



General Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND GENERAL

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND EARLY LEARNING AGENDA

Thursday, June 4, 2026

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 10:30 AM

I. Call to Order

1. Confirmation of quorum present
2. Approval of draft minutes of 5/7/26 meeting (see agenda packet)
3. Suggested additions to today's agenda
4. Brief announcements

II. Public Forum

III. Continuation of Business from Previous Meetings

1. Discussion of potential partnering with the Ashland Schools Foundation or Ashland Community Health Foundation
 - a. Strategies for proceeding
 - b. Impact on City's Childcare Affordability Grants
 - c. Fundraising strategies
 - i. Engaging local businesses
 - ii. Grants
 - iii. Other

2. Approaching the Planning Commission about childcare in the Ashland Mills development.
3. Updating data on existing early learning/childcare slots in Ashland

IV. Anticipation of July 2, 2026 Meeting

1. Continue discussion of topics carrying over from today's agenda.
2. Suggestions for other topics.

V. Adjournment

If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, including electronic attendance, please contact Kerrick Gooden at citymanageroffice@ashlandoregon.gov or 541.488.6002 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least three business days before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



**ASHLAND GENERAL
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND EARLY LEARNING
MINUTES
May 7, 2026**

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 10:30 AM

NOTE: These are DRAFT minutes until approved by the committee.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:35 am

In attendance were committee members Paula Hyatt, Lisa Verner, Joanie Keller-Hand, Anne Sebanc, John Love, and Jessica Therkeslen (via Zoom)

Also present was staff liaison Kerrick Gooden

1. Confirmation of quorum present

Confirmed

2. Approval of draft minutes of the 4/2/2026 meeting (see agenda packet)

Keller-Hand moved to approve the minutes. Sebanc seconded the motion. All ayes. Motion passed.

3. Suggested additions to today's agenda

4. Brief announcements

Therkelsen and Sebanc reported on having attended the Nonprofit Association of Oregon's Nonprofit Leaders Conference, held recently in Ashland. Therkelsen noted that representatives from United Way and others were in attendance, but no significant attention was given to preschool children or younger. Sebanc agreed to reach out to Dee Anne Everson regarding some grant opportunities, and to ask how Jackson County United Way is addressing birth-to-age-5 childcare needs. Love reminded the committee that Governor Kotek took up the issue of pre-K childcare through an [Early Childhood Care and Learning System](#) Roundtable. Love and Hyatt will follow up on this.

II. Public Forum

None

III. Continuation of Business from Previous Meetings

1. Review City's Childcare Affordability Grants application (see agenda packet - Paula)

1. Are any changes needed?
2. Process for reaching out to potential applicants

The committee reviewed the updates to the Affordable Childcare Grant program for 2026/27, as approved at the last meeting, and asked Gooden to launch the program with an application deadline of June 19, 2026:

Love moved to release the Affordable Childcare Grant Program with an application deadline of June 19, 2026 for review at the following meeting. Hyatt seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

2. Discussion of potential partnering with the Ashland Schools Foundation (Paula)

Hyatt briefed the committee on her meeting with ASD Superintendent Joseph Hattrick. Hattrick expressed interest in supporting a charter change with the Ashland Schools Foundation to include pre-K support, and explained this process would take time. Committee discussion included that this was the last year for this funding allocation, the potential to allocate some or all of the remaining childcare funding towards ASF, the relative impacts to potential applicants of the grant program, and outcomes as reported by providers who have benefited from the program to date.

3. Appeal to the Ashland Planning Commission (see agenda packet - Lisa)

The committee discussed narrowing the scope of this appeal to the planning commission to just the Ashland Mills Development for considering childcare / early learning opportunities during development review (see agenda packet).

4. Business engagement plan

1. Who are the key business leaders we should engage?
2. What do we want to learn?
3. What is our ask?

Not addressed due to time

5. Updating data on existing early learning/childcare slots in Ashland (Nancy)
no update

IV. New Business

1. Potential partnering with the Ashland Community Health Foundation (John)

V. Anticipation of June 4, 2026 Meeting

1. Continue discussion of potential with the ASF or ACHF.
2. Planning Commission
3. Suggestions for other topics

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33am

OF

GUEST COLUMN

Child care requires universal solution

By Ty Morris, Kendra Votava

We have been sounding the alarm for years: Oregon's child care system needs support. From early childhood educators and child care advocates, to parents and families, we are being pushed to the brink. We have been pleading with our elected leaders to prioritize children in our state's policies.

But now is the time to take action. Years of underinvestment have made educators unable to care for themselves and pushed families into impossible choices. Now, as we approach the National Day Without Child Care, child care providers across the state will show the true impact of continued underfunding in the child care sector. On May 11, these Oregon workers will shut down to demand what every working family deserves: universal child care, now.

The Day Without Child Care isn't about disruption; -it's about clarity. Child care is not separate from other industries. When Oregon's child care providers walk out, we're showing exactly what happens when a system built on exploitation collapses.

In every corner of the state, families are struggling to access the affordable, equitable, quality child care they need, and entire communities are suffering the effects. When families cannot find child care, they cannot work. When families cannot work, local businesses become short-staffed and families decrease their spending. From there, windows are forced to shutter and the economy shrinks.

This is not an issue limited to certain people or regions; from our roles in Albany and in Portland, and across Oregon, we both have seen just how universal the problem is. As of 2024, 34 of Oregon's 36 counties qualified as a child care desert for infants and toddlers.

Even for older children, when more care opportunities are available, a quarter of our counties remain deserts. Moreover, child care is unaffordable for nearly all families in Oregon, regardless of income. A recent LendingTree study shows a household with two children needs to make over \$400,000 per year for child care to be affordable — which is nearly four times the median income for Oregon families.

We understand how difficult it is to have a system that doesn't work for families. Families that are referred for care might wait up to 18 months to be accepted if they aren't already on the list. That means families have a year and a half of no access to care, of limited access to work and struggle to provide for their children. By then, their child may have aged out of services, and missed benefits such as

Funding child care isn't a luxury or an unnecessary add-on — it's the infrastructure that makes Oregon work. It is essential for our lawmakers to support educators, value children and allow families to work and local businesses to thrive.

•early math and literacy support, social skill development and early identification of disabilities. Losing further funds for such programs would be devastating.

If we want to stabilize this ecosystem and finally address the problems plaguing our system, investment is necessary. Funding child care isn't a luxury or an unnecessary add-on — it's the infrastructure that makes Oregon work. It is essential for our lawmakers to support educators, value children and allow families to work and local businesses to thrive. Our policies do not currently reflect this, but they can.

A universal problem requires a universal solution. This is why we support the campaign to win child care for all. It reflects the far-reaching nature of this industry: addressing the racial, gender and economic inequities that are at the root of these discussions.

Oregon needs a child care system that guarantees quality care for every child, living wages for every provider and justice for the Black and Brown communities who have been carrying this system on their backs. We urge our leaders to give the child care industry the respect and resources that it deeply needs. We want our state to prioritize children over corporate profits and tax breaks for billionaires.

While the Day Without Child Care may be just one day, the campaign to win universal child care will continue until that goal is realized. There is a role for everyone --- from the largest cities to the smallest towns --- to share their values and uplift the importance of child care. Every Oregon family is deserving of quality, affordable care.

Ty Morris, based in Portland, specializes in trauma-informed anti-bias training and coaching for early educators and organizes with For All Families Oregon, a grassroots organization advocating for family-forward policies. Kendra Votava is a child care provider based in Albany and organizes with For All Families Oregon, a grassroots organization advocating for family-forward policies.