



Commission on Equity Agenda

Refer to the bottom of the agenda for meeting information.

Monday, July 28, 2025

5:30 PM

Council Chambers and Online

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Land Acknowledgement

We, the City of Lacey, are on the ancestral land of the Tribal People of the Treaty of Medicine Creek, including the Nisqually Indian Tribe and Squaxin Island Tribe. We acknowledge and remember those Tribal People not recognized today who were absorbed or relocated into other tribes for survival. We recognize the ancestors and their descendants who are still here. We recognize and respect the Tribal People of the Treaty of Medicine Creek as the traditional stewards of this land since time immemorial and their role today in taking care of these lands in perpetuity. We recognize and have the responsibility to call attention to the histories of dispossession, forced removal, and abridged treaty rights that allowed our nation, state, and city to develop as they have today. We recommend that community members read the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854.

4. Approval of Agenda, Previous Meeting Minutes, and Consent Items

- A. Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of June 23, 2025, meeting minutes

5. Public Comment

Refer to the bottom of the agenda for instructions on how to provide public comment.

6. Inspirational Item

- A. Thelma Jackson, Vice Chair

7. Business Items

- A. **Veterans, Active Duty, and Families Community Forum Recap**
Peyton Griffin, Communications Intern
- B. **2025 Work Plan Review**
Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

8. Commissioner Reports

A. **50th Anniversary Block Party**

Thelma Jackson, Vice Chair
Clifton Brown, Commissioner
Annie Clay, Commissioner

9. Director Report

A. **Equity Map**

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

B. **National Community Survey**

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

C. **Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Advisory Board Regional Meeting**

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

D. **Potential Human Services Commission Joint Meeting**

Shannon Kelley Fong, Assistant City Manager

10. Adjourn

Next Meetings and Upcoming Events

- **Commission on Equity Meeting** - August 25, 2025 - 5:30 p.m. at City Hall or remote
- **Commission on Equity Meeting** - September 22, 2025 - 5:30 p.m. at City Hall or remote

Attendance and Public Comment

Attend Remote or In-Person

There are several ways to attend the Commission on Equity Meeting:

In-Person: Council Chambers at Lacey City Hall
420 College Street SE, Lacey, WA 98503

Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GbHqElgSTKmQRtPqu8PXkw

City Website: <https://cityoflacey.org/government/public-meetings/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VX3DW2hfizY>

Phone: (888) 788-0099 or (877) 853-5247 (Webinar ID 865 4483 4249)

Verbal Public Comment

Each speaker is limited to three minutes. Comments are welcome on matters connected to City business or specific agenda items. **Ballot measure endorsements (in support or opposition) are not allowed during Public Comment. This includes comments on candidates or the Lacey Metropolitan Park District (RCW 42.17A.555).**

Prior to starting your comments, please provide your:

- a. Name
- b. City of residence or connection to the City

c. Topic or subject matter of your comments

The opportunity for verbal public comment is available in-person or by Zoom:

In-Person: Use the sign-up sheet located in the meeting room.

Zoom: Preregister using the following Zoom link no later than two hours prior to the meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GbHqElgSTKmQRtPqu8PXkw

Instructions and access details will be provided once registration is complete.

Written Public Comment

Please email written public comments to coe@cityoflacey.org. The comment period will close two hours before the meeting time. Commissioners will receive all written public comments provided by this deadline. Comments may not be addressed during the meeting. All comments are part of the official record.



Commission on Equity Minutes

Monday, June 23, 2025

Council Chambers and Online

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Kim Sauer, Chair (present at 5:45 p.m.); Thelma Jackson, Vice Chair; Commissioners Annie Clay, Raul Garza (present at 5:38), Makieda Hart, and Jon Hegwood (remote until 5:32, then present in person); and Kieran Sills-Powell, Lacey Youth Council Representative (present from 5:58 p.m. to 7:11 p.m.)

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Commissioner Clifton Brown

STAFF PRESENT: Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Hand, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager; and Brandy Legomina, Deputy City Clerk

3. Land Acknowledgement

Vice Chair Jackson presented the abbreviated Land Acknowledgment.

4. Approval of Agenda, Previous Meeting Minutes, and Consent Items

- A. Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of June 2, 2025, meeting minutes

Commissioner Hegwood arrived in person, leaving remote attendance at 5:31 p.m.

Commissioner Hart moved to approve the agenda, previous meeting minutes, and consent items. Councilmember Clay seconded. The motion carried.

5. Public Comment

Verbal Public Comment

No one signed up to speak at the meeting in person or remotely.

Written Public Comment

No written public comments were received.

6. Inspirational Item

A. Commissioner Jon Hegwood

Commissioner Hegwood discussed the efforts made by the Department of Defense to rename the Navy ship USS Harvey Milk and presented quotes from US Representative John Lewis, calling for hope, optimism, and necessary “good trouble” during times of despair.

7. Business Items

A. **Language Access Plan Review and Language Service Update**

Veronica Hand, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager

Commissioner Garza arrived at 5:38 p.m.; Chair Sauer arrived at 5:45 p.m., presiding over the remainder of the meeting; and Lacey Youth Council Representative Sills-Powell arrived at 5:58 p.m.

Hand presented an overview of the newly implemented language access service used to address language barriers for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). To help eliminate language-related barriers and comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a comprehensive Language Access Plan was presented for review. The Language Access Plan helps to ensure LEP individuals have equitable access to City programs, services, and communication. Discussion ensued.

B. **First-Time Homebuyer and Fair Housing Forum Introduction**

Veronica Hand, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager

Hand provided an update on the upcoming First-Time Homebuyer and Fair Housing Forum, hosted in partnership with the Thurston County Realtors Association. The event is scheduled for November 8, 2025, at the Lacey Community Center and is designed as an educational opportunity for first-time homebuyers, particularly those from historically underserved communities.

C. **Community Events and Celebrations Policy Review**

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

Kelley-Fong presented the draft Community Events and Celebrations Policy to the Commission for review. This policy is intended to support the implementation of a City grant program that funds community events and cultural celebrations. Given the City’s limited staff capacity to directly support additional community or cultural

events, establishing a grant program was recommended. The goals of the grant program and its requirements were discussed in detail.

Vice Chair Jackson moved to recommend the Draft Community Events and Celebrations Policy to the Lacey City Council, with an amendment to the "Eligible Entities" section to allow for a fiscal agency relationship for applicants. Commissioner Hegwood seconded. Motion carried.

8. Commissioner Reports

A. Juneteenth Proclamation

Commissioner Thelma Jackson

Vice Chair Jackson provided a review of the Juneteenth Proclamation, which was presented at the June 17, 2025, City Council meeting and accepted by President Larry Jefferson of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Discussion ensued regarding the scale-back of Juneteenth events.

B. LGBTQIA+ Pride Month Proclamation

Commissioners Annie Clay and Jon Hegwood

Commissioners Clay and Hegwood provided a review of the LGBTQIA+ Pride Month Proclamation, which was presented at the June 17, 2025, City Council meeting and accepted by Commissioners Annie Clay and Jon Hegwood of the Lacey Commission on Equity.

Discussion ensued regarding the Proclamation Against Hate, Racism, and Discriminatory Actions; Proclamation on Transgender Day of Visibility; and the Pride flag.

C. Pride Night at the Lacey Night Market

Commissioners Annie Clay and Jon Hegwood

Commissioners Clay and Hegwood provided a review of the Pride Night at the Lacey Night Market event, which occurred on June 13, 2025, at the Lacey Depot.

9. Director Report

A. Retreat Update

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

Kelley-Fong provided an update on the Commission on Equity Retreat, which is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 6, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The location will be determined at a later date.

B. Equity Map Update

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

Kelley-Fong presented an update on the Equity Map, which is scheduled for review at the June 24, 2025, Council meeting.

C. DEIB Advisory Board Regional Meeting Update

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

Kelley-Fong provided an update on the DEIB Advisory Board Regional Meeting. Kelley-Fong reached out to Thurston County to explore the possibility of them serving as the host for the meeting, in collaboration with the City of Olympia's Social Justice and Equity Advisory Board.

D. Community Forum Updates

Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager

Kelley-Fong provided updates on the following community forums:

- The Veterans, Active Duty, and Families Forum is scheduled to come before the Commission for an update in July.
- South Puget Sound Community College, Saint Martin's University, and various vocational schools will be contacted to explore opportunities to participate in future events designed for young adults.

Additional reports were discussed in detail:

- Vice Chair Jackson volunteered for the inspirational item at the next Commission meeting.
- An update on the utility wrap art project is scheduled to come before the Commission at a future date.
- Vice Chair Jackson requested a presentation from Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE), a project by United Way.
- Commissioner Hegwood provided information on HerSpace, an entrepreneurial makerspace, designed for women.

10. Adjourn

Chair Sauer adjourned the meeting at 7:11 p.m.



STAFF REPORT July 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Veterans, Active Duty, and Families Community Forum Discussion

RECOMMENDATION: For review and discussion only. Based on feedback from the Commission, the City will augment **Attachment 1** for final review at the next COE meeting.

STAFF CONTACT: Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager *SKF*
Peyton Griffin, Communications Intern

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Veterans, Active Duty, and Families Community Forum Summary Notes

FISCAL NOTE: None

PRIOR REVIEW: None

BACKGROUND: On May 28, 2025, the City of Lacey (City) hosted a Veterans, Active Duty, and Families – Community Forum (Forum) at the Lacey Veterans Services Hub (LVSH). The Forum was facilitated by the Commission on Equity (COE). There were approximately 32 community members in attendance, not including staff and COE members. The purpose of the Forum was to better understand the lived experiences, needs, and challenges of military-connected community members. This event is part of the City's broader commitment to building a more inclusive and welcoming community through its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Strategic Plan.

Like previous COE Community Forums, this Forum centered on small group discussions. At each table, a COE member served as the table facilitator and City staff acted as a notetaker. Attendees self-selected the table they wished to join. Each group responded to structured questions designed to capture authentic lived experiences and feedback related to equity, inclusion, and community participation.

Attachment 1 provides a synthesized summary of the feedback shared by community members in response to these questions. These insights are not verbatim, but represent thematic trends that emerged during the discussion.

Positive Experiences and Welcoming Factors:

Participants shared several positive aspects of living in the Lacey area as veterans, active-duty members, or family members:

- Lacey is seen as more veteran-welcoming than many other communities.
- Participants noted respect from the community, especially when wearing identifying attire.
- Support networks were found through civic organizations, local businesses, and service hubs.
- Family inclusion and visible representation of diverse veteran identities (LGBTQIA+, racial/ethnic, gender) were highlighted as meaningful.

Areas for Improvement:

Participants noted that while veterans may be respected publicly, genuine inclusion requires deeper, intentional efforts:

- Broader recognition of the diversity within veteran communities.
- More events that include and celebrate LGBTQIA+ veterans, veterans of color, and nontraditional families.
- Enhanced outreach to underrepresented groups (e.g., disabled veterans).
- Early pathways to civic involvement, including participation on local boards and commissions.
- Stronger, more cohesive communication and outreach – especially targeting JBLM, local colleges, and underserved communities.

Challenges and Barriers:

Community members identified persistent barriers that prevent equitable access and participation:

- Difficulties navigating healthcare systems (VA, Tricare), especially for behavioral health services.
- Housing insecurity, limited transportation, and job instability were common challenges.

- Lack of preparation for civilian systems post-discharge, with minimal guidance or follow-up.
- Veteran families – especially spouses and immigrant partners – reported exclusion from many services.
- Information gaps due to inconsistent digital communication and outreach limitations.

DEIB-Specific Insights:

Although some attendees were unfamiliar with DEIB terminology, most emphasized the need for deeper equity work:

- Veterans want a clear and visible role in Lacey’s DEIB efforts.
- Racial and cultural biases were reported in service access and broader community experiences.
- Participants voiced a desire for safe spaces and better support for LGBTQIA+ and disabled veterans.
- A call was made for services that recognize and affirm intersectional identities and nontraditional family configurations.

Community Participation and Next Steps:

To support greater civic engagement among military-connected community members, participants offered a range of suggestions:

- Expand mobile and printed outreach to reach veterans not online.
- Promote veterans as community contributors, not just as service recipients.
- Create more spaces for veterans to come together and celebrate.

Final Thoughts:

The Forum highlighted the City’s opportunity to better integrate military-connected voices into its broader DEIB strategies. The feedback shared reflects a strong desire for inclusion, respect, and belonging beyond symbolic gestures. Staff recommends using these insights to guide future planning, outreach, and resource development for veterans, active-duty members, and their families.

RECOMMENDATION: Review and discussion only. Based on feedback from the Commission and additional notes to be reviewed, the City will continue to augment **Attachment 1** for final review at the next COE meeting.

Attachment 1

The information below is an initial analysis of notes taken at the Veterans, Active Duty, and Families – Community Forum. Importantly, these notes were summarized and did not represent verbatim discussions.

Question 1: One or two positive experiences

Community members shared:

- Lacey and Olympia are more welcoming to veterans compared to other places like California and Yakima Valley
- Wearing veteran attire in public is met with respect, which wasn't the case in other regions
- Visibility of veterans in public leadership (e.g., local councils, mayor) increases feelings of inclusion
- Veterans feel normalized here—it's a part of everyday life, not something that sets them apart
- The community has a strong veteran presence and culture, making it easier to connect
- Supportive experiences at colleges like Evergreen State College and Saint Martin's University with veteran programs and tuition discounts
- Chamber of Commerce and local resources helped some veterans start their own businesses
- Participation in local programs like Lions Club and Veterans Advisory Boards helped foster a sense of purpose and belonging

Question 2: What made you feel welcome?

Community members discussed:

- Strong neighborhood connections and camaraderie
- High concentration of veterans and military-connected families makes integration easier
- Diversity among veterans—LGBTQIA+, racial/ethnic, gender—is increasingly visible
- Local events (BBQs, July 3rd, community fairs) bring people together
- Children and families found it easier to connect and settle in

- Returning veterans appreciate the growth, landscape, and emotional safety of Lacey
- Inclusive community atmosphere, especially compared to more conservative or isolated places like Yelm or Gig Harbor
- Veterans find value in participating in community groups and programs
- Supportive city staff and well-organized programs like the Lacey Veterans Services Hub (LVSH)
- Programs like the Hub allow veterans to both receive and give back to their communities

Question 2c: What would make you feel more welcome?

Community members shared they would feel more welcome if there were:

- More inclusive and diverse events recognizing veterans' contributions
- Symbolic support such as sanctuary city status or pride events for LGBTQIA+ veterans
- A stronger focus on celebrating veterans' skills and contributions, not just expressions of gratitude
- More outreach about available services, especially targeting new or transitioning veterans
- Earlier exposure to boards, committees, and how to get involved in decision-making
- Practical recognition of underrepresented groups (e.g., queer, trans, immigrant spouses)
- Increased outreach at local events like July 3rd or the BBQ Festival
- One-pagers or flyers distributed at JBLM and colleges to share resources
- More visible support and resources for spouses and families of veterans

Question 3: Have you ever felt excluded?

Community members mentioned:

- Shunning or discomfort in social settings, particularly for veterans in academic or activist environments
- Political climate can feel alienating if views differ from community norms

- Veterans of color reported subtle racial biases—e.g., being followed or looked at with suspicion
- Some more recent veterans felt unwelcomed in veteran social groups
- Transitioning veterans often feel isolated, especially when arriving without local friends or family
- Misconceptions about veterans, assumptions that they are only trained for combat roles
- Cultural and racial microaggressions persist in some community areas
- LGBTQIA+ and trans veterans or families may experience a lack of visible support in certain places
- Veterans don't want to be "thanked" with pity or performative gestures, they want real inclusion and opportunity
- Spouses and immigrant partners often feel unsupported or invisible in existing services
- Homeless veterans and those with mental health needs feel especially excluded from support structures

Question 4: What challenges have you experienced related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)?

Community members discussed:

- Some veterans confused or alienated by the language of DEIB—feeling it creates barriers rather than unity
- Communities like Yelm and Gig Harbor are less diverse, making reintegration harder
- Veterans miss the racial and cultural diversity they experienced in the military
- Young and marginalized veterans (e.g., LGBTQIA+, disabled, formerly incarcerated) often struggle with belonging
- Homelessness, PTSD, and economic instability make DEIB irrelevant if basic needs aren't met
- Racial bias and public discomfort still exist in some community spaces (e.g., clutching purses, locking car doors)
- Local organizations like AASHO are working to create inclusive cultural and community spaces

- There's a need for local DEIB efforts to include veteran voices and experiences

Question 5: What barriers have you encountered?

When asked about barriers, community members shared:

- Healthcare access — limited providers, long waits, and complexity navigating VA, Tricare, and Community Care
- Mental health support is insufficient, especially for high-disability veterans or those without private insurance
- Housing affordability and access are serious challenges, especially for new arrivals and families
- Veteran spouses lack tailored resources or transition support
- Reservists face unique barriers when navigating services
- Communication challenges—veterans don't know about resources or events unless directly contacted
- Utility bill inserts are not effective; printed newsletters or digital outreach preferred
- Employment opportunities are limited, especially for those with leadership or technical skills from the military
- Lack of up-to-date provider directories for healthcare navigation

Question 6: What would encourage or increase your ability to participate more in community decisions?

Community members discussed:

- Clearer communication — advance notice about meetings, board openings, and surveys
- More outreach at schools, churches, veteran events, and community centers
- Diverse outreach methods: social media, printed flyers, radio, in-person events
- Events to foster pride and engagement
- Opportunities to meet elected officials and city leaders in informal settings
- Veteran-friendly advisory boards with outreach to new residents
- Remove the digital divide by offering information both online and offline

- Use mobile ideas (e.g., ice cream truck) to promote city activities
- Normalize veteran involvement by showing them as contributors, not recipients of charity

Question 7: What surprised you when transitioning out of military service?

Community members mentioned:

- Lack of support for navigating civilian systems (e.g., housing, insurance, healthcare)
- VA follow-up is minimal (only a few calls and little real guidance)
- Veterans often don't know about available state resources, only federal ones are emphasized
- Difficulty building new relationships after constant relocations during military service
- Realizing there's no long-term friend group due to years of moving — replaced with a national network
- Lack of community awareness about what veterans go through post-service
- Severance and disability compensation laws are confusing and financially restrictive
- Sense of being "on your own" despite promises of support
- Spouses and families feel unprepared and unsupported by transition services
- Seasonal depression and adjustment to civilian emotional environments were unexpected and difficult