

A Brief History: Creating the Human Rights Commission

In August of 1997 at a joint meeting of the Pullman City Council and Washington State University's President's Cabinet, WSU President Sam Smith suggested the city and university enter into a joint venture to enhance the attractiveness of the Pullman/WSU community. These preliminary discussions led to the development of the Livability Task Force (LTF).

The first meeting of the Livability Task Force took place on October 16, 1997. Representatives of Washington State University (WSU), the City of Pullman, the Pullman Chamber of Commerce and the Pullman School District participated in the meeting. The Task Force agreed that the university and the city should work together to ensure that the community (broadly defined) is hospitable to all who live here. The LTF identified four areas of specific concern: Economic Issues, Climate Issues, Student Issues, and Promotion/Marketing Issues.

To address these issues the LTF discussed the creation of a human relation's council based on a Fort Collins, Colorado model. In January 1998, a draft plan for a Human Relations Commission was distributed to members of the Livability Task Force and circulated for public input in February.

Community members proposed the name of the organization be the Pullman Human Rights Commission. The Livability Task Force considered all public input and developed the following charges for the newly created Pullman Human Rights Commission.

1. Be proactive in insuring that the rights of all people and groups are protected.
2. Identify current efforts and existing programs with the purpose of helping WSU and Pullman better enhance diversity.
3. Describe the characteristics of a livable community.
4. Identify barriers to the attainment of a livable community.

5. Identify the means by which the community can achieve its desired goals.

6. Develop recommendations for the community at large or for government, business, and education groups.

7. Identify ways to ensure ongoing communication about livability issues; this may include publications, public forums, or news releases.

8. Address specific issues brought to the Commission through dialogue, intervention as necessary, or referral to appropriate entities.

9. Provide annual reports to the Livability Task Force that include recommendations.

10. Address policies, laws, and actions that may be counter to the goals of the community and the Human Rights Commission.

11. Recognize individuals who have made substantive contributions fostering respect for diversity in our community.