



## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission 2025 Annual Report

Compiled and submitted by Chair Nancy Goodloe, Ellensburg City Council

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission operates under the authority of Chapter 1.88 of the City Code and is responsible for advising the City Council on diversity, equity and inclusion matters with the mission to support Ellensburg in celebrating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community that welcomes and is supportive to all residents and visitors because doing so enriches each individual's life and the community's wellbeing and vitality.

### Membership

The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission is a nine-member commission of community volunteers. The 2025 membership includes:

- Phil Backlund, term expires 5/31/2026
- Tylene Carnell (now VACANT), term expires 5/31/2027
- Kandee Cleary, term expires 5/31/2026
- Teresa Divine (now VACANT), term expires 5/31/2028
- M. Eliatamby-O'Brien, term expires 5/31/2027
- Amber Hoefer, term expires 5/31/2026
- Alex Mandujano (now VACANT), term expires 5/31/2028
- Serena Turney (now VACANT), term expires 5/31/2026
- Nancy Goodloe, City Council Member & Commission Chair

### 2025 DEI Commission Report & Accomplishments

Over the past year, the Commission continued its work in the midst of public debate and widespread misinterpretations of what equity efforts seek to achieve in our community. What follows is a summary of the Commission's key highlights and accomplishments from 2025, illustrating the breadth of our work amid these challenges.

### Community Engagement & Outreach

- Updated the Commission's Listening Tour policy and pre-session script to strengthen consistency and community trust.
- Hosted four Listening Tours in 2025 in partnership with Central Washington University, the Filipino American Student Association, MEChA, and EQuAI.
- Reached out to organizers of multicultural events in neighboring communities to build relationships and gather ideas for a multicultural event in Ellensburg. Explored options for hosting a Multicultural Day at the Farmers Market or Unity Park; the event did not materialize in 2025 but is still considered for 2026.
- Planned two Community Conversations for 2025; due to community constraints and ongoing controversy, these events did not move forward.
- Continued relationship-building with liaisons at the Ellensburg School District, Ellensburg Downtown Association, and Central Washington University.
- Three Commission members attended the Braver Angels Community Workshop as listeners to hear multiple perspectives from the community. The workshop aimed to identify shared ground regarding DEI-related concerns driving local controversy; the workshop concluded without consensus on the issues discussed.



- Continued partnership with the DEI Commission's community liaisons, including learning about emerging issues in their organizations and offering support and feedback to collectively strengthen community well-being.

### **Arts, Culture & Inclusivity Initiatives**

- Met with the City's Arts & Economic Development Manager to discuss opportunities for Commission involvement in citywide inclusive arts initiatives, and appointed a representative to participate in ongoing planning.
- Commission members served on the Juneteenth Event Subcommittee and attended the celebration.
- Created a grounding statement used at the start of Commission meetings, including definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging, as well as examples of how Commission work aligns with each principle.

### **Proclamations & Community Acknowledgements**

- Over the past four years, the Commission developed a suite of cultural and heritage proclamations to promote understanding, recognition, and celebration of communities represented in Ellensburg. These proclamations were submitted for inclusion in City Council meeting packets and historically read aloud, often by a member of the honored community. February 18, 2025, in response to some public scrutiny about the DEI Commission, Mayor Rich Elliott announced that these proclamations would no longer be read aloud at City Council meetings. The Commission continued submitting proclamations for the agenda packet despite this change. Proclamations developed and submitted by the Commission include:
  - National Black History Month
  - National Women's History Month & International Women's Day
  - Irish American Heritage Month
  - National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
  - Transgender Day of Visibility
  - Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Heritage Month
  - Jewish American Heritage Month
  - LGBTQ Pride Month
  - Juneteenth Day of Observance
  - Hispanic/Latinx Heritage Month
  - National Disability Employment Awareness Month
  - National Native American Heritage Month
- In 2023, the Commission created additional Recognition Days to be shared on the City's Facebook page, providing opportunities to uplift significant cultural observances and communities in Ellensburg. At the June 2, 2025 City Council meeting, Mayor Elliott announced that only federal holidays would be recognized on the City's Facebook page moving forward. Recognition Days developed by the Commission and their 2025 posting status:
  - Posted: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Random Acts of Kindness Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day, Veterans Day
  - Not posted: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day, Race Unity Day, International Day of Peace, Día de los Muertos

### **Policy, Advisory, and Government Engagement**

- Provided multiple equity-informed advisory recommendations to City Council, including guidance on the docketed Comprehensive Plan process and other policy issues related to inclusion and community wellbeing.
- Attended City Council meetings to offer public comment and address ongoing public criticisms and misinformation regarding the Commission's work.



- Requested and participated in a joint study session with City Council in June 2025 to clarify the Commission's scope, address widespread misinformation influencing Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals, and support a clearer understanding of the city's DEI values.
- Attended a Planning Commission Study Session to discuss the DEI Commission's recommendations to City Council regarding the Comprehensive Plan – Chapter 9.
- Received a briefing from City staff on the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update process; several Commission members also individually participated in Community Conversations about the future of the Commission and the DEI chapter in the Comprehensive Plan and attended the Community Workshop as listeners as part of the Comprehensive Plan docketing process.
- Submitted a third-option advisory recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding its proposal to City Council; this recommendation was not publicly acknowledged or discussed by the Planning Commission.
- Invested significant time drafting an equity-informed version of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 9, submitted to City Attorney for review, and formally recommended its adoption as part of City Council's review in place of the draft submitted by staff at the December 1<sup>st</sup> City Council meeting. The Commission held a Special Meeting to prioritize and advance this guidance to Council.

### **DEI Commission Grants**

- Launched the 2025 DEI Commission Grant Cycle, reviewed 6 applications, and awarded \$5,000 in total funding to five community-based projects (approved by City Council). 2025 Grant Recipients included:
  - Valley Voices Choir: Hosted 4 concerts and supported program accommodations for hearing-impaired participants, ASL interpretation at two concerts, and a language coach for a performance in a non-English language. All concerts were open to the public and advertised as such.
  - Kittitas County Recovery Community Organization: Provided Back-to-School supplies to help offset costs for low-income families.
  - Gallery One: Funded Spanish-language youth arts workshops, expanding access for low-income Hispanic/Latinx youth.
  - Ellensburg Ski Team: Provided skiing equipment for local youth who face financial barriers to participation.
  - Juneteenth Celebration: Funded culturally relevant musical performances for the community celebration.

### **Looking to the Future:**

As we reflect on 2025, the Commission underscores its desire to have played a more active advisory role to City Council throughout the year's significant challenges. Our members bring professional expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and community engagement, areas directly relevant to the issues at hand. We stand ready to support Council in navigating complex community dynamics, particularly when misinformation or heightened tensions arise. Not being consulted during key decision-making moments conveyed, intentionally or not, that our perspectives and expertise were not valued in this process.

While we anticipate changes to our Commission's scope of work in 2026, we hope that one thing does *not* remain consistent: the experience of being sidelined during public controversy about our work and, at times, about us as individuals. We remain committed to service, collaboration, and the well-being of all Ellensburg residents, and we look forward to opportunities for more meaningful partnership with Council in the year ahead.