

Southwest Montana Veterans Home Update #103

By Mike Lawson

Greetings once again to you, the Veterans/Counties/Communities of SW Mt, who are the chief organizers and supporters of the SW MT Veteran's Home.

Our unpredictable May weather shouldn't be a surprise to those of us who have lived in Southwest Montana for any number of years. The comforting thing for us is that we know it will get better, the grass will get greener, the trees will bud out and the flowers will bloom. The best is yet to come, especially for the gardeners/farmers/ranchers. On the construction front, concerning our two Veteran facilities being built in Butte, both will be completely constructed and operating this year. The SW MT Vet Home will likely see all five of the resident Cottages finished by the end of June. The new VA Veteran's Medical Center is expected to be completed this fall with a well-rounded staff and increased services for our veterans in SW MT, to receive the medical care they may need.

The new VA Medical Center being built by Wayne Paffhausen's crew, led by his son Todd, is moving right along. At this point, Todd and his partner are doing the framing. They have the wall sections standing on one end and most of the west side as of this weekend. The rest of the perimeter walls should be standing this week, which is good as the roof trusses are expected to be delivered within two weeks. More focus will be given on this project in next week's update.

Last week the covered walkways were a hot topic with their funding being passed in HB14. We in the SW MT Veteran Community are anxious to see this project's construction get started as quickly as possible, but there's a sequence of steps that have to happen before that can become a reality. I was fortunate in getting information from Barb Smith, who is the Administrator for "Senior and Long Term Care Division, Mt Public Health and Human Services", concerning these steps. Step 1; The Governor receives and signs HB14 (money not available until this is completed) Step 2; DPHHS internal conversation per Director Meier. Step 3; A&E/DPHHS/CT coordination on a phasing plan for insertion into the bid set by CT/A&E. Step 4; Finalization of the bid set by CT/A&E. Step 5; Advertising for bids and award. Step 6; Contractor mobilization time-table is unknown at this time, but Barb is the key person in working through this process. We have been involved in bringing our Vet Home to this point for 12 years, so we need to be patient and let Barb work through this process. I have the utmost confidence that the covered walk-ways will become a reality for the safety of our Resident Veterans and the Eduro Staff who are taking care of them.

I always give credit where credit is due for all the good info I receive from Mike Ascheman/John Kotka/Mark Gollinger.

Construction Updates:

Community Center/Cottage #1/Cottage #2/Cottage #3; Completed and turned over from Markovich Construction to the State of Montana (the owner).

Cottage #4: The Carpenters finished the trim-out on all the doors/windows and are installing the door hardware consisting of the door-knobs/closures/stops/etc. They are also finishing the installing of the FF&E Package in the East-Wing. This includes the toilet paper holders, soap dispensers, etc. They have to hold off on mounting the mirrors until the sinks/cabinet vanity tops are installed. They did install the Crown Molding on the coffered ceilings. The Plumbers are flushing and filling all the water

lines so they're ready for the future start-up inspections. The Electricians were fishing their wire through the conduit going to the pumps, light switches/outlets/fixtures. They are hooking up to the pumps to enable them to be flushed and filled. The Tile guys are working in the North-Wing Resident Rooms and have grouted the floor tile in the spa bathroom. The Floor Layers are scheduled to start laying linoleum in the East Wing resident rooms this week and then move into the kitchen/dining room areas.

Cottage #5: Taping and mudding continues. The wall prep skin-coating of mud to a level 5 finish is taking place in the West-Wing. The Sheet-metal guys continue doing their HVAC equipment installation. The Plumbers are working on air handlers/valves/piping/gas lines.

Zemljak Excavating continues to spread topsoil throughout the Vet Home site.

Becker Landscaping continues running the irrigation lateral lines and curb edging. They also are building the flower bed borders.

Hawe Steel Fabricators built and installed hand-rail at the Community Building and the Electrical Vault.

In the Veteran world in Montana, the VA has a Vaccination Van that is going across Montana to give Veterans, their wives, and caregivers a Covid-19 vaccination. If you are in need of one, call the VA or a VA Veteran Representative. The numbers are coming down, so be safe, get vaccinated and be careful who you're around. The tourists are coming and hopefully they don't bring any Covid-19 with them. I would encourage any of you veterans who belong to any of our Veteran Organizations to attend their State Conventions this summer after a long year of isolation. I plan to attend two or three of them, especially the Marine Corps League Convention being held in Butte in June. With our Covid numbers being down and with most of us being vaccinated, we should be in good shape in coming together. Have a mask if in doubt and use common sense using safety measures. Let's hope for warmer weather and do some outdoor recreation. Until next time.