

ASHLAND GENERAL

Ad Hoc Committee on Early Learning and Childcare REGULAR MEETING MINUTES August 1, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

In attendance: Joanie Keller-Hand, John Love, Lisa Verner, Nancy Seward, Jessica Therkelson, Paula Hyatt, and Kerrick Gooden

1. Land Acknowledgement**

Gooden read the land acknowledgement

II. Regular Business

1. Overview of grant recommendation process (10 minutes)

Hyatt spoke of the review process for the two submitted grant proposals and the goal of providing a recommendation to Council that could adopt an award before the beginning of the school year in September. This was an adjustment from last year when funding was not available until July. In feedback from last year's program, partners recommended opening up funds for infrastructure, special needs support, sliding scale offerings (scholarships), and increased staffing, which were adopted for this year's program.

After launching the program, Hyatt reached out to all local licensed programs including SOU, Childcare Resource Network, Business Oregon, Soredi, the local SBDC, and local news KOBI-5. The City's Public Information Officer also did a full press release.

Two applications were submitted requesting a total of 140K.

Discussion will include whether to use the extra buffer available to fund the full ask, or to decide how to allocate the advertised 135K.

2. Review of Early Childcare Grant Applications and discussion (30 minutes)

Both applicants received funding last year and have increased their request.

Children's World Montessori--

The application met the requirements. Love asked to explore how this increases the capacity for childcare. Therkelsen spoke of it addressing reducing economic burden and increasing family retention. Hyatt mentioned space constraints may limit more slots. Keller-Hand spoke that it serves toddlers, which is one of only two local organizations that do toddler care. This grant may not increase slots, but would decrease economic burden on the community through larger subsidy. This could change the demographic of families served. This program, with its toddler care, may prevent loss of slots/turnover to retain families. Bilingual families are served here. License is due to expire in August and will need to be renewed. Testimonies from families served spoke of its benefits. The group came to a consensus of agreement to fund.

YMCA Ashland-

Nothing stands out as concerning on the application. Behavioral support is included, and the lower ratio of staff to children is meant to retain slots. Funding the sliding scale could increase seats. Funding special needs with increased staffing support is important. A classroom is available at the YMCA which could accommodate more students when the Walker, Bellview and Helman sites are at capacity. Justification for more staff at living wages made sense and is encouraging as investing in good staff may reduce turnover. There is no way to know how many families will apply until school starts. YMCA tends to be a program for behavioral and financial needs and its goals are in line with this grant and the committee's hopes for the community. The YMCA delivered a strong program last year. The group came to a consensus of agreement to fund.

3. Development of grant recommendation to Ashland City Council (20 minutes)

Committee discussed how to allocate funds based on applications. Both programs serve 40 children, but toddler care costs more. The committee reached consensus to fully fund both applications if City administration agrees the committee can utilize the buffer amount.

If City administration states a need to stick to the limited award amount at 135K, the consensus was to fund as follows:

50 to Children World

40 to YMCA for Behavioral support

45 to YMCA for Sliding Scale at YMCA

III. ADJOURNMENT