

# Ball gets rolling on sustainability strategies for Tantramar region

By KATIE TOWER  
STAFF REPORTER

The planning stage is over and now it's time to start taking action.

A list of top priorities was established last month during the wrap-up session for the Tantramar 2040 sustainability plan — recommendations that will help get the ball rolling on some of the initiatives that will be a part of the long-term vision for the region.

"We wanted to set priorities from what we've already done (at previous workshops) so that we could get people working on things, to get things off the ground," said Katie Friars, Tantramar 2040 coordinator and executive director of EOS Eco-Energy.

The first step, she said, will be to create a Tantramar Sustainability Alliance, which would consist of a group of representatives from each partner community and organization that will lead the implementation of the plan.

"We really need an overarching body to coordinate all of these projects and actions," said Friars. "Because it's one thing to develop a plan but we want to ensure it doesn't end up just sitting on a shelf somewhere."

Another priority that will get under way as the sustainability plan undergoes some final tweaking is carrying out energy asset mapping.

"We want to determine how much energy we use and where it's all coming from."

As a result, Friars said that could lead to measures the communities may be able to take to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

The Tantramar 2040 committee will also be researching the feasibility of establishing a regional shuttle system, and looking into developing a business model and acquiring funding

for the initiative.

Friars said the shuttle system, which was a topic that came up time and time again during the discussions and consultations over the past few months, would offer transportation for those who need it, such as seniors with medical appointments or for commuters who travel to work every day.

"We need something that's set in place that people can use."

Other priorities that will be concentrated on in the short term will be: to place greater focus on educating the public around the themes of sustainability; exploring community energy projects; completing the milestones for the Partners for Climate Protection program; re-establishing a Tantramar Watershed Alliance; conducting bio-regional asset mapping; and establishing a food council.

Deputy Mayor Bob Berry said he was pleased with the recent wrap-up workshop, which featured guest speakers from the Strait-Highlands Region of Cape Breton who talked about the implementation of their sustainability plan. He said they are a prime example of how sustainable decisions can be incorporated into the operations of small and rural communities.

"The thing that really impressed me... what they said is that these payoffs for these investments don't have to take decades. We can start noticing a change in two to three years," he said.

The Tantramar 2040 plan, an initiative that is bringing together all the communities in the region to collaborate on a long-term sustainable vision, is currently in draft form but will soon be completed in its final format, with a large number of short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations being proposed.

# Hospital auxi

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With a 65-year history and co-ers that have brought in more ters of a million dollars to Sackville Memorial Hospital played a significant role in m enhancing Tantramar's health

And to continue on that sam iliary is on the lookout for new can contribute their time and ongoing efforts.

Joyce O'Neil, fundraising cha iary, said although the group roster of about 40 volunteers, m "supportive but aging."

It is hoped an upcoming me social event will bring in some bers that can help out with so demanding tasks and fundrais

"We all know the saying 'ma light work.' Having some new r make things a lot easier," said C

The auxiliary will host it event on Thursday, April 28 in t um from 2 to 4 p.m.

"We hope people will come understand what the auxiliary

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