

**ASHLAND GENERAL
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND EARLY LEARNING
MINUTES
March 5, 2026**

10:30AM - Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:34 am

Present were committee members Paula Hyatt, Jessica Therkelsen, Joanie Keller-Hand, Anne Sebanc, and John Love

Also present was staff liaison Kerrick Gooden

1. Confirm quorum present

Confirmed

2. Approval of draft minutes of 2-5-26 meeting (see agenda packet)

Therkelsen moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Keller-Hand. All ayes. The motion passed.

3. Suggested additions to today's agenda
4. Brief announcements

Hyatt will not be able to attend the next meeting. The issue of pre-K childcare was taken up by the governor, who convened an [Early Childhood Care and Learning System Roundtable](#).

II. Public Forum

None

III. Continuation of Business from previous meetings

1. Cultivating future funding, aka the future of our *ad hoc* committee
 - a. Further discussion of partnering with the Ashland Schools Foundation
 - b. How best to use the \$100,000 remaining in Affordability Grant funds designated for 2026-2027

Love approached Erica Thompson, Executive Director of the Ashland Schools Foundation (ASF), regarding the committee's recent discussions. Thompson explained ASF's Charter has a K-12 focus, which could only be changed by the Ashland School District (ASD), but could act as a fiscal sponsor of an existing non-profit and/or help get the word out through their newsletter. The committee discussed not having the capacity to stand up a dedicated non-profit, but how its work could join ASD efforts to lobby in Salem for ongoing State support. The committee also discussed models of childcare support in other states, such as New York, and the potential benefit to ASD of increased local pre-K programs that would feed ASD. Hyatt agreed to approach Joseph Hattrick to explore further.

The committee discussed recommendation options for the remaining \$100K allocated for the Childcare Affordability Grant program for the 2026/27 school year. Discussion included positive impacts demonstrated from previous distributions and the importance of clear and early communication to potential applicants regarding the expected closure of the program after the next award. The committee decided on making only minor/required edits to the program narrative and application to align with program year, etc. and will coordinate with Gooden regarding suggested edits before the next meeting.

2. Business engagement work plan (see agenda packet)
 - a. Let's decide what we actually can do, are going to do—while our ad hoc committee still exists—or not do.

The committee discussed the purpose of the business engagement work plan as a template for engaging the business community in the exchange of experiences and ideas regarding childcare, or lack thereof, rather than a survey only aimed to gather data. Conversations and/or the convening of local business leaders including Asante, SOU, ASD, the City, OSF and the Chamber of Commerce could inform the group as it winds down its existing form as an ad-hoc advisory committee to council and considers a pivot to another form in support of local pre-K early education. The committee considered a kickoff gathering of key local leaders in May and a larger summit of regional stakeholders towards the fall. The committee also discussed working with Mayor Graham on this as a regional issue prior to the Oregon Mayors conference in August.

- Therkelsen agreed to begin a draft invitation for what is being proposed for a larger gathering in the fall
- Hyatt agreed to talk with Hattrick regarding ASF, and to meet with Rooklyn and Love regarding the potential for an initial gathering in May
- Love would like to revisit the ad hoc committee's original charge at its April meeting, and will draft a progress report in preparation for a potential presentation to Council in May or June.

IV. New Business

V. Anticipation of April 2, 2026 Meeting and Adjournment

1. Continue discussion of future funding
2. Business engagement progress
3. Committee members' suggestions for other topics
4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11.34 am