

## MINUTES

### 1. Call to Order and Roll Check

Chair Rebecca Dyson called the meeting to order and a roll check confirmed that Directors Dyson, Franko, Hatch, and Ruby were present. Director Skuratowicz was scheduled to arrive a few minutes late.

### 2. Land Acknowledgment

Director Hatch read the Land Acknowledgment.

### 3. Adoption of Agenda *(At this time Board members are provided the opportunity to amend the Regular Session agenda.)*

Director Ruby moved and Director Franko seconded the adoption of the December 19 agenda as proposed. The motion passed by a unanimous vote of the four members present

### 4. Consent Agenda *(All items may be adopted by a single motion unless pulled for special consideration.)*

Director Hatch moved and Director Ruby seconded the approval of the Consent Agenda for December 19. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the four members present

4.A. Approval of Minutes for the November 14, 2024, regular session and special sessions October 24, 2024, November 21, 2024, and December 3, 2024.

### 5. New Business

#### 5.A. Collaborative Presentation by the Ashland School Board and the Sunstone Housing Collaborative

Director Dan Ruby began by reviewing a series of demographic studies and forecasts that the school district commissioned over several decades. These consistently and repeatedly forecast a gradual, steady decrease in school enrollment as fewer families with children moved into Ashland. A respite period occurred during a period when the state legislature granted open enrollment, allowing Oregon families to choose other school districts without seeking approval from their home district. Ashland benefitted from that but its end has diminished enrollment beginning with Kindergarten and moving through the grades. The innovation committee also looked at barriers to enrollment and affordable housing became a more significant factor through the years.

Director Jill Franko reviewed the timeline and development by the Board of Innovation Committees. The Board sought to explore creative, innovative ideas on several topics in a slower, more thoughtful fashion than regular meetings allowed. They also sought to bring other people and new thinking to their examinations. Consequently, they created three committees to look at innovation in enrollment, high school offerings and scheduling, and district-wide calendars and schedules. Director Franko chaired the committee focusing on

building enrollment. That committee assembled a group of about a dozen people from different fields and initially identified the topics of marketing, online course offerings, and affordable family housing as issues to explore more deeply.

With regard to housing, volunteer Krista Palmer offered to do research into what options other school districts inside and outside Oregon had explored or attempted. She accumulated a considerable amount of data, examples, organizations, and districts and connected with many of them. An idea began to grow about possibly creating housing in Ashland using approaches and strategies learned from others. Because the district did not want to become either a developer nor a property manager, the idea of forming an independent nonprofit organization to pursue ideas and resources was approved.

Ms. Palmer was hired to devote her attention full-time to the development of that organization, and work on securing financial resources for a start-up. Private and public grants were secured and a Master Service Agreement was developed between the new group, Sunstone Housing Collaborative, and the Ashland School District to define tasks and responsibilities. Sunstone quickly garnered support from the City of Ashland, Jackson County, and the State of Oregon for the idea of creating a housing development designed with families in mind.

To this end, Sunstone developed a Request for Proposals from potential contractors and developers. They issued an RFP, received and reviewed proposals, and eventually arrived at a recommendation to bring to the Board. Eva – clear about decision? Becka – vote to accept the recommendation

The proposal they have developed and wish to recommend involves four partners:

- Edlen and Company, a real estate development company
- Outlier Construction Company, a local construction company
- arkitek:design&architecture, a local architecture firm
- Greater Ashland Community Land Trust, a local nonprofit organization

Some of the highlights of these organizations are:

- Edlen has deep experience engaging with local communities to keep people informed through design and development stages. Russell – when would the decision about sale of property happen?
- Outlier has worked with the district on several bond projects. They partnered with the Talent Maker City project to introduce local young people to construction trades. They partnered with the Builders Association and Rogue Workforce Partnerships to create internships and job shadowing opportunities for students.
- Chris Brown at arkitek has helped build an Internship Development Program across southern Oregon, through which students develop architectural portfolios. He has helped fifteen students enter higher education programs in architecture.

The RFP stipulated that successful partners would have explicit commitments to internship and apprenticeship programs to benefit Ashland high school students. The proposed project is now entering a pre-development phase during which many ideas will be explored and evaluated.

## **6. Public Comment**

At this point, Chair Dyson opened the topic to public comment. The majority of the speakers addressed the use of the parcel across from the high school known as Lincoln Field.

Ross Jacques, an Ashland parent, said that the district's priority should be educating children, not developing real estate.

Dave Hering, an Ashland parent, also spoke to education as the appropriate priority for the school board.

Mathew Havniar, a Talent resident, said that recovery housing for those who lost homes in the Alameda fire, should be a priority.

Mila Langer, a student and soccer player, said that the field should be preserved for use by school athletics.

Greg Starbird, an Ashland parent, said the field has been poorly maintained and should be used for athletics.

Jessica Dohrman, an AHS freshman who plays varsity soccer, said the sport is an effective recruiting tool for new students and the district should support athletic excellence.

Anya Saturen, an Ashland student, said the field should be preserved for athletics.

Reese Donovan with the Ashland Soccer Club said the field should be preserved for athletics.

Luna Gutierrez Langer, an Ashland student, said the field should be preserved for athletics.

Mat Norris, an Ashland resident, said Ashland should change its urban growth boundary and development should occur on the Willow Wind property.

Dan Elster, an Ashland parent, said the field should be maintained for athletics.

Kya Lutz, an Ashland student, said the field should be maintained for athletics.

Susie Lutz, an Ashland parent, said the field should be maintained for athletics and questions whether this was the best approach to increasing enrollment.

Justin Donovan, a resident of Ashland, said the field should be maintained for athletics.

Marie Caballero Uhtoff, an Ashland coach, said the field should be maintained for athletics.

Ann Gaffney, an Ashland resident, opposed the development and suggested we might find more creative ways to address enrollment.

## **7. ACTION ITEM: Approval of Development Partners**

Director Ruby said that he would abstain from voting on this motion. However, he believes this is the right thing to do for kids who are in grades K-8, and that it will position the school district for growth in 2043. He worked hard for many hours over the months on the development of Sunstone and this proposal.

Student Representative Owen Taylor commended students who stood up for what they believe in, and for doing it in a respectful way. He appreciated the talent of our students athletically and academically.

Student Representative Azaleah Davis-Powell said she has heard from many students that the project is important but they would appreciate an alternative location. There is support for affordable housing in Ashland but some don't want it next door.

Director Skuratowicz appreciated the passionate support of the public comment speakers on behalf of this space, and noted there are other voices that the board must also listen to. Housing has been an issue since she joined the Board in 2007-2008. Right now, the school district is looking at a death spiral with enrollment and the school board is responsible for maintaining a viable district. She is also a soccer mom and understands the feedback from that community.

Director Hatch said that the passion of speakers is palpable. He said that in some ways he thinks the issue has been misconstrued and misrepresented. He has tried to set aside his personal interest. The Board is embarking on a process to examine an opportunity, and there is still time to have a thoughtful engagement and investigation of the subject. They want to be solution focused and he hopes we can turn down the heat.

Director Franko moved the approval of the recommendation to move forward with Edlen & Company, Outlier Construction Company, arkitek:design&architecture, and the Greater Ashland Community Land Trust as the development partners for the Ashland Attainable Housing Project located at East Main and Mountain in Ashland, Oregon. Director Hatch seconded the motion. The directors voted:

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Director Dyson – Yes  
Director Franko – Yes  
Director Hatch – Yes  
Director Ruby – Abstain  
Director Skuratowicz – Yes

The motion carried by a vote of 4-0 with one abstention.

## 8. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Dyson adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by:

Jackie Schad, Board Secretary

Dated for Board Approval: February 13, 2025

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Board Chair Rebecca Dyson

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Superintendent Joseph Hattrick