

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #104

By Mike Lawson

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

Every week sees our SW MT VET Home getting closer to being completed, at least this phase of it. I say this because the "Covered Walkways" are in the wings waiting for movement on them to being constructed. Barb Smith, the Administrator for the Senior and Long Term Care Division, is a key player in this effort of negotiation with the other State Department/Entities, such as A&E/DPHHS/CT. She sounds positive about some movement at these higher levels of construction, possibly starting sooner than later. We hope this will be the case and are grateful for her efforts. Politics aside, it's so good to see more and more finishing touches taking place at our Vet Home site, especially regarding the Landscaping. Talking to Becker's landscaping crew, I was told that beside the lawns that are going in, there will be many flower beds as well as an incredible number of shrubs and trees planted on site. This just adds to our anticipation of this Veteran's Home being a show place in this part of the US. It really is exciting to see everything come together! As I get my latest updates from my go-to guys, being Mike Ascherman/John Kotka/Liaison Mark Gollinger, it's common for them to tell me there's less and less to report, as the light at the end of the tunnel of completion is getting brighter and brighter. I've been asked to continue to write this article and cover other area activities, in our six county area of SW MT. If any of you have veteran news that you would like to have covered, please let me know with a phone call or if you want me to come to your community, I will be happy to do so. Veterans are important and this is one way of supporting one another.

Construction Updates:

Community Center/ Maintenance Building/Cottage #1/Cottage #2/Cottage #3 have been turned over to the state, with only #2 & #3 not staffed by the operating Contractor Eduro. This is due to the Medicare Inspection yet to take place. We have 4 Veterans in Cottage #1, after two Veterans passed away. This hold-up on getting the inspection is frustrating to say the least. From our Veteran Point of view, it is at least a few months overdue and with 36 beds now available, our Veteran's on the waiting-list are concerned about this delay. Somewhere in the State bureaucracy there's a problem that no-one we ask has an answer for. Both our Congressional Senators are trying to get answers. Hopefully they will, and then we can get Veteran Residents admitted. Then maybe the door will be open for the VA to do their inspections.

Cottage #4: I estimate that in about 3 weeks this cottage will be turned over to the state as completed. It continues to be inspiring to see the week to week progress when we do our walk-through. The Tile Guys, who are out of Helena, have the Spa Room and Public bathroom tiled/grouted. They are now working on the resident bathroom walls in the North Wing, which will complete this cottage and allow them to move to Cottage #5 in a couple of

weeks or so. The Floor Layers are prepping the resident room floors for the laying of the linoleum. The Electricians are pulling wire and doing trim-out consisting of hanging lights/installing switches/outlets/etc. They also have finished wiring the pumps for the flush/fill operation and are ready for the future start-up. The Carpenters continue trimming out the doors consisting of the panic bars/door stops/closures. They also pulled wire for the card readers. The Plumbers are finished with their trim-out.

Cottage #5: The Tapers continue to apply mud/sanding of the walls to a "Level #5 Smooth Wall Finish". They have the west-wing done and are continuing this process throughout the rest of this cottage. The Sheetmetal workers got their HVAC air louver control cans installed in the attic, which allowed the Sheet-rockers to completely finish the ceiling sheetrock. The Plumbers were running copper pipe to the Air Handlers and working on gas-line valves. Johnson Controls were pulling low-voltage wire for the thermostats and controls. It seems like this cottage is moving along faster than the others. Great seeing the progress.

Becker Landscaping: These guys are a hard working crew and are accomplishing a lot. I would guess that in a couple of weeks the groundwork around these Cottages/buildings are really going to have a more finished look.

Zemljak Excavating is close to having all the topsoil spread for the Landscapers.

The Veteran Medical Center being built by the Paffhausen crew is seeing all the exterior walls standing and the interior wall being framed on the floor. I would expect to see some of those stood up this week. This building will be a beautiful building once completed.

The weather is differently getting warmer and people are getting outside and enjoying it. The 4th of July will see a parade here in Butte and hopefully in some of your communities as well. Let me know and we'll get the word out! The next important day for Veterans is Memorial Day on May 31st. Here in Silver Bow County we'll be putting flags on Veterans graves at the five Cemeteries in Butte, the one at Melrose, and Sunset Memorial between Butte and Anaconda. There will be a Veteran's Ceremony conducted at the Amphitheater in the Veteran's section of Stodden Park. Many times, Veterans from other counties will come and be part of that ceremony. Just know you're invited and welcome. I'll close for now. Until next time, take care.