

Minutes of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

CITY OF ELLENSBURG

Commission Meeting

Date of Meeting

March 10, 2026

Time of Meeting

3:00 PM

Place of Meeting

Council Chambers & Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Nancy Goodloe called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The group read the grounding statement.

Roll Call Present: Phil Backlund, Amber Darting, Nancy Goodloe, Judd Grey, Amber Hoefler, Cody Natland, and M. Eliatamby-O'Brien.

Also present: Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the DEI Commission; Stacey Henderson, Planning Manager; Lily Frey, Housing Program Manager; Chris Horner, City Attorney; Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, City Manager; Rhonda Schmidt, Ellensburg School District liaison; Ramona Bryant, League of Women Voters of Kittitas County; and 1 member of the public (in person).

2. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Cody Natland moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Amber Darting seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion approved 6-0.**

3. Public Comment

Chair Goodloe called for public comment. There was no public comment.

4. Approval of Commission Minutes from February 3, 2026 Meeting

Commissioner Phil Backlund moved to approve the meeting minutes from the February 3, 2026 DEI Commission meeting. Commissioner Judd Grey seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion approved 6-0.**

5. New Business

A. Arts & Economic Development Manager Kelle Vandenberg presented on the Kittitas County America 250 Celebration, which is in the planning process. The celebration includes multiple events over the year with a day of service on April 18 and a community picnic on July 4. The planning group is looking for help with funding (entire event is expected to be about \$3,000) and event planning. Staff will bring a funding request to the DEI Commission at a future meeting for consideration. Commissioners Backlund, Darting, and Natland expressed interest in joining the planning meeting if available.

There was a question about what equity initiatives are entwined with the celebration and initiative. There was a question about whether the event planning group could apply to an ArtsWA equity grant for the event. Staff will look into this.

B. Housing Program Manager Lily Frey reported on the Racially Disparate Impacts Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Frey shared information about the City's housing survey, which is available in English and Spanish. Suggestions for additional survey distribution included CWU (student success, employee council, faculty, and staff), Kittitas County Health Network, Kittitas Valley Ministerial Association, the Library, 509Teens, HelenHouse, and Kittitas Valley Healthcare). Staff will forward the survey flyer and information to DEI Commission members to share out.

There was a question and concern raised about the rate of acquisition of housing by large property owners and whether that could be considered a displacement risk. There was also a question about hearing from realtors and large property groups and what shape that could take.

There was a suggestion about checking with the Washington State Human Rights Commission and the Fair Housing Center of Washington about data they may have that would be helpful.

Chair Goodloe called for public comment; there was none.

C. Planning Manager Stacey Henderson reported on the Community Vulnerability Climate Element of Comprehensive Plan, which is a new required chapter. Staff asked for feedback on the climate hazards document.

Hoefler suggested another population to consider as at risk is farmworkers/fieldworkers for flooding/smoke/outdoor elements.

There was a question about whether the chapter would include goals and objectives; staff indicated yes.

Chair Goodloe called for public comment; there was none.

D. Staff reported the Council Chambers will be unavailable at the regular meeting time on July 14 due to a training for the wastewater treatment plan. Staff asked if the commission could meet at 5 p.m. instead. Commission members agreed that time would work. Staff will confirm availability of Commissioner Cleary and will then update calendars.

E. City Manager Heidi Behrends Cerniwey presented the staff recommendations on edits to Chapter 1.88 of the City code, which include renaming the commission. The edits include a suggestion to move from the Council-suggested Community Engagement Commission to Access & Engagement Commission. Staff plans to take the draft to the March 16 City Council meeting. If approved, there would be a second reading at the April 6 City Council meeting.

Behrends and City Attorney Chris Horner provided information about why the Council is considering the change including federal risk to grant dollars and staff risk and the desire to have the chapter frame the work of the commission.

Conversation included points that the name of the commission should highlight what the community is about and communicate that the community is welcoming.

Chair Goodloe made a motion to forward an alternative name to the City Council that included the word equity - Access, Equity, and Engagement Commission. Commissioner Cody Natland seconded the motion. During discussion, members noted the preference is to include the word equity in the name, but that Access and Engagement Commission was a secondary choice. Chair Goodloe asked if anyone would want to write up the rationale on that; there was not a volunteer. **Motion approved 6-0.**

The Commission provided other minor edits to staff.

William Coleman provided public comment.

6. Liaison Reports

Chair Goodloe asked if ESD liaison Rhonda Schmidt could give a report at a future meeting on the DOJ settlement and student survey. Staff will add this to a future agenda. The school district is doing some listening sessions for students and staff.

7. Subcommittee Reports

There were no subcommittee reports.

8. Commission Member Reports

There were no commission member reports.

9. Staff Report

Staff reported:

- There were just a few seats left in the Ellensburg Academy, taking place on March 11 & 18.
- The Ellensburg Fieldhouse Project is moving forward.
- Nominations are open for the Historic Preservation community-selected award.

10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the DEI Commission

Drafted: 3/13/26

Approved: 4/14/26