

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

February 5, 2026

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 10:30AM

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:35am.

Present were committee members Paula Hyatt, Nancy Seward, Lynn Ransford, John Love, Anne Sebanc, and Jessica Therkelsen.

Present also were council liaison Dylan Bloom and staff liaison Kerrick Gooden.

1. Confirm quorum present

Confirmed

2. Approval of draft minutes of 12-4-25 meeting (see agenda packet)

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

3. Suggested additions to today's agenda

no additions

4. Brief announcements

Hyatt thanked Verner for assisting the Siskiyou School to connect with senior planning staff to explore early learning options under new zoning/planning rules.

Bloom reported on the first meeting of the city's strategic planning series: breakout groups seemed to recognize that early learning is a priority for the future of Ashland, and that quality childcare is an ongoing need to attract families.

Love shared that BOLI has a new [Child Care for Construction \(CCC\) Program](#) in collaboration with the Oregon Business Development Department that offers financial assistance for registered apprentices or new journey workers.

Seward shared an upcoming conference sponsored by the Southern Oregon Chapter of the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children (an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a membership organization committed to the advancement of the early childhood profession). [The 2026 Together for Children Winter Conference: Every Child Belongs](#) (February 28, 2026 at the RCC/SOU Higher Education Center) will feature a group of local and state panelists speaking on the upcoming Oregon initiative Every Child Belongs, previously known as the Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Program which will be implemented fully in 2026.

II. Public Forum

none

III. Continuation of Business from Previous Meetings

1. Reports received from affordability grant recipients (see agenda packet)

- a. Committee approval of reports - all
- b. Suggest schedule for next and final reports - all

The committee reviewed the reports as included in the agenda packet, reflected on the accomplishments of all grant recipients, and noted the positive impact for the community through increased number and quality of childcare slots actualized by the grant.

The committee asked Gooden to send out a notice to grant recipients in May for a final report, and noted there may be no substantial update from recipients who had already completed their project (infrastructure-focused grant recipients).

2. Cultivating future funding, aka the future of our *ad hoc* committee

- a. Report on chair's meeting with Mayor Graham - John
- b. Endowment scenarios for moving forward – Paula
- c. Potential for working within Ashland Schools Foundation – John & Paula
 1. Pipeline from babies to kindergartners
- d. Using \$100,000 remaining in Affordability Grant funds as seed money?
- e. Presentation to City Council—April?

A) Love reported on his meeting with Mayor Graham:

- The Council values promoting Ashland as a great place for kids, and is encouraged by increased housing options and recent improved flexibility in zoning/planning rules related to childcare; meanwhile, the projection is for decreased K-12 enrollment.
- Graham anticipated the city would decrease its grant programs and suggested the committee reach out to the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) for support of its efforts.

The committee discussed presenting to the LOC or inviting key contacts to attend a regular meeting. The committee also discussed a potential opportunity to present to Council regarding its impact on the local economy. Grant reports include testimony that could be used, and the committee considered approaching providers for in-person testimony.

B through D):

Hyatt and Therkelsen provided their research findings on establishing an endowment in Oregon. Discussion included the importance and cost of required administrative tasks, insurance considerations, and the need for tight by-laws and accounting systems as essential due to liability (which falls to the board of directors). Non-profits are reporting difficulty in obtaining insurance in the current economic climate at a cost of about \$1500 per million. The committee discussed operating as a project under an existing foundation (such as the Ashland Schools Foundation - ASF) as an option for defraying costs while beginning the work while sourcing a seed fund that will take time.

The committee discussed the idea of broadening its scope from just providing childcare grants to supporting a greater vision for Ashland as a place for babies and young families. Resource navigation for families and business coaching for providers could grow this vision with programming and/or services not provided by other local organizations. Existing programs such as Ashland Reads, Ashland Family YMCA, SOESD programs, Science Works, SOU Preschool, and others may all benefit from an organization focused on connecting families with and between them. This type of work could begin immediately, while concurrently sourcing the \$3 million needed for an endowment fund of sufficient size to issue childcare grants. The committee considered it could take three to five years to source such an endowment given the current economic climate.

The committee discussed its strengths, expertise, and value it would add to ASF, such as increased enrollment and percentage of any grants received, etc. The committee discussed how to approach the Ashland Schools Foundation to explore if it would consider such a project under their umbrella, and if so, recommending that the council approve the remaining \$100K (currently earmarked for childcare grants) to launch it.

The committee decided to prepare a one-page draft proposal with which to approach ASF to begin this discussion. Love will prepare a draft and distribute to the committee for feedback through the staff liaison before the March meeting.

3. Business engagement work plan (see agenda packet) - all
 - 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 and report schedule.

The committee discussed briefly it was not ready for this given the previous discussion. All were in agreement to put this on hold.

IV. New Business

V. Anticipation of March 5, 2026 Meeting and Adjournment

1. Report on business engagement progress
2. Report on discussions with the Ashland Schools Foundation
3. Committee members' suggestions for other topics
4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:54am