

**ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
September 4, 2025**

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 4:30pm

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Committee Members present: John Tyler, Cassie Preskenis, Catherine Greenspan, Sean Smith, Allison Mendel, and Emily Simon

Council Liaisons present: Gina DuQuenne, and Jeff Dahle

Staff present: Kerrick Gooden

Guest presenter: Micah BlackLight

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

Simon 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.

Tyler read the labor acknowledgment

II. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the 8.7.2025 regular meeting

Tyler moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Preskenis. All Ayes. The motion passed.

III. Special Presentation - Micah BlackLight - Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call

Micah BlackLight presented the background and current status of his project: Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call. (See agenda packet)

BlackLight explained the project was inspired by the 'Say Their Names' memorial and has received Parks approval for installation at Ashland Creek Park, and has received local support and regional attention. Blacklight explained the project is ready to receive funding to actualize a 3-D rendering which will enable a more accurate estimate of the total project cost.

Donations for the project are currently being accepted by the Parks Foundation, but fiscal sponsorship was recently secured through the Peace House and funds received by the Parks Foundation will transfer over (currently around \$30K).

The committee discussed the history of the 'Say Their Names' memorial at railroad park, its vandalism, and the recent permanent playwrights' plaque installation there featuring a quote from Lorraine Hansberry. The committee discussed these efforts as stepping stones for BlackLight's project. The committee discussed that the Oregon Remembrance Project and Ashland Sunrise Project are behind this as it supports repair and reconciliation. The committee discussed how it can support this project and asked BlackLight to let the committee know how it can support moving forward.

1. [Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call: https://ashlandparksfoundation.org/crystallizing-our-call/](https://ashlandparksfoundation.org/crystallizing-our-call/)
2. Presentation

IV. Public Forum

none

V. Liaison Updates and Reports

1. Update from 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: The last planning meeting included discussion about what is considered to be 'affordable' housing in a particular development: Is a 500 square-foot dwelling at \$400K really considered affordable (just due to its small size) compared to other dwellings in the same development?

Tyler: Discussion at the last CEPAC meeting included consideration of a gas tax that would affect about six stations in the City with the majority of expected revenue coming from out of the area. Discussion also included EV and electric bicycle rebates.

Sage: Gooden updated the committee that he received Sage's formal resignation from the committee earlier in the day.

Preskenis: was not able to make the last TAC meeting.

Simon: did not make the last PAAC meeting. DuQuenne shared that Kate Russell and Peter Finkle looked at and adopted art for the traffic-signal boxes project. Preskenis added that unselected art will be held for new events. The committee considered a future agenda item for discussing the idea of relocating the statue of 'Pioneer Mike' from Ashland Plaza and replacing it with something that might reflect the City better, such as the second Guanajuato Heart that needs a permanent home. The committee discussed how to solicit alternative views of this idea and considered approaching Finkle for suggestions.

Mendel: HHSAC had its last meeting at Opportunities for Housing, Resources, and Assistance (OHRA) with a full tour. Discussion included that 65% of OHRA's budget goes to navigation services. The committee discussed its interest in hearing from the new 2200 Ashland Street Committee once it gets off the ground, and considered how it might support Ashland's unhoused population.

Smith: Parks discussion included sliding scale fees for the Community Center and Pioneer Hall which are not yet set.

Smith and Mendel: CoCoConvo- (Monthly meeting of committee chairs) - Smith and Mendel attended and discussion included the proposed Enhanced Law Enforcement Area (ELEA) ordinance. The committee discussed adding this as an agenda item for SERJAC to consider and come up with a position, which us up for a first reading on September 16th City Council meeting. Discussion also included how the 2200 Ashland street facility and related programming will be able to support Ashland's unhoused population.

VI. Unfinished Business

1. Belonging Survey - Update from subcommittee and committee discussion on use

Committee requested that Council Liaisons seek Council direction on how to conduct, compile, and report results from the Belonging Survey. Discussion included benefits of multiple modes in conducting the survey, such as by electronic means such as Survey Monkey, in-person with paper surveys while tabling at local events and/or locations such as the Food Bank, online through the City's website and/or City Manager's report, and through newsletters and/or other organizations' platforms. - Preskenis offered to start a working group to consider format, etc.

2. Community Center and Pioneer Hall Park's Fees discussion
3. Collaboration with Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee on the Equitable Housing Plan

VII. New Business

1. Rescheduling October's Regularly Scheduled Meeting - Conflict with Yom Kippur

Committee discussed and decided to move SERJAC's next regular meeting to Thursday, Oct 9 4:30 in the Otte-Peterson Conference Room at the Grove.

2. Thank you letter to the editor of the Sneak Preview

The committee briefly reviewed this item with no further discussion.

VIII. Announcements and Events

1. BASE Comedy Jam - September 5 - 7:00-11:--PM at The Historic Holly Theatre - 226 W. 6th St., Medford Oregon: <https://baseoregon.org/event/base-comedy-jam/>

2. Ashland Sunrise Project's *Get Into Action* - September 8, 2025 - 5:30-7:00PM Ashland Public Library <https://ashlandtogether.org/event/into-action/>

IX. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:02PM