

**ASHLAND GENERAL
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND EARLY LEARNING
MINUTES
May 1, 2025**

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 11:00AM

I. Call to Order

Therkelsen called the meeting to order at 11:03am

Members present: Nancy Seward, Paula Hyatt, Jessica Therkelsen, Joanie Keller-Hand, and Lisa Verner

Staff present: Staff Liaison Kerrick Gooden, Deputy City Manager Jordan Rooklyn

Guests present: Kurt Hildebrand, Allan Sandler, Breanna Gutierrez, Brooke Hornecker, Sam Fung, Madison Fung

1. Confirm quorum present

Confirmed

2. Approval of draft minutes from 4.3.2025 (see agenda packet)

Seward motioned to approve minutes from the meeting of 4.3.2025.

The motion was seconded by Hyatt.

Vote: Seward, Hyatt, Therkelsen, Keller-Hand, and Verner- Yes. Motion passed.

3. Suggested additions to today's agenda

None

4. Brief announcements

Hyatt spoke of receiving positive feedback regarding the committee's work from Soroptomists. Verner spoke of an upcoming development code update that will provide outright permitted use for childcare in certain zones.

II. Public Forum

Committee members and guests exchanged introductions. Madison and Sam Fung are involved with commercial real estate and invited the three guests in attendance. Gutierrez and Hornecker, owner and director (respectively) of Little Sprouts Enrichment Academy, spoke of looking to support childcare needs in Ashland. Sandler spoke of his interest and previous efforts to develop a childcare center with a theater production component. Rooklyn spoke of having an economic development focus as Deputy City Manager. Gutierrez spoke of having experienced zoning challenges when attempting to open childcare centers in the past, and of the difficulty in securing quality staffing, especially for special-needs children. Verner spoke that the earliest possible activation of the childcare zoning changes in Ashland would be July 3 after successful first and second readings at City Council.

III. Continuation of Business from April Meeting

1. Business engagement work plan (see agenda packet)

Therkelsen and Verner provided background on this item. Verner spoke about a questionnaire for consideration as part of the business engagement work plan.

Discussion turned to refining the business list and what business questions would be asked. Committee discussed working on this individually and bringing it back to the committee for review. Business list ideas can be sent to Verner for compilation through Gooden, and Rooklyn offered to assist with putting out the questionnaire when ready

for City review.

Gutierrez spoke about having worked with Asante on a cooperative model/business proposal for an employer-sponsored childcare benefit as part of their benefit package. Discussion regarding benefit plans with Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and/or Health Spending Account (HSA) plans and discussed how payments don't keep up with childcare costs. Discussion included the value of regional partnerships from Ashland to Medford, and the anticipation that funding for Head Start will be adversely impacted.

2. Updating chart about progress on the committee's goals. (see document in agenda packet for the September 2024 version with suggestions for inclusion in red)

Verner encouraged members to review.

3. Cultivating future funding beyond June 2026 - discussion with Kurt Hildebrand and Shasta Zieke of the Oregon Community Foundation. Kurt is the Philanthropic Advisor and Regional Director of the Southern Oregon regional office. Shasta is Senior Donor Relations Advisor for Southern Oregon.

Hildebrand spoke about the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) as the largest foundation in Oregon for over 50 years, with a regional office in Medford. Hildebrand spoke about options for endowment potential, including endowment partnerships and donor-advised funds. Endowment partnerships can issue funds each year with a 4-5% distribution - an endowment of \$2.5 million would be needed to execute the annual level of grant funds the committee was able to issue before. Donor-advised funds are fully expendable to give all out, but can only go to non-profits or government entities. Strategies for raising this size of an endowment were discussed, including the consideration of setting up a separate nonprofit to collect funds over time. Hildebrand spoke that OCF's leadership Council has identified childcare as a top priority and has a Special Gifts Officer that may be able to help with this.

IV. Adjournment to June 5 Meeting

1. Continuation of cultivating future funding: Meeting with an investment banker at Rogue Credit Union and Bret Anderson with SOU's Institute for Applied Sustainability

None

2. Suggestions for topics from committee members

None

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07pm