

**ASHLAND GENERAL
AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND EARLY LEARNING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

December 4, 2025

10:30 am Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way

I. Call to Order

Present were Committee Members John Love, Lynn Ransford, Nancy Seward, Jessica Therkelsen, Anne Seban, Paula Hyatt, Joanie Keller-Hand, and Lisa Verner.

Also present were Council Liaison Dylan Bloom and Staff Liaison Kerrick Gooden.

1. Confirm quorum present

Confirmed

2. Approval of draft minutes of 11.6.25 meeting (see agenda packet)

Ransford moved to approve the minutes. Seward seconded the motion. All ayes. The motion passed.

3. Suggested additions to today's agenda

none

4. Brief announcements

Bloom spoke of the potential sale of surplus City property and proposed an idea to request future funding for the Affordable Childcare Grant Program from revenues received from such sale. The committee could recommend to Council that this revenue be restricted for such use in the next biennium.

II. Public Forum

none

III. Continuation of Business from Previous Meetings

1. Reports requested from affordable childcare grant recipients.

Gooden spoke of having sent out reporting reminders to the four grant recipients requesting a report back by January 15, 2026.

2. "Mind the Gap" : Strategies for filling gap in childcare slots due to closing of Children's World Montessori
 - a. UU Fellowship
 - b. Ella's Classroom (ABC Montessori)
 - c. Little Sprouts
 - d. Siskiyou School

Love spoke with leadership of the UU Fellowship. Discussion included clarifying timelines for the Business Oregon CCIF Infrastructure Grants. The committee discussed the suggestion for putting the UU Fellowship back in contact with the previously interested party (Rogue Valley Educational Services) to apply.

Love spoke with ABC Montessori and will assist them in applying for the same Business Oregon CCIF Infrastructure Grants. The committee discussed the suggestion that they include having received City support through its Affordable Childcare Grant Program in their application.

3. What actually *is* the need for preschool / childcare seats in Ashland?
 - a. What information does the Southern Oregon Early Learning Hub have?

The committee discussed the availability of preschool slots. Availability appears to have grown to meet Ashland's need through the work of the committee, as evidenced by unfilled slots, but there remains a need for more infant/toddler care. The committee discussed business challenges to infant/toddler care programs, including liability

concerns and costs associated with operations, and that typically such programs are 'subsidized' through other programs for older children.

The committee took up two questions:

- 1) What role could the committee take in supporting infant/toddler programs? and;
- 2) How can the committee foster connections between programs to help meet this need?

Discussion included that these are typically not municipal functions, and the committee would need clarity from Council regarding what is expected from the committee beyond its charge as an advisory body. Discussion also included the committee's priority of improving affordability and access to quality childcare, and the potential for the City to pivot by leveraging the unused \$100K (slated for Childcare Grants during the next year of the biennium) as seed money for a new fund and/or program to be picked up and carried forward by community partners.

The committee discussed moving forward with the idea of approaching the Ashland Schools Foundation to explore potential collaboration, and reviewed numbers provided by the Oregon Community Foundation for what an endowment fund might provide for sustainable giving. (A minimum of \$2 million of seed funds would yield around \$90K/yr at OCF's current endowment rate of 4.5% interest, or the same seed funds could be used to give out less per year to increase the fund's principle and allow increased sustainable giving in the future.)

The committee also discussed difficulty with communication back from the Southern Oregon Early Learning Hub, and considered exploring resources from Zero to Three, a non-profit that serves the infant/toddler population, as its national conference will be in Portland this year.

4. Business engagement work plan (see agenda packet)
 - a. Suggestions for final changes in questions.
 - b. Decide on businesses to include in our sample.
 - c. Strategies for conducting the interviews: who will do them and on what schedule?
 - d. Analysis plan.

The committee discussed that it was not ready for business interviews yet, and considered if it would ask businesses if they would be willing to contribute to an endowment fund if it was established. The committee discussed forming a working group to focus on an endowment fund plan and 'elevator pitch' prior to discussing with businesses.

The committee identified two action items prior its next meeting in February and before business interviews:

- 1) Love will initiate the 'exploratory' conversation with Ashland Schools Foundation. And;
- 2) Therkelsen and Hyatt will develop endowment fund options and/or 'road-map' for recommendation to Council

IV. New Business

V. Adjournment to February 5, 2026 Meeting

1. Committee members' suggestions of topics.

none

2. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40am