

South Montana Veteran's Home Update #42

By Mike Lawson

Greetings once again to you the Veterans/Communities/Counties of SW MT., who are the chief organizers of the SW MT Veterans Home.

Whoever would have thought, we would be in this Pandemic Coronavirus crisis, where everything is shut down, including Butte. It happened so fast, that people were caught unawares. Some of our workplace construction projects are still able to work, while others cannot. In the case of our SW MT. Vet Home Construction Site, the work, so far, has been allowed to continue. Liaison Mark Gollinger and I did a walkthrough of this site on Thursday afternoon. It was interesting to note that many of the workers, either were working alone or in groups of two or three. Nowhere were there 10 guys working together in one location. This, combined with most of them being younger than 40 or 50, fit into the guidelines of 10 or less people together, and being in a younger age bracket. With these guys spread out between the buildings, the issue of maintaining personal space from one another, was a normal part of their working environment. Whether the work is stopped, on our Vet Home, or not, remains to be seen. It seems to me the work environment is well within the safety guidelines the government officials are enforcing/recommending.

The work on each of the buildings is moving forward, with some buildings being concentrated on more than others. There is excitement at seeing the overall site moving forward, to the point of having confidence, things will be done by the end of September. I had a good session with Mike Ascherman about what's happening and what's projected to happen, now and in the next two weeks. I'm sure the out of town contractors doing the siding, the patient lift overhead room tracts, etc., could be a question mark, due to travel /other government restrictions being imposed. We'll see.

SW MT Vet Home Construction Update:

Community Center: Inside; This building is the biggest, with the most technology based-equipment to be installed within it, once the building is finished. Some examples are Computer/telecommunication, therapy, satellite, printers, etc... The point of this is the infrastructure for all this equipment, has to be hardwired, within the walls, before the sheet rock gets hung, along with the other wiring, plumbing and heating components. This, as Mike Ascherman says, is the hardest and most detailed to complete, of all the buildings. It does keep looking more complete, every time we walk through it. The sheetrock hangers have very little if any sheetrock left to hang. The guys doing the tape and mud work are close to having that completed. The bathroom fiberglass sheetrock, (Denshield), which goes behind wherever there is tile, should be completely in at the time this article comes out. Mike said the suspended ceilings, will come next, followed by painting. The Sprinkler Fitters (Plumbers) from the Sprinkler Company, ITM, out of Helena, are making good progress in getting the overhead Fire Suppressant System sprinklers installed. The Heating-Duct keeps moving along. I saw one of these sheet metal guys, cutting and making a fitting, to fit into a part of the ductwork and appreciated/admired, the skill he had, doing his trade. That's the story of all the craftsmen on this job. They learned their trade by going through a four-year apprenticeship and now help make beautiful buildings, for the rest of us, because they learned how. People go to college to get a degree, and these folks go to trade school/apprenticeships and become "Graduate Journeyman", deserving the respect, as any college graduate gets. (We need both, believe me). Lots more to do on the inside, but it's moving quickly.

Outside: It's ready for siding. The siding contractor out of Great Falls wasn't able to come last week but promised, Mike, they would be on the job this week. Frustrating for Mike, I'm sure, when things don't go as planned.

Cottage #1: Inside: A beehive of activity continues here, but the progress is moving forward, for sure. Incredible, the amount of infrastructure work that goes into the walls, in the attic, etc... It's a beautiful sight to see the precise manner, in which the electrical conduit is installed in the attic rafters and the walls, (Check the pictures out on our SW MT Vet Home Website). Again, I can't emphasize enough, the skill/knowledge of the Journeymen Electricians. They're close to being done in this building for now. The ITM "Springler Fitter's" are working on the overhead Fire Suppressant System. The Sheetmetal workers have quite a bit to do yet. As is the case in all the buildings, inspections are part of the process and before one phase of the construction can continue, the phase before it has to pass whatever inspections are required. Just part of the quality control process. The Sheetrock of the Lid is close to being started after the insulation is installed that is covered by it. Lots of detail work but the forward progress is very visible.

Outside: If you have driven by the SW MT Vet Construction Site on Blacktail Loop, you will have seen big visible transformations taking place on the outside of Cottage #1. It's been inspiring to see the 3M Air Barrier Peel and Stick sheets of material being applied on the North/East/West sides of this building. The windows are being installed, once the material is applied around the individual window openings. The blue foam insulation board has been mostly installed over this 3M Air Barrier material, on the building's North side. Looks good and is impressive.

Cottage #2: The Carpenters continue to do a little blocking, but the big event this week will be when the electricians move into this building, as they finish up on Cottage #1.

Cottage #3: Roofing is continuing to be done. Plumbing is going on, as well as a bit of framing. The drying-in process is getting close to being completed.

Cottage #4: A big concentration of framers working on this building. The exterior walls on one of this building wings, have been framed and tipped/raised up. Roof trusses are the plan this week, to be rolled up on top of this wing. The other wing's walls should be framed this week and tipped/raised up. If things go well, we'll see roof trusses rolled up on it, also. Once the wings are up, the roofing can be done while the framers build the Common Area (central portion). Always exciting to see Cottage walls go up.

Cottage #5: In a holding pattern for now.

The SW Mt Vet Home Foundation now has all needed tax requirements, satisfied. Until this Coronavirus Crisis restrictions are lifted, all meetings are on hold.

Our Liaison Mark Gollinger has been busy reviewing the RFP application proposal submitted by the single contractor who bid on operating our SW Montana Veterans Home. Once he gets his review done, he gives it to Shaunda Hildebrand, who will go over it and then submit it to her higher-ups. Hopefully we'll have a contractor in place, within a couple of months.

I will close and urge you to stay home and follow the procedures recommended, like washing hands, wearing a face mask when out in public, etc... We'll get through this with a lot of prayer and hope. Take care.