

ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
July 10, 2025

4:30 PM - 1195 East Main Street - The Grove - Otte-Peterson Conference Room

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 4:30pm.

Members Present: Catherine Greenspan, Sean Smith, John Tyler, Allison Mendel, Cassie Preskenis, and Emily Simon (via Zoom)

Council Liaison Present: Gina DuQuenne (arrived at 5:15)

Staff Present: Kerrick Gooden

1. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work -the Ikirakutsum 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

Tyler read the Land Acknowledgment

2. Labor Acknowledgment - We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

Smith read the Labor Acknowledgment

II. Approval of Minutes from 6.5.2025 Meeting

1. Approval of minutes from the June 5, 2025 regular meeting.

Tyler motioned to approve the minutes from June 5, 2025 as-is. The motion was seconded by Greenspan. All eyes. Motion passed.

III. Public Forum

None others present for the Public Forum

IV. Announcements and Events

Preskenis spoke about the recent gift from Guanajuato artist Gilberto Salazar Montes of two Guanajuato hearts. On July third, the Hearts of Guanajuato art exhibit was unveiled as a collaborative installation made possible through the support of Southern Oregon University (SOU), the City of Ashland's Public Arts Advisory Committee (PAAC) and the artist. The first heart was installed and unveiled at SOU behind the Schneider Museum while delegates were here from Guanajuato, Mexico. The second heart will go somewhere else in the City, to be determined in collaboration with PAAC. Preskenis also announced that Micah Blacklight signed an MOU for Peace House to be the official fiscal sponsor of Ancestors Future: Crystallizing Our Call. The Committee discussed it's support of these two installations.

V. Liaison Updates and Reports

1. Report on Playwrights Plaque Installation

The committee (SERJAC) discussed the positive and overwhelming turnout and coverage of the June 22 Playwrights Plaque unveiling at Railroad Park. Credit was given to artist Micah Blacklight who is planning to present to SERJAC at its September 4 regular meeting to regarding the planning of the installation of Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing our Call. The committee discussed how to support this next installation and considered forming a subcommittee, possibly in conjunction with the Public Arts Advisory Committee (PAAC), and discussed the idea of a joint meeting with PAAC. Preskenis spoke that the artist may present to the City Council about the project again once there is a 3-d rendering - Preskenis will consult with the artist regarding timing for additional support and/or

publicity.

2. DEI Survey Subcommittee Report

The first draft was discussed (included below), with the stated goal of soliciting public feedback that City Council can address (as opposed to things the Council can do nothing about). Members will consider and provide feedback and send back to staff liaison to relay to subcommittee prior to sending to the City's legal department for review.

City of Ashland - Community Belonging & Welcoming Survey

We want to hear from you! This anonymous survey helps the City of Ashland understand how residents feel about belonging, inclusion, and access to community resources. Your input helps shape a stronger, more welcoming city for all.

Estimated completion time: 10-12 minutes

Section 1: About You (Optional)

1. Do you live in Ashland? Yes No Part-time / seasonal

If yes: How long have you lived in Ashland? <1 yr 1-5 yrs 6-10 yrs >10 yrs

2. Do you work in Ashland? Yes No Remote worker living in Ashland

If yes: How long have you worked in Ashland? <1 yr 1-5 yrs 6-10 yrs >10 yrs

3. What is your age?

4. What is your racial/ethnic background? (optional)

5. How do you identify your gender? (optional)

6. Do you identify as a member of any of the following groups? (check all that apply)

LGBTQIA+ Person with a disability Immigrant or refugee Veteran Other: _____

Prefer not to answer

7. How many people live in your household?

Number of adults (18+): _____ Number of children (under 18): _____

Section 2: Sense of Belonging & Inclusion

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (circle one)

I feel welcome in Ashland. [1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree]

I feel a strong sense of belonging in my neighborhood. [1-5]

I feel respected and valued in public spaces. [1-5]

My identity and culture are represented in community events and institutions. [1-5]

I feel safe expressing my identity in this city. [1-5]

Section 3: Diversity & Inclusion

9. How welcoming do you feel Ashland is to people of diverse backgrounds?

Very Unwelcoming Unwelcoming Neutral Welcoming Very Welcoming

10. Have you personally experienced or witnessed discrimination in Ashland?

Yes - personally experienced Yes - witnessed No Prefer not to answer

11. If yes, please describe (optional): _____

Section 4: Housing

12. How would you rate the availability of safe, affordable housing in Ashland?

Excellent Good Fair Poor Not sure

13. Do you feel at risk of losing your housing in the next 12 months?

Yes No Prefer not to say

14. What are your biggest housing challenges? (check all that apply)

Cost Availability Safety Discrimination Accessibility Other: _____

Section 5: Transportation

15. What transportation modes do you use most? (check all that apply)

Personal vehicle Public transit Bicycle Walking Ride shares/taxis Other: _____

16. Does the transportation system meet your needs?

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

17. What transportation challenges do you face? _____

Section 6: Education

18. Do you or your family access education in Ashland?

Yes No Not applicable

19. Rate accessibility/inclusiveness of education:

Excellent Good Fair Poor Not sure

20. Barriers to accessing education?

Yes (explain): _____ No Prefer not to say

Section 7: Access to Services

21. Ease of access to the following services (circle one):

Health care | Mental health | Food assistance | Child care | Job support | Legal/Immigration

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

22. Hard-to-access services or resources? _____

Section 8: Civic Engagement & Representation

23. Have you attended a community meeting or event in the past year?

Yes No

24. What would help you feel more engaged in civic life? _____

Section 9: Final Reflections

25. What is one thing the city could do to be more welcoming and inclusive?

3. Update from Chair regarding conversation with Mayor Graham

Mendel spoke of her positive meeting with Mayor Graham about this survey who was supportive and suggested starting with an outline to submit to the City Attorney for review.

4. Current liaison assignments:

Greenspan – Planning Commission

Tyler – Climate and Energy Policy Advisory Committee

Sage – Historic Preservation Advisory Committee

Preskenis – Transportation Advisory Committee

Simon – Public Arts Advisory Committee

Mendel – Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee

Smith -- Parks

Greenspan- Planning: SOU 2025 master plan was presented. Discussion included while notifications of this plan went out to neighbors via the planning department, public sentiment was feeling this was first to hear of it and of not feeling valued when not notified.

Tyler - CEPAC: will attend in August - the July meeting overlapped with SERJAC's changed date.

Presekis - TAC: will attend the next meeting

Simon - PAAC: nothing else to report as PAAC didn't meet

Mendel - HHSAC: will attend the next meeting

Smith - Parks: will attend next meeting - Gooden will e-mail an introduction to Chair and Staff Liaison.

The committee discussed when, what, and how to present it's annual report to Council - Gooden will inquire if there is a request for a mid-year report this year. The committee reviewed and discussed meaningful collaborations with other committees that would be important to include in its future report to Council. DuQuenne offered to support by talking to the chairs of other committees and commissions so they understand why SERJAC is attending their meetings. The committee discussed the survey being developed that could be used as a reference tool when discussing SERJAC with other committees and/or residents.

DuQuenne announced that July is Disability Pride Month.

VI. New Business

1. Discussion regarding attending Rotary

Simon was invited to speak to Rotary regarding SERJAC on Tuesday, August 26 at 8:00am at Calvin Hall, First Presbyterian at 1615 Clark Ave. The committee discussed and Preskenis volunteered to attend.

VII. Adjournment

Mendel provided clarification regarding the monthly meeting of Committee Chairs.

A SERJAC member was approached by a concerned citizen that there was not a place to add pronouns on committee applications and had concerns of being mis-gendered repeatedly. Committee members reviewed the application form online during the meeting and found that it contains an optional 'preferred pronouns' section on the application.

A future agenda item was suggested for how to discuss immigration raids. Ashland Sunrise Project did an event on how to be good ally and had an immigration attorney speak.

Announcement that July 19 is an annual Luau for NW Seasonal Workers Association from 6-8:00pm - Discussed how allies can witness and/or be a witness during key events such as this, as well as at court and/or to be present to help read any papers, etc.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55pm