



Comox Valley 2026 Municipal Election

Questions for Candidates

VIVIAN CHISLETT RESPONSES - SEPT 29, 2026

Social Sector/All Candidates Forum

“Making the Comox Valley a Healthier Place to Live”

September 22, 2026

Dear Chris, & Community Leaders,

Thank you all for your informative presentations. I loved the presentation style and format of how this event went. It worked easily, was able to absorb the information, hear the connectedness and feel the heartfelt human passion from each of you.

Before I respond directly to your questions, I would like to share a bit of what this process of putting my name in for nomination has been like for me. And then a bit of who I am. I feel compelled to do this as I am finding that the level of requests, asking for positional inputs, overall expectations of local council and mounting pressure that we are all feeling daily, coming forward from all directions.

How to balance them, with my own well being, is certainly a new space for me.

I am now understanding this is the political landscape, and the domain of the job, yet I am asking, if we want our government to reflect us, then how to can we make the processes itself more aligned to how different humans relate and function.

For me, clearly social determinants need to start first with our personal campaigns, then seeing how this shows up at the councils we elect, living in behaviour in council chambers and how/what is voted on, our community interactions on the ground.

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TEL. (250) 218-011 2 **EMAIL:** info@cvsocialplanning.ca **WEB:** cvsocialplanning.ca

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I am finding the public personas that seem to be created to deal with the competing interests of many, an interesting space.

I was part of an all candidates meeting and found at the end, just listening to an incumbent in Comox, that I have sat and watched in council during this last term, speak in a certain manner, address the questions in a polished way, that I too would have voted for that person.

Even though in council chambers, we see little of that actually happen. With either voting or behaviour.

4 incumbents from Comox also chose not to show up at this event.

How to flush out this gap?

I chose to run, so I can keep the conversation about transparency, accountability, listening, in our local election process.

What I would love to see, in round table discussion format, is who are you From where do you make your decisions? What values are key, and how do they connect with your skills and experiences? And how does that relate to our community group...

Broad general questions are natural... yet questions of commitment, changes, etc, while I understand the need for this, are also at the same time creating stances where perhaps curiosity be more transparent.

I will answer these questions from there. If I have not heard the question the way it is being asked or I missed something, please know, navigating these waters is new, and it is not as obvious or clear for us coming in, as it is for all of you who have been inside the systems.

I appreciate the dedication you have to ensuring all humans are seen and felt loved for being human, regardless of what state their lives look like. I am inspired by the focus your groups have in ensuring that transparency is real, and interconnectedness is the only way to have real on the ground solutions. Thank you for your service to humanity. We are going to need this more in this next collective shift.

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Let's put people back in planning, all humans in housing, humanity as the backbone to the systems we design.

The Questions

a) Comox Valley Hospice Society

As a trained End of Life Doula, I absolutely feel this is an essential service in our health service. I received my certification from Douglas College six years ago, as I wanted to be ready to be able to assist my family and personal friends at what I feel is the most precious part of our lives. Everyone deserves to die with dignity. I have been blessed to be with three friends and my father during this time.

- i. Would you support including the Hospice Society in age-friendly and community planning?

Absolutely. It is an essential service.

- ii. Would you be willing to explore opportunities for municipal space, grants or other partnerships for the Hospice Society?

Yes. How far this conversation can go at the Comox Council table will depend on who our voters elect in.

- iii. Would you help ensure rural hospice needs are represented in regional and provincial conversations?

Yes. If there is a way for me to do that. Not sure what level of advocacy Comox Council will take and where. Again it will depend on what council we have.

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b) Hornby Denman Health

5 years ago, my husband and I developed a concept called the 'Butterfly House' to independently age in place, yet together. It is based on the format of the Abbey House, with some changes.. We were looking for different types of aging in place than what we see as either institutional, or age in place, as we could see what's coming. This was presented to Glacier View, as one option there. I currently assist a 94 year old friend, age in place in Comox. The only reason he is able to do so, is due to his friend network and his scooters. His legs are no longer stable. He is on a wait list for a place, it looks like 2 years. So now his friends are having to move more into role of caregiving. He is adamant about his autonomy and we are grateful that he is sound mind. Another friend of ours, needed to move into full time care and could only do so, until a GP was found, which took 2 months. Fortunately, she has enough financial resources to pay the \$10,000 month for private care at Casa Loma. My 28 year old niece has been trying to get a diagnosis for a visual disturbance issue that has altered her life completely. She can no longer drive, or work and is entirely dependent on us for her well being. We have been through the system for past 2 years both in Vancouver and on Island. We have looked seriously at going to Taiwan or China, where we could pay for the level of tests she requires and is not getting in the system. It is heart wrenching to watch her lose weight, she now at 103 lbs, and have internists tell me they can't rule out she has an eating disorder. Even after I have explained what she eats, etc.. The gaps are real.

i. Rural and remote equity

When a service exists somewhere in the Comox Valley but is difficult or costly to access, how would you determine whether an equity gap exists and what do you believe is the appropriate role of local government in addressing it?

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I feel strongly that local governments need to utilize the community resources much more. I would refer back to what measurements your group and others are using. As I am just starting to understand where local jurisdiction powers lie, it is not yet clear the level or roles municipalities can actually work on this. And not yet sure what level of advocacy Comox Council will take and where. Again it will depend on what council we have. It will also depend on the next Council approaches in their direction to Town mgmt, on opening up how to pursue new learning and public discourse conversations.

ii. Role of municipal government in addressing the social determinants of health

If many factors affecting a person's health—such as loneliness, food insecurity, transportation, housing, social isolation or lack of community connection—cannot be addressed through a medical appointment, what role do you think local government should play in strengthening the community infrastructure and connections that can address those needs?

Certainly ensuring citizens know the available resources that are accessible in Town of Comox, is key. Communications as a service will be something that I bring to the Council table. Discussing with D'Esterre Centre, our local churches to see where they are distributing this type of information. Again, how this next council embraces advocacy in the 'doing', at what level, will depend entirely on who is elected in. I will be a voice to bring this conversation forward.

iii. Collaboration

Hornby Denman Health, with support from United Way's Healthy Aging program, is leading the Comox Valley Healthy Aging Community Collaborative. The purpose is not just to share information, but to identify systemic barriers and work collectively toward solutions. What would you be prepared to bring to that table—authority, resources, partnerships, policy change or advocacy—and how would you know whether our collective efforts were making a meaningful difference for older adults and other residents experiencing barriers to wellbeing?

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I expect each organisation or collectively you have a system of measuring. Perhaps each organisation or collaboratively. 15 years ago, I worked in a Real Estate Foundation funded values matrix for Jack Menard at CVLT to assess development applications against those organisations' values. I would advocate for the same as long as it has a lived experience component. After working in policy planning for past 20 years, I have seen way too many ideas, move into conceptual frameworks, and systems that have little reality to what is happening in our lives.

c) Comox Valley Community Justice Centre

A clear motivator for me running is to see stronger integrity, ethics, listening and respectful dialogue, debate at the Comox Council table. And how our public personas are lived in reality at decision time. I have been involved for the past two years during our Official Community Plan process and have seen all sorts of behaviours that are not appropriate in 2026.

- i. What is one way you might implement anti-racist/hate principles and Restorative Justice principles into your work on Council?

Review where the Town of Comox is with this, as a council table and within the structure. Assess if there are any gaps. Be a transparent, kind, compassionate human, able to listen to others perspectives, even if they differ from my own. Be curious. Stand strong when these behaviours come forward. Stop a council meeting (I believe there is some sort of process to do this), if this arises. Use the new internal ethics Bill 17 to respond directly, if its at Council table.

- ii. How do you envision Council working collaboratively with non-profits to ensure community knowledge informs decision-making, while also finding opportunities to align plans, priorities, and resources so we can maximize community impact?

Council can only be collaborative going forward. There is no other model that can work with the level of complexity of forthcoming issues, fiscal responsibility, competing interest and asset management which is upon us. There needs to be better mechanisms for hand on expertise from the community, knowledge,

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sound contribution at the table. I am just learning how Town's staffing resources are limited in every department. Council needs to vet and build a reliable network with non-profits so they can get efficient response, to assist in whatever decisions are being made.

d) Comox Valley Conservation Partnership

20 years ago when I first moved to the Comox Valley, I was on the board of the CVLT. I got involved then, as the maps started to really show the level of loss coming and the absolute need for wildlife corridors. In that period (2007ish), I created a successful fundraiser called the Lorax Award with CVLT, BC Hydro, K'omoks First Nations, where people nominated school aged children for their caring actions around nature. All nominees were then invited by Kumugwe Dancers, to learn a dance. An event was held, 1st year Band Hall, 2nd year Long House, where the nominee was announced for their actions, then someone in the audience had to stand up and declare that they would plant a tree in their name. Each child received a Lorax book. It was a powerful experience. Tree seedlings were also donated for any audience member to take home. It was a wonderful way to explore, exchange, protect. Forward to today. I am now an advocate in our neighbourhoods in Comox for all that which has no human voice. Couple years back I presented to council about the value of natural assets on the budget line. Including the obvious, forest, species, water, but also the light corridors, skyline, ocean view scapes. These are also a fundamental part of what make Comox a unique and special community. As densification is here, it is the time to use 3d modelling to understand what is impacting what.

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- i. Will you protect and restore forest lands in Comox Valley watersheds?

I will use my council voice to continue to speak for that which has no human voice. With my 20 years in planning and architecture, I will bring my development experience to understand how a conceptual idea of a multi-family actually lives on it's site and what will be the lasting loss in exchange for the housing. Competing interests are here and they are very real. We need to be able to assess and find where they overlap, and their impacts.

- ii. Will you protect, enhance, and restore urban watersheds?

I will bring voice to this in the conversations that will bring impact to all watersheds. How action is taken, will depend entirely on the Comox Council that is elected and what they represent and reflect.

- iii. Will you increase access and connection to nature for all Comox Valley residents?

Yes. Comox has just completed a couple of plans that address this directly. With a policy in place, it will be possible to see where the gaps exist within the zoning bylaw and applications coming forward.

e) Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy

Coming out of Concordia University, (oh way back when) as a trained social research (with a focus on quality of life), my first couple years working was with street workers in Montreal and Toronto, understanding what their lives were like, what their needs were and how community could address them. I also did quality of life research in all of Quebec prisons. In recent times, I have not been focused with the details of substance abuse. I am aware of these issues and challenges we face. This is one area, I will have delve much deeper into again.

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The Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy has outlined clear recommendations for prevention, education, and culturally informed care. [

<https://www.courtenay.ca/city-hall/corporate-information/master-plans-and-strategies/community-substance-use-strategy>]

- i. If elected, how will you use your political position to support this strategy and actively implement these recommended actions to address the social determinants of health, with the goal of improving health outcomes across the Comox Valley?

First, let's address the CV Substance Use Strategy - I need to get back into understanding this in a thoughtful meaningful way. I certainly know I will bring critical thinking, looking at gaps and curious mind to opening up to see if there are spaces that have not yet been explored.

2nd - Local governments do have limited scopes and responsibilities. This is being shared with us new candidates quite often. However, one level of service is planning. And for some that just means pipes, water, garbage, sewer. However, for myself, social determinants are really talking about the neighbour next door. How is she/he living with whatever is happening in the home. Can they get to their appointment. Are they eating. Do they need a babysitter. Does the dog need to be walked. What happens when someone falls? Are bills being paid? Are they getting outside enjoying life. If someone is asking for food, money on street, what do we do. If we feel unsafe around others, how do we express that? If someone is driving too fast and I no longer walk. All of these questions are how do we support each other in our neighbourhoods so our overall community is healthy. And how does our council represent and reflect that at the table.

f) Comox Valley Early Years Collaborative

In 2018, I volunteered for one of the Montessori pre-schools in Courtenay. I loved this experience as it taught me the beauty and simplicity of how young children experience the world. I had forgotten that from my earlier times as an

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au pair in France. It did bring clearly forth what their needs are. Without the fundamentals, how can we expect them to become thriving citizens.

- i. What is your understanding of the challenges facing families with young children in the Comox Valley, particularly families experiencing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities?

I learned from your presentation of how many children are living with these vulnerabilities here. There is a lot more I need to learn about this area. With a background focus on quality of life, I understand the dynamics of how one area can influence impact another in our lives.

- ii. What role should local government play in supporting accessible, affordable and inclusive early learning and childcare in our community?

This role just came up at the Town of Comox Council table. A non-profit Montessori school needed to move into a proper zoning. Finally, they found a commercial space downtown. There was support to do that. Then they asked for a tax exemption. It was not granted by this current Council. I have not taken the time to understand what was weighed and how that vote went this way. However, it brings forward the key issue for the Comox Council. Decision making trees are absolutely necessary to show citizens how this vote was arrived at. For me, I would have voted yes. It is the one mechanism a council has to support families and children in our downtown core. I want to understand how and why the council decides yes or not and what competing interest took priority (clearly something else did here).

- iii. Early years are everybody's business. What specific action would you take during your term to improve outcomes for young children and families in the Comox Valley?

It has been great to see Comox moving into this space during this past four years. I know Mayor Minions has been a champion on supporting more

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children and families in Comox. I would continue to advocate for more daycares, as this is the only way families are going to be able to make it work.

As for actions, yes. If there is a way for me to do that. Not sure what level of advocacy Comox Council will take and where. Again it will depend on what council is elected and the direction they focus on for priorities.

g) Immigrant Welcome Centre

Comox Valley has a [Welcoming Communities Plan](#) (2025-2028) developed by the Welcoming Communities Coalition, North Vancouver Island Local Immigration Partnership

[<https://immigrantwelcome.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/WCC-Community-Plan-2025-28-Revised-Feb25.pdf>].

"My name is Yevhenii Sushko. My family and I came to Canada in April 2022, seeking safety from the war in Ukraine. The adjustment took some time, and finding employment was one of my main priorities. In Ukraine, I was a licensed architect, and I wanted to continue designing homes here in the Comox Valley. Vivian Chislett provided me with tremendous help and support throughout this process. She involved me in several volunteer projects that helped me adapt to the local building culture and Canadian building codes. Vivian introduced me to local architects and helped me secure my first job in residential design. This was especially valuable because that job also helped me obtain permanent residency. My wife, Oksana, also received free consultations on several occasions regarding job searching and adapting to the local community. In many ways, it was thanks to Vivian Chislett that we were able to adapt to life here so quickly and make the decision to stay in Canada!

In 2022, my husband and I hired a recent architect, Yevhenii Sushko who had arrived from the Ukraine to work with us on 2 conceptual proposals. We did this after I went to the Job Shop with him, only for him to be told he would never make more than \$25 an hour by his rep at the Job Shoppe. I was so dismayed by this approach that I took it upon myself for 3 months to network him into our industry. While his english

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was lacking, when he began to work with John architecturally, we began to see that architecture is a universal language. We also saw that Yevhenii was one of the better architects we had ever seen. So to learn his skills, we engaged him to do a conceptual plan for temporary living at the former Comox Elementary Site. SD 71 was willing to grant us a 5 year lease, and had aligned with your organisation to have your group be the community partner. This project did not move forward due to some issues, primary being Town of Comox planning would not support the plan. Did not take it to Council.

It identifies four priorities when it comes to coordinated action for supporting newcomers in our region.

- Sense of belonging
- Access to information and services
- Meaningful employment
- Sustainable leadership

i. If elected, what will you do in relation to each priority area in your municipality?

This is the lens I live with and move it into action every day. "My name is Yevhenii Sushko. My family and I came to Canada in April 2022, seeking safety from the war in Ukraine. The adjustment took some time, and finding employment was one of my main priorities. In Ukraine, I was a licensed architect, and I wanted to continue designing homes here in the Comox Valley. Vivian Chislett provided me with tremendous help and support throughout this process. She involved me in several volunteer projects that helped me adapt to the local building culture and Canadian building codes. Vivian introduced me to local architects and helped me secure my first job in residential design. This was especially valuable because that job also helped me obtain permanent residency. My wife, Oksana, also received free consultations on several occasions regarding job searching and adapting to the local community. In many ways, it was thanks to Vivian Chislett that we were able to adapt to life here so quickly and make the decision to stay in Canada!

h) PRIDE Comox Valley

As a professional in the architecture & planning industry for 20 years here in Comox Valley, we have been advocating for sustainability, which includes universal design for all. Early adopters, it has been a part of our practice to show, innovate, guide our clients

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into opening up new ways and possibilities for their development projects. My personal earlier years in Montreal, New York and Toronto, were lived in and celebrated through these communities.

- i. If elected, will you commit to ensuring that 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors are meaningfully included in municipal housing planning, consultation, and decision-making?

I will be a voice for all humans in housing, planning, and decision making. Based on what we saw in the Comox OCP process, I am advocating for neighbourhood conversations to be part of the council conversation - whatever our needs are.

- ii. If elected, will you support annual local government funding to help sustain Pride in the Park? *Proposed contribution: \$3,000 annually, shared among local governments proportionate to population.*

This next council has fiscal management as its primary responsibility. It will be up them to decide on a small tight budget on where and who to allocated. It is important all of us understand the competing interests that are at play right now. Depending on the council that is elected, will be what support actually plays out. I will need to assess that when the time comes. I am a supporter of this community and will assess the monies asked, with thorough analysis and decision making.

- iii. If elected, will you commit to a phased approach to increasing access to universal washrooms across municipal facilities, from improving signage, accessibility, and staff training in existing washrooms to incorporating universal washrooms into all new builds and renovations?

Universal design should be the basis for all buildings. Zoning bylaw control this. And if the council that gets elected can move in this direction, then yes. I can't commit to actions, but I will advocate for universal design, including washrooms as a baseline.

i) Comox Valley Food Policy Council

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After purchasing our home in Comox in 2007, I realized the necessity of growing food within our downtown lot. Next spring, I completed a Master Gardening Certificate and off I went. It has been a wonderful learning journey about self reliance and what is possible at home. 2 summers ago, I took course in bee keeping, hoping to be a bee keeper in Comox (but due to the Golf Course) chose not to.

- i. Food insecurity is rising in our community. How would you address the root causes of food insecurity?

As experts, I would look to you as an organisation to see where you know the living experience is here in the Comox Valley. From there, I would analyze, assess and then return back to you with what I felt was possible and actionable, depending on what Council is elected in Comox.

- ii. Climate change will continue to bring more severe extreme weather events including flooding, drought, wildfire etc. What is the role of local government in preparing for these events and how would you support this action?

Emergency planning and management is a critical role in local government. Comox has just finished it's Climate Action Plan. The next council will need to ensure that every application and development vision that moves it forward encompasses this action plan, so it becomes lived experiences in neighbourhoods.

- iii. How would you support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as it relates to food sovereignty, land access, and resource stewardship?

To support UNDRIP right here in the Comox Valley, let's move local food policy past simple consultation and genuinely back K'ómoks First Nation jurisdiction over their treaty lands, waters, and agricultural spaces. For us as good

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neighbors, this means actively showing up to support K'ómoks-led water and ecosystem stewardship so that traditional harvesting, hunting, and marine food gathering can safely thrive for generations to come.

j) Comox Valley Community Health Network

- i. What is one action you will personally advocate for, if elected, that will reduce poverty in the Comox Valley?

Guaranteed Basic Income. The more I learn at the municipal learning sessions put on by the Town of Comox, the more I see that the next council will have a challenging time as fiscal responsibility is at the forefront and asset management a must. There are already known tax increase for next year, without the Council doing anything. There must be a stable base for people to know they can still live from. GBI will do that. Yes, it is a federal issue but one that lives out in our neighbourhoods.

- ii. Can you share an example of a time you meaningfully involved people most affected by an issue in a project or decision? If elected, how will you bring that approach to municipal decision-making?

Last year during Comox's Official Community Plan process, there was a new mid height zoning (up to 9 storeys) proposed for the Mariner Building. One of Comox's 'last affordable housing' apartments. It is only still affordable for those that have lived there a long time. Anyone new coming in pays market rents, for very old building. Like other neighbourhoods in Comox, when speaking with people in the area, no one knew this was being proposed. Or most felt it was a done deal, as the owner's of the building has told tenants that they were building this the new building next summer. See Decaf Nation's article on this. As a community engager, set a date, rented Red Church, with other neighbours distributed flyers. Had 60 people attend and was facilitator for round table discussion. Any question could be asked. Intent was to share information about what was being proposed and take action based on what each felt individually. I believe strongly in participatory democracy and that everyone should know about the decisions being made

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at council table and why it was made. Many residents wrote council, their concern, which was primarily emergency exit during a crisis event, with too many cars for the single exit road, was heard. Council defeated the motion. 2 weeks following that the property manager let the tenants know that after they got a more pro development council this Oct 17, election, this application for the 10 storeys will come back. Following the applicant's presentation, I personally lobbied council to follow Saanich's lead and create Tenant Protection Bylaw as Comox does not have one.. Nothing has been put forward yet.

- iii. Poverty is shaped by decisions at every level of government. What do you believe municipal governments can realistically do to reduce poverty in the Comox Valley?

Listen. Collaborate with community organisation. Get our thinking caps on together. So groups can understand just where local governments can actually act and local governments understand how to take a holistic lens to their decisions so they can see how one choice affects the other.

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