

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home , Update #7

By

Mike Lawson

Greeting again to you the Veterans/communities who are the six counties in SW Montana who are represented as the organizers and chief supporters of the "SW MT Veterans Home".

A lot has been happening on our Veterans Home construction site, up until this date of July 20th. A number of us visit the site on a daily basis to observe the construction and relax in the "Viewing Hooch". From my observations and getting my weekly updates from my "Go to Guy" Mike Ascheman, the Veteran Home Project Construction Superintendent, things are moving in the right direction.

Phillips Concrete out of Dillion have stripped the forms off Cottage #1 ,which will allow Zemlijak Excavating to do the dirt/compaction work around and inside the foundation. This will get it ready for the Plumbers/Electricians to get their sewer/venting/conduit in place before a slab concrete floor can eventually be poured. This concrete crew will now move onto the Cottage #2 site and the process of building footings/walls and doing cement pours will start all over again. Remember we have 5 of these cottages to be built. If some miracle comes along, it would be nice to see the possible 6th Cottage built. It is drawn into the plans for the future (we can hope and dream).

The Community Building has been a "Beehive " of activity especially with Mike Zemlijak Excavating working inside the foundation digging ditches for the Plumbers to put the sewage pipes/vents, doing compaction and than putting 6 inches of self compacting gravel on top of that. Yesterday I observed workers putting down some type of heavy yellow plastic sheeting on top of this gravel and then rebar on top of that. Mike expects that the concrete slab floor will be poured about the time this "Butte Weekly" is on the stands. Then the excitement of seeing the "Carpenter Framers" putting up walls/roofs will take place.(There's so much ground work that has to happen before this framing phase takes place.) Once this starts we'll have a visual prospective of our Vet Home. Take a drive-by and check it out.

The puzzle piece concerning our Veterans Home I wanted to address this week is Politics. It was a very real factor throughout the process, from it's inception, to getting approved by the Montana Legislature and than the VA, to trying to get Bridge Loans approved to build the Home until the VA money came through, until finally a Sen. Tester sponsored Bill with bipartisan support was passed in Congress . We now see our Vet Home being built. Our Politicians are people like each of us and it's we who have elected them, the Democrats, Republicans and Independents who represent the 6 Counties of the SW MT Montana Veterans Home. Our six County Delegates on all sides of the aisle have backed the Legislation throughout this 10 year process for trying to get this home up and running. Sen Sesso and Rep Pat Ryan introduced and pushed a number of Bills to try and get our Vet Home become a reality. When a number of us testified in support of these Bills it was amazing to see our representatives from all our six SW MT Counties there in full force supporting us, no matter their Party Affiliation. Sen Tester was with us from the start, battling on many fronts between the Senate and the VA, hitting many brick walls but never giving up. He worked across the aisle and with strong support from both sides he finally got the VA money that had eluded us for so long.

Our Veteran Organizations are non-political and we, the members, are very careful to keep it that way when representing the Vet Org we are a member of. Each Veteran personally chooses who they are concerning religion, politics and many other things, as all Americans do. The point is, as Veterans we accept and respect each other for who we are and keep religion and politics out of it. This six SW Montana County coalition has come together, no matter our beliefs, and made a wonderful thing happen. We can take pride in that.

Keep enjoying your summer, visit the Vet Home Site and until next weeks update, Take Care.

Mike Lawson