

**ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
January 8, 2026**

Otte-Peterson Conference Room at the Grove - 1195 E. Main Street  
4:30-6:00PM

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:31PM.

Present: committee members Allison Mendel, Catherine Greenspan, Sean Smith, John Tyler, and Emily Simon.  
Also present: guests Denise Gherkey and Anna Lee; staff liaison 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

Smith 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.

Greenspan read the labor acknowledgment.

**II. Approval of Minutes from 12.4.2025 Meeting**

1. Approval of minutes from the 12.4.2025 regular meeting

**Tyler moved to approve the minutes. Greenspan seconded the motion. All ayes. The motion passed.**

**III. Public Forum**

Denise Gherkey and Anna Lee spoke of compounding issues related to homelessness and recounted experiences of the night lawn. Concerns expressed included being turned away from the OHRA shelter due to low risk scores in preference to others with higher scores, not willing to stay at the severe-weather shelter due to safety concerns related to other shelter guests, and condescending treatment from OHRA staff while seeking services.

**IV. Unfinished Business**

1. Update regarding 2025 accomplishments and 2026 workplan presentation to Council

The committee's work plan presentation to council went as planned in December.  
No changes were made by council and the plan was adopted as presented.

2. SERJAC Social Event - ideas for discussion and planning

No discussion due to time restrictions.  
Item pushed to next meeting's agenda.

3. Belonging Survey - Status update, discussion, and next steps

Gooden updated the committee on having received over 290 responses to the Belonging Survey so far and suggested leaving the survey open until after the Ashland Town Hall scheduled for January 21, 2026. Gooden also provided an update on DuQuenne's survey distribution efforts as she could not attend the committee meeting. Tyler, Smith, and Simon updated the committee on their distribution efforts and the committee decided to keep the survey live until after the Town Hall.

- A. The Belonging Survey is Live - [Here is the link](#)

## **V. Liaison Updates and Reports**

1. Update from current liaison assignments:  
Greenspan – Planning Commission  
Tyler – Climate and Energy Policy Advisory Committee  
Preskenis – Transportation Advisory Committee  
Simon – Public Arts Advisory Committee  
Mendel – Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee  
Smith – Parks

Greenspan spoke of two planning hearing items discussed by the Planning Commission at its December 9, 2025 meeting. One item was about a proposal to subdivide a single lot into multiple homes — discussion included affordability concerns. Another item included discussion about a development proposal where tenants were not notified of a planning action. Committee discussion included what constitutes equitable notice (only owners are *required* to be notified) and the inherent difficulty with the idea of notifying tenants versus owners.

**Simon moved to request Greenspan to send a synopsis of equity concerns discussed at the Planning Commission to Gooden, and for Gooden to share with SERJAC's council liaisons. Tyler seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion passes.**

Tyler spoke that CEPAC's meeting included discussion of Avista's franchise agreement with the city. Discussion included consideration of changes to an ordinance-based agreement rather than the current franchise agreement. Discussion also included potential future incentives for switching to electric lawn equipment, and the difference between incentives and mandates.

Gooden updated the committee that Preskenis had rendered her resignation from the committee for personal reasons.

Simon spoke regarding PAAC that OSF is working on two plaques to be installed on 'the bricks' of OSF Campus as part of the Playwright's Walk with a potential celebration in July. Discussion included the importance that significance of the railroad plaque be conveyed to attendees of any tours of the playwright's walk, and as part of the walking map of Playwright's Walk Plaques under development. Mendel spoke of working on another plaque in front of the library, and Smith spoke of his work supporting art on Ashland's south side near OHRA.

Mendel spoke that HHSAC elected Werthaiser as its new Chair with Fields completing her term, and discussed the release of Request for Proposals for Social Service grants, with nothing else of note.

Mendel also shared that discussion at the monthly Commissions and Committees Conversations (CoCo Convo) meeting included: incentives for non-gas appliances, the creation of a manufactured home ordinance, concerns regarding the fate of the Fremont Cottonwood tree on city property if the property is sold, the affordable housing trust fund, the potential for the top level of the city-owned Hargadine Parking Garage to include RV parking due to its connections, and neighborhood concerns regarding transient behavior at Garfield Park.

Parks will meet next week and Smith will report.

2. Update from ELEA subcommittee

Simon and Smith gave a brief overview that they had begun research into the context of the current Enhanced Law Enforcement Area Ordinance, with review beginning with a first reference in 2012. Simon recommended inviting O'Meara to speak to the committee regarding his perspective on the ordinance history. The committee also considered asking Councilor DuQuenne and City Attorney Pietila to also present their perspectives regarding the ordinance. Smith and Simon will expand research from archived ordinances to include historical Council meeting minutes. The committee discussed this as a big project with no specific timeline, with a preference for taking the time for a broad context and understanding rather than rushing to a recommendation.

## **VI. New Business**

1. Pioneer Hall - Discussion regarding equitable use

No discussion due to time constraints — the item was pushed to the next meeting.

2. Discussion - regional ICE activity - should SERJAC issue any recommendations to Council?

No discussion due to time constraints — the item was pushed to the next meeting.

## **VII. Ongoing or Future Items for Consideration**

1. Equitable Housing Plan working group

No discussion.

## **VIII. Announcements and Events**

1. **Town Hall Tour - U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley**  
January 11, 2026  
Ashland High School Gymnasium  
201 S. Mountain Ave.  
[More information from Ashland.News](#)
2. **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration**  
January 19, 2026 Doors open at 11:30  
Historic Ashland Armory / Ashland Plaza  
208 Oak Street / Ashland Plaza  
[Here is more information from Ashland Together](#)
3. **Town Hall - City of Ashland 2026**  
January 21, 2026 5:30-7:00PM  
Ashland High School Theatre  
201 S. Mountain Ave.  
[More information from City of Ashland](#)
4. **Building New Attainable Housing: Obstacles and Opportunities**  
January 25, 2:00-3:30pm  
Mountain Avenue Theater  
Ashland High School  
201 S. Mountain Ave.  
[Here is more information from Ashland Together](#)
5. **BASE Second Annual Fundraising Gala**  
February 28, 2026 6:00-9:00 PM  
Ashland Hills Hotel  
2525 Ashland Street  
[Here is more information from Ashland Together](#)

#### **IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 PM.