ASHLAND GENERAL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
September 5, 2024**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ad Hoc Committee on Early Learning and Childcare

Present: Paula Hyatt, John Love, Lisa Verner, Nancy Nordike, Alissa Kolodzinski, Kerrick Gooden

Guest Presenters : Annie Hoy, Andrea Johnson

1. Land Acknowledgment**

Hyatt read the Land Acknowledgment

II. Early Learning and Co-ops: Guest speaker Annie Hoy (20-25 minutes)

Annie Hoy and Andrea Johnson gave a presentation. Johnson spoke of running a successful school that has a potential opportunity to expand into the space outside of Science Works, although this is currently on hold. Johnson spoke of a collective interest with other childcare providers in putting together a worker-owned Early Learning Center Cooperative run by teachers. Johnson spoke that usually coops like this are formed by parents. She is putting together a work session at the end of the month with interested providers to learn how a teacher-owned business model would work. Hoy spoke that in general, early learning educators are looking for more voice and this model provides equity and visibility for teachers. Hoy and Johnson clarified this is for infancy through kinder-readiness. Johnson spoke of the goal to have this cooperative established by the end of the year with its by-laws in order to jump in on the next round of infrastructure grants, and is currently scouting for potential locations.

Hyatt asked about regulations. Johnson and Hoy spoke of the various requirements based on zoning and anticipated outdoor classrooms will be permitted in the Summer of 2025. Zoning and parking are major holdups for existing commercial spaces. Johnson spoke of a six-month timeframe before being able to consider land acquisition and that Science Works is considering which direction it will be going regarding use of their trailers. Hyatt mentioned House Bill 571 for funding that is separate from the infrastructure bill and mentioned the importance of quality of care over numbers of seats. Johnson spoke that the cooperative could help pool resources for counseling, special needs, and navigation services, etc.

Johnson spoke that this cooperative idea is happening all over the country with Co-ownership is one way for teachers to have agency over incomes and work life. The local interest in land-acquisition is for longevity. The hope to provide 8 hours of care rather than the typical 3-6 hour offerings as the big local need and request for aftercare (to fill the gap in care hours with working families). Hoy spoke that a cooperative model can provide as much support to workers as families.

Nordike asked if teachers would be certified. Johnson spoke that all teachers meet or exceed the certification standards, adding that a cooperative might be able to access grant opportunities that individual programs could not. which could alleviate some financial constraints for growth. The goal to start is to secure space to increase

numbers that the cooperative members collectively already have - which is about 80 families.

III. Update on Grant Awards (5 minutes)

Paula confirmed with staff liaisons that the awards went out as recommended.

IV. Review of priorities and discussion of next steps (30 Minutes)

Tyler presented the committee's short and long term goals (see agenda attachment).

Hyatt spoke that the YMCA received 7 Preschool Promise slots for this year and is the only local program able to meet the conditions of that program. . Hyatt spoke that the committee has done what is possible for Preschool Promise. Love wondered if the cooperative might be potential prospect for more Preschool Promise slots, and Nordike spoke of the increased staff requirements for those.

Love spoke on business engagements and referred to PepsiCo's full floor dedication to childcare. Verner and Hyatt spoke that the economic development benefit of childcare is an important point to emphasize for those that do not have children. Workers make decisions about employment based on childcare needs, and a gap exists for those at 200% or more median income.

Hyatt suggested providing the census data that the committee completed to the Chamber of Commerce to update their information. Post pandemic, some families are opting for online schools, while absentees and truancy is increasing. K-12 is grossly underfunded and will hopefully be prioritized in next legislative session. Many municipalities are struggling with greater class size and employee burn-out. Hyatt spoke of the need for wrap around services and that legislators are looking at related issues for families.

Committee agreed to look over handout (in packet) and give consideration for next steps to bring back next meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT