

# Town of Comox Candidates

## Contents

<b>Questions to the Comox Candidates</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TOWN OF COMOX MAYORAL CANDIDATES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TOWN OF COMOX COUNCIL CANDIDATES</b>	<b>4</b>
Jenn Meilleur	4
Kealy Donaldson	4
Steve Blacklock	4
Ken Grant	5
Jonathan Kerr	5
Peter Gibson	6
Maureen Swift	6
Chris Haslett	6

## **Questions to the Comox Candidates**

1. Please tell us how you currently use the Cumberland Trail Network?
2. Do you support mountain biking and how do you envision mountain biking being part of Comox Valley's future?
3. Why do you feel that the Cumberland trails are an important community asset/amenity for the Comox Valley, and how would you champion them?
4. Would you support a permanent regional funding stream for UROC to continue to manage the Trail Network? What would a sustainable local government funding model for the Cumberland Trail Network look like to you?

For reference we included the UROC Trails Strategic Plan to every candidate.

# TOWN OF COMOX MAYORAL CANDIDATES

## No response recieved from:

- Nicole Minions

# TOWN OF COMOX COUNCIL CANDIDATES

## Jenn Meilleur

Thank you again for the work you do to support Mountain Biking and thank you for engaging with the candidates about this!

1. I have family members who are riders and trail builders. I hope to trail run on these trails sometime soon.
2. Yes, I do support mountain biking. Mountain biking already plays a big role in building community and supporting an active and healthy lifestyle, while also supporting local economic development. I hope to see mountain biking continue to grow.
3. The Cumberland Trails provide an invaluable network of outdoor spaces for people to connect with nature, exercise, and have fun in solitude or with friends --> trail networks like these are integral for the health and wellness of locals and visitors alike. The Cumberland trail network has the added benefit of bringing people from all over the world to the Comox Valley to mountain bike - so we also benefit economically, regardless of which municipality or electoral area we live in. From a Community Economic Development perspective, I think there's an opportunity for Comox to draw people to our seaside Town as a place to enjoy and stay while coming to enjoy the trails.
4. I believe that local governments have an important role to play in helping to establish diverse and stable funding streams for non-profit groups who are providing core services for local social and environmental wellness. I hope that the Town of Comox will develop a formal grant in aid program, similar to many other local governments locally and provincially.

## Kealy Donaldson

1. I do not currently.
2. I think it is prevalent now and many enjoy this amazing recreational sport - all over Vancouver Island and beyond. It has a strong place hold in the future of the Comox Valley.
3. All trails are important in my view and Cumberland Trail Network is no different. It's important that citizens have recreational access - at all levels of ability!
4. I think it's reasonable to allocate maintained funding; an engagement process through your stakeholders would bring valued information as who and how the Trail Network could sustain annual funding. What would a sustainable local government funding model for the Cumberland Trail Network look like to you? The possibility of allocating funding, from all stakeholders including Municipalities, KFN, CVRD, Users and the potential to tap into Provincial and Federal sponsorship seems likely with the growing use and diversity of the Trail Network. A regional approach would benefit the network at the highest level.

## Steve Blacklock

1. I am a trail runner and support UROC and the Cumberland Community Forest Society via my annual participation in both the Cumby and Perseverance running events.
2. Mountain biking is a huge and increasingly popular sport / activity for people of all ages in the Comox Valley. I applaud UROC's efforts to manage the increasingly busy trail network.
3. Mountain biking creates both jobs and volunteer opportunities throughout the Comox Valley. The Cumberland Trail Network draws trail users from all over the island and around the world. As an elected

official in Comox, I would continue to promote the “Cumby Trails” to residents and tourists alike.

4. My understanding is that UROC’s annual budget is already funded 20-25% taxpayer dollars via grants. While I realize that grant funding is often thwart with issues and unpredictability, I cannot comment as to whether a better funding model involving the Town of Comox is feasible at this time. In my opinion, future government funding for UROC should most logically come from BC Tourism, VI Tourism, and CV Tourism which in turn funded through taxes.

## Ken Grant

1. As I live in Comox, I am an occasional user of the trails.
2. I think Mountain biking is a big draw for locals and tourism alike to the Valley, so I am in full support of Mountain biking.
3. The Cumberland trails are important for the health and well-being of not only Cumberland but the entire valley I think they are one of many tourisms draws to the region.
4. A permanent funding supply is a tough one as every community has assets that serve the whole valley. In Comox we have the Marina which only Comox pays for and that is not a small bill. Courtenay has the Sid Williams theater and other things. I don’t think it is fair to single out one community amenity for funding unless you include all of them.

## Jonathan Kerr

1. Our family of four loves to hike in the Cumberland Forest. (Our favorite trail is Mama Bear!) Many thanks to UROC and your members for the countless hours of work that you do to keep these trails in such great shape. We always enjoy our visits to Cumberland to enjoy the Disc Golf Course, park, and downtown shops and restaurants.

Thank you for sharing your 2022 UROC Strategic Plan with me. I particularly appreciated reviewing the Zone Map (Figure 2) and reading about your ongoing commitment to sustainability. It is an impressive document

2. As a family doctor in the Valley, I am passionate about supporting all ways in which we can foster a **Healthy Community, Healthy People, and a Healthy Environment.**

Mountain biking is a great example of a sport that gets people outdoors, participating in a physical activity, while building community.

I am a coach and athlete with the Vancouver Island Biathlon Club. We organize two Mountain Bike Biathlon Races every summer. The participants really have a blast doing a technical course, with shooting bouts in between each lap. There are even penalty loops for each shot that you miss. (See pictures below from the adult and kid races).

Thinking about next summer, it would be great if UROC and the Vancouver Island Biathlon Club could collaborate on putting a race together for your members, to give them the opportunity to try a new sport and put their mountain biking skills to the test on a different set of trails.

3. The Cumberland Trails are an important asset for the entire Comox Valley. I have many patients, friends, and neighbors that also use the Cumberland Trails, many of whom take the short drive from Comox to Cumberland to enjoy the extensive Cumberland Trail network.

In my family practice, I often write prescriptions for exercise and spending time in nature. Mountain biking is

a great activity to promote physical and mental health.

From an economic and tourism perspective, the Cumberland Trails attract visitors to the Comox Valley from across Vancouver Island, the mainland, and the rest of Canada, which supports our local businesses and economy.

4. I recently supported the creation of a Regional Parks Service for the entire Comox Valley Regional District. I recommended we focus on the connectivity of our trails and greenways with our neighboring municipalities, to encourage active transportation and physical activity. Accountability and transparency are important to me, so you view my voting record on my website [www.healthycomox.ca](http://www.healthycomox.ca)

A Regional Parks Service could potentially serve as a permanent regional funding stream for UROC, allowing your members the funding and support required to maintain and improve the Cumberland Trails for years to come.

## **Peter Gibson**

1. Do not mountain bike! Quite active in former life on Mount Washington. First mountain bike on Mt W. It was a Rocky Mountain with no suspension, padded brakes and no lift (yet) access. Incredible trail system circumnavigating the physical mountain. I was hooked!
2. The future of mountain biking is an important element to active transportation in the Comox Valley and adjacent mountains.
3. Mountain biking is one of the many activities that the Comox Valley has to offer. Current structure of marketing the Comox Valley is uncertain. Similar concerns regarding current status and priorities of economic development. Directed funding could evolve from a regional economic development plan?
4. Need to know more about Comox council philosophy on funding regional projects. Comox focused projects have priority for Comox Council first. Ever consider user pay? Controversial but should be on the table for discussion.

Having said the above, what you folks have accomplished is a precedent setting example how a community, public and private ownership, care of environment and users can be driven by heart with sound organization and philosophy. Well done.

## **Maureen Swift**

1. I am not a trail user.
2. I believe mountain biking is a fantastic activity and our trails are a real asset for tourists and locals.
3. I believe the trails allow people an opportunity to get out and challenge themselves both physically and mentally. This was especially important as a way to gather during the pandemic.
4. I believe UROC does receive some funding from the Regional District. I am not sure how much money would be required to create a permanent funding model.

## **Chris Haslett**

1. I do not currently use the trail network.
2. I do support mountain biking as part of the future of the valley. I love how the community has embraced it

and made it a destination for riders. As the valley continues to grow and thrive, marketing the trails to bring in more tourism to the area is a win in all areas as far as I can see it.

3. Touching on the answer above, I would also encourage marketing of the area and trails on town and community websites to attract riders and grow the user base.
4. At this time, I would need to see what funding currently looks like as well as where the money is currently coming from in order to answer this best. Would this be a joint funding from Cumberland, Comox, Courtenay, and the RD or is this something that could be funded through the provincial government to get the best impact?

I appreciate your questions and time. Regarding question 4, I would love to know more on how this is currently working so that I could best think on how to help the cause.

**No response recieved from:**

- Alex Bissinger
- Don Davis
- Ruby Sidhu