

SW Mt. Regional Veteran's Home Update #1

By Mike Lawson

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Greetings to the veterans/communities of the 6 counties in SW Montana who organized and are part of our "Southwest Montana Regional Veteran's Rest Home" presently being built here in Butte, Montana. The purpose of this weekly article is to keep you updated as to the progress of the construction of this long awaited project.

This Vet's Home Project has been an uphill battle for the past 10 years for many of us. Bob Pavlovich started to work on this at least 20 years ago as a Legislator in Helena . He worked a deal with the Eastern Montana folks to build a Vets home there if they would than support building a Vet Home in SW Montana. They got their Vet Home in Glendive, Mt., and have since supported us getting our SW Montana Regional Veterans Home. The long battle started after approval from the Montana Legislature and the VA., with the Montana being responsible for 1/3 of the 15 million dollar projected cost (Tobacco Tax money) and 2/3's from the VA. The State money was raised and we thought construction would quickly be forthcoming but than we found out that being on the VA's Priority List entitled larger populated area's and emergency type remodeling, etc. projects to leapfrog in front of our rural state status. The battle to get our home happened on many fronts with Bills introduced in the Legislature by our SW Mt. County Legislators to get a Bridge loan from the state to build the home and the VA would be paid in full when our name come up on the VA List. We took bus loads of Veteran's to testify before both the Senate and the House for 3 or 4 years only to get shot down by 1 or 2 votes. Meanwhile our Sen Jon Tester, who was the ranking member on the Veteran's Committee in the US Senate worked on a Bipartisan front to write and pass Bills to overcome this Leapfrogging of bigger populated areas shutting us down. He hit a number of brick walls but kept trying and got Legislation passed to make the dream of SW MT Regional Veteran's Home become a reality. A lot more could be said about the many folks/Veterans who worked on this but for the sake of space I'll call this "History in a Nut Shell".

The "SW MT Regional Veteran's Home Foundation" has been formed, Incorporated/Registered with Sec of the State, h ave an EIN number w/IRS and is in applying process for a 501(c)3. Their Mission Statement is "To ensure the Southwest Montana Regional Veteran's Home has everything that the Residential Veterans need to make it a "Home" for them". The Foundation is made up of a two Pier Membership format. The first pier is made up of the Board of Trustees and the second is open to veterans and the public who simply attend the monthly meetings on the first Monday at the Butte Archives.

Two Trustees and an alternate from each of the 6 SW Montana Counties, involved in the creation of our Veteran's Rest home, are chosen by their fellow Veterans in that county. They are as follows: Chairman: Tom Straugh - Beaverhead County, Vice Chairman: Dave Williamson - Powell County, Secretary: Shelly Stocyh -Powell County, Treasure: Eileen Greb - SilverBow County. Board Members; Jerry (Bud) Redfield - Madison County, Larry Lattier - Jefferson County, Bob Pavalovich - SilverBow County, Conrad Frank - Beaverhead County . At present

time DeerLodge County needs to fill their Trustee slots and Madison/Jefferson County need one more trustee slot each to fill. The Foundation has a Bank Account and are taking donations which will be used to get things that are not provided by the VA or the company operating the SW MT Regional Veteran Home.

SW MT. Regional Veteran's Rest Home "Site Report;

It's finally a long awaited reality in seeing the Contractors on site preparation and seeing footings for the Community Building foundation walls being formed and poured. Markovich Construction are the General Contractors with Mike Zimlack Construction doing the excavation. Cory Markovich is the Project Manager with Mike Ascheman being the Project Construction Superintendent. Cory and Mike have been very friendly and accommodating to us the Veterans. We asked if a viewing area could be prepared for veterans and visitors to watch the construction throughout the building process of 18 months or so. They outdid our expectations by building a viewing "Hooch" (Building) which has two large window openings to look/watch the construction activities take place. Anyone that wants too can visit this "Viewing Hooch" and watch the SW MT Regional Veterans Rest Home being built. All are welcome to do so. Mike Ascheman said that the Community Building foundation wall forms should be built and poured with cement this week. Exciting to watch for sure. A mountain of dirt has been piled up on the Continental Road side of the property attesting to the incredible amount of excavation needed to just get the site ready for the actual building to begin. With all this going on the Ground Breaking Ceremony has yet to take place until the Governor, Sen Tester and many other dignitaries can coordinate their schedules to make it happen. Tentatively it will happen toward the end of this month. Next week I'll mention how the State of Montana is involved and their overseeing this project from beginning to end to make sure everything is being done according to the Plans and Specifications engineered and drawn by the Architects. Until then, please go check the "Viewing Hooch" out.