

**ASHLAND GENERAL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
October 3, 2024**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Affordable Childcare Ad Hoc Committee

Present was Paula Hyatt, Joanie Keller-Hand (zoom), Jessica Therkelson, Nancy Nordike, Alissa Kolodzinski, Kerrick Gooden

1. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work - the Iikrakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza.

II. Regular Business

Review committee goals and prioritize initiatives.

Hyatt spoke that the Early Learning Grant Program is up and running with funds distributed to the selected community partners. Peter Buckley is spearheading Southern Oregon Success to support a variety of social assistance platforms across Jackson and Josephine counties. Hyatt spoke of this as a collaboration of over 80 organizations intending to align agencies to help families more effectively navigate services. Hyatt will attend the meeting on October 11 to review Jackson Care Connect and AllCare as agencies that have developed metrics for tracking social-emotional learning for early grades.

Hyatt spoke that the Children's Institute in Portland has recognized Ashland's work by this Early Learning Committee, and that she will be attending the SOELS (Southern Oregon Early Learning Systems) early learning council retreat OCT 29 to share about the program and will be doing a podcast regarding this Committee's work.

Therkelson spoke of the recently released Surgeon General's Advisory on Parental Stress as it relates to this committee's work. Hyatt spoke of the focus for the committee as moving forward as including supporting behavioral support staffing and how these investments will return to Ashland through a workforce and economic development lens.

The committee reviewed and discussed work plan goals:

-Preschool Promise slots are limited to new families. The YMCA has seven of these slots and wants to open to toddler care -- Hyatt and SOREDI (Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc.) sent support letters on behalf of the YMCA for this. Nordike asked about the capacity for Preschool Promise and offered to reach out to Little Rascals regarding growing capacity.

Hyatt spoke that the committee can support applications with letters of support. Keller-Hand offered to look into other partnerships. Hyatt spoke this program supports families that make less than 200% median income and would like to see solutions for those in the 'gap' between this amount and what it really takes to afford childcare.

-Engage local businesses to assess employee needs. Discussion explored if there was something like a foundation to navigate a consortium among local businesses to know what businesses are struggling with limited childcare. Committee needs Identify goals, questions, and who will do it. Hyatt spoke that the Ashland Chamber of Commerce was engaged in a business retention study, but has not heard an outcome. Nordike offered to ask at the upcoming Chamber dinner. Hyatt spoke of breaking this work among committee members with mini-interviews after the development of a questionnaire for consistency. What do employers think is happening with families? Businesses connecting employers with housing options consider housing as an employee benefit, and childcare is not different. Equus Workforce Solutions or Rogue Workforce Partnership could provide perspective.

-Work with providers - The committee disseminates information when it receives grant information to active partners such as the YMCA, and the committee might also want to talk to others. Hyatt spoke of developing a list-serve for sending out information as an ongoing part of the committee business and developing a standard list for sending information to include (but not limited to) Peter Buckley, Cynthia Anderson who manages the Child Care Resource Network, Rick Bailey at SOU, contacts at Asante, contacts at Business Oregon, and Marshal Doak of the Small Business Development Center. Hyatt spoke that Krista Palmer of Sunstone Housing Collaborative is passionate about including early learning as part of this potential development. Hyatt spoke of reaching out to Rick Bailey regarding SOU's Master Plan as well as a senior project at Cascade for bringing youth and seniors together.

Next meeting is in first week of November. Next step will be to define the workplan related to business engagement.

III. Updates

Updates from members

IV. ADJOURNMENT