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City Council establishes Human Relations board

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Lancaster City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to create its own Human Relations Commission.

While the city has had a protective ordinance in place since 1991 to deal with cases of discrimination, it was tied in with the Lancaster County Human Relations, which does not address cases regarding marital status or sexual orientation.

The newly approved city commission provides enforceability for all kinds of discrimination.

The initiative was undertaken by the council's personnel committee, headed by council member Steve Diamantoni.

Volunteers are now being sought to serve on the five-member commission.

The commission will hear cases involving discrimination. Severe cases will be turned over for investigation to the county's commission, which has agreed to look at them on a case-by-case basis.

"We're going that way because the county already has the structure in place," Diamantoni said.

Approval, which came after nearly a year of meetings, was greeted with applause by many in the audience.

Councilwoman Julianne Dickson said she was glad council's vote was unanimous. She said it shows the city "denounces and condemns discrimination, intolerance and inequality, and that we strive for equal treatment for all of our citizens."

Resident Mark Stoner, who attended many of the meetings leading up to approval, thanked the council for its support and their "courage.

"You're the first council in over 10 years to bring it up," Stoner said.

Laura Montgomery Rutt of the Lancaster Alliance for Tolerance and Freedom, also thanked council and said she hopes the county will take note.

"I hope the county commissioners will urge the rest of the county to become a hate-free zone," she said.

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