

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #74

By Mike Lawson

Greetings once again to you the Veterans/Counties/Communities of SW MT who have been and are the organizers and supporters of this, our Southwest Montane Veterans Home.

As I am writing this, I am up at our annual Hunting Camp, on the West Fork of the Madison River. We take turns being the Camp Mouse for a day and to keep our camp secure, the fires going, etc., so being Camp Mouse, it is a good opportunity to write this article while the rest of the crew are out hunting in the snow and the cold. I did do a walk through with Liaison Mark Gollinger and got my weekly briefings from my faithful go-to guys, Site Superintendent Mike Ascheman and Carpenter General Foreman John Kota. The asphalt paving really looks good and as soon as the flags come in, they'll be flying proud. The big story that's happening is the Community Center and Cottage #1 with variations of work phases being done in the other Cottages.

Construction Updates:

Community Center: —Interior: The final finishing work continues and the "end of the tunnel light" of this building being completed, is getting pretty bright. The Electricians have most of the lighting fixtures installed and I was quick to notice that the exit lights were up. They also have the large breaker panel boxes wired. Amazing amount of wires that are connected into these electrical panels. The lights are expected to be turned on, the Monday before this article comes out. The start-up crew started the air handler systems, and all went well. Johnson Controls were/are programing, for the Boilers and Air Handlers, with more to come. The Plumbers are waiting for some back ordered sinks to come in so they can finish the bathrooms. The start-up crews are expected to start the Boilers up, this week. This is a big deal, to have this building self-heating. The acoustical ceiling tile borders are being installed in the T-Bar ceiling framework. Once the start-up crew gets everything running and the inspections are passed, the rest of the acoustical tile panels will be installed. All the flooring, except for the warming kitchen has been installed and that should be done this week.

Exterior: Lights in the Portico front entry way ceiling, have been installed. SW sidewalks have been poured with the East End Patio and NE sidewalk left to form and pour. Some door seals to install once the sidewalks are completed.

Cottage #1: —Interior: Plumbers are doing their Boiler tie-ins. Electricians are trimming out their light fixtures and light switches. The start-up crew started the Air Handler System and the inspection process went well. The flooring guys are scheduled to move in this week and start their floor covering installation. This will be a big job. Johnson Controls is programing for the Boilers and Air Handler Systems. The Carpenters are still waiting for two doors that have been back ordered. High hopes, for them to arrive soon. This building is not far behind the Community Center and once the flooring is finished, this will be very close to being complete.

Exterior: Metal soffit trim was installed. Rear Patio column is ready for the Siding Crew to trim/side it. Front entry columns siding is completed.

Cottage #2: Interior: The Tapers are doing some finish taping and the Painters have painted the East Resident Wing, The Carpenters have started hanging doors and are trimming out windows in the East Resident Wing. After the Painters paint the SW Wing, the Carpenters will move into it and work on doors and window trim there, this week.

Exterior: Back Patio Column is framed out and ready for the Siding Crew to trim and side it.

Cottage #3: —Interior: Plumbers are running gas line to the Boilers. Tile guys have the floor tile laid in the resident bathrooms and are now working on the shower walls with the bathroom walls, to follow. They have ten rooms left. The Carpenters will be trimming out bathroom doors as the Tile guys get finished with each room.

Exterior: Front Columns are sided and the back-patio column is framed and ready for the Siding Crew to trim/side.

Cottage #4: —Interior: Not a lot on this Cottage except a bit of rough-in work by the Plumbers. The sheet rockers are moving some sheet rock in and will probably be hanging sheetrock in the next week or so.

Exterior: The siders have most of the siding done but are caulking and working on the soffits and roof-eve trim.

Cottage #5: When not working on the other Cottages, the Plumbers and Electricians are working on their respective rough-in work.

Exterior: The Siding Crew have the trim work done on two sides of this Cottage and are now doing the same on the other two sides. Probably start seeing the blue siding portion going up this week or next. This will be easy to see from Continental Drive side.

Site work: With the Concrete Crew having quite a bit of concrete work left and due to the temperatures dropping, it's imperative for the ground to be at a warm temperature, before doing a concrete pour. They are now forced into using a ground warming machine and insulated blankets to keep the ground warm and cover the concrete, so it cures properly. This gets expensive, but it has to be done correctly, which from a veteran's point of view, is appreciated.

Zemljak Excavating: They've been all over this site, from prepping for the sidewalks/patios/curbs and leveling the dirt to the proper grade, around the Cottages, Storm Drain Ditch and the Storm Drain Pond. Their site-work is isn't far from being completed.

A bit of information on the new Veteran IBOC Medical Center being built on the south side of the Harley Davidson Dealership, progress is happening, the footings were dug and compacted, the footing forms were built and poured with concrete. Being able to work on this, this winter, will be a big plus.

Another Veteran Happening is the creation of the Veteran's Court in Butte. This is going to be an incredible program for the Veteran, who gets in trouble and is likely headed to prison. They will have the option, when going before Judge Whalen in the Felony Court or before Judge McCarthy in the Misdemeanor Court, of going into this program. It can be a new lease on life for them. Eighty percent of the veterans who have gone through this program, across the country, have turned their lives around and have never offended again. A lot of accountability will be required of them. A Veteran Mentor will be assigned to them to encourage and help them along their way to recovery. Four of us are starting Mentors for this program. Mike Vincent will be the Mentor coordinator, with the mentors being Bob Green, Mick Ringsak and myself, Mike Lawson. There's a whole team of others which include Probation Officers, Police Officers, Psychologists, County Attorney Lawyers and others. The bottom line is, we all want this veteran to succeed in turning his/her life around. The team's reward will be in seeing them make this life change.

I'll close for now with a plea to be safe and follow the recommended health safe practices of masking and distancing. One of our 80 plus year old VFW member, is in the hospital with Covid-19 at this time. It's a real deal. Take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Until next time