

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #105

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.

The month of May in Montana is a big question mark as to planting a garden, unless you plant it in a greenhouse. I have 5-6 inches of snow on my deck table as I write this. If the Mountains are accumulating two to three times this amount, then we are in much better shape concerning water shortages/forest fires. Easy to complain but this really is a good thing. For we who are, native to Montana or have lived here for any great amount of time, we know to expect it in May. I have a friend, Whitey, who just returned from wintering in the Phoenix area. I ribbed him about coming home too early, but his response was that it was getting into the 90's down in Arizona country and even with the snow, coming home was the better choice. Southwest Montana is a good place to live and come home to for sure!

Our Vet Home is getting closer every week to being done and Mike Ascheman is looking forward to the day when things are completely done. Seeing the landscaping taking place gives that accomplished feeling, a very real fuzzy place within one's self.

Some things coming up is the expectation of the long awaited Medicare Inspection hopefully happening this week. Another thing is the loss of our Veteran Liaison Mark Gollinger who has resigned and will be moving on to another job. Mark is well known and respected for being a Veteran Advocate while working for the State Unemployment Office in Butte and creating a network across the state for agencies who focused on Veterans. He retired from 20 years of being a Sea Bee in the Navy, attaining the rank of Master Chief, and went on to supervisory positions for a number of construction companies in California. He's in Butte because he loves this part of Montana and it is home. He'll continue to address veteran's issues from the Veteran's organizations that he's a member of, and from being a regular Montana Veteran. It's a big loss for the SW MT Veteran's Home and I would hopefully expect that another veteran would be hired to take his place versus a non-veteran.

Our SW MT VET Home is starting to get inquiries from different groups to have Veteran Ceremonies or Ceremonies honoring our Veterans take place there. The SW MT VET Home Foundation will be in discussion concerning these possibilities and will keep you posted. It is a great way for our Vet Home Residents to interact with veterans and our communities. With the Covid -19 restrictions being lifted, we should expect these residents to have more open dialog and interaction with their families/veterans in the near future.

My great go-to guys Mike Ascheman, John Kotka and Liaison Mark Gollinger have less and less to report to me. Most of the Buildings are completed and the ones not completed are quickly moving in that direction.

Vet Home Construction Home Updates:

Community Building, Maintenance Building, Cottages #1, #2, & #3 are turned over to the State and if not already staffed by E duro, the nursing operations contractor, they are ready to be once the Medicare Inspection takes place. The E duro folks, who are not already working on site, are signed up/processed into the system and ready to start work/training. This hold-up by the "State Entity" who does the inspections is not only a hardship for the Resident Veterans and their families but is also a hard burden on the Vet Home Operator E duro in terms of training and expense. Hopefully this week will be the week.

Cottage #4: The Carpenters have been busy doing the finishing work of installing the FF&E package for each resident room and in the greater areas of the building. Remember this package consists of dispensers, grab bars, towel racks, mirrors, etc. As the Tile Guys finished each bathroom, the Carpenters rehung doors and installed door-hardware on all the doors which consisted of wall/door stops/knobs/etc. They also did fill-in of any nail holes with the appropriate putty. John said all the exterior door card reader wiring was installed.

They're at the point of being pretty well caught-up until start-up time. The Tile Guys will have all the tiling of this building finished when this article comes out. This includes all the resident bathrooms, the kitchen back splashes, tile around the fireplaces, Spa Room and public bathroom, etc. Each of these Cottages take a lot of tile and are very labor-extensive. These three young tile guys are good craftsmen, are attentive to detail and their work is to be admired. The Painters are painted-out and ready for their touch-up inspections. The Plumbers are caught-up until start-up time. The Electricians are doing their trim-out work of installing receptacles/switches/lights/etc. There was T-Bar metal ceiling frame-work installed in the Pantry and both resident wing corridors should have this metal ceiling installation take place this week. The Floor-layers have laid the linoleum in the East Wing resident rooms, have moved into the kitchen/pantry area and then will move into the resident rooms in the North Wing. Start-up should happen with-in the next couple of weeks. This is increasingly good news!

Cottage #5: The Sheet-Rock Tapers are taping and running mud to a Level-5 wall finish in the south-east wing resident rooms/corridor. The next step when they're done in this area is the painting at some point. The west wing has this process completed. The Plumbers are hooking up valves and running copper piping to the VAV's (Air Handlers), which are considerable and take time. The Sheet-Metal guys are hooking in the big metal duct-work to the heat-exchangers in the Mechanical Room. The Carpenters have been building window jambs and have them installed in the west wing, with the expectation of having the SE Wing installation completed this week. Exciting to see the movement going on in this Cottage!

Outside Site Work: The Becker Landscaping continues to install their irrigation laterals with some sprinkler head installation. The borders for the lawn/flower bed/shrub beds/etc. is becoming more prominent to the eye. They continue to rake out the topsoil in preparation of the eventual laying of the sod-lawn. Zemljak Excavating continues with spreading top-soil and contour landscaping where needed.

Our neighboring Veteran Medical Center being built right across the street to the north of Three Bears, is taking shape despite the weather. This two man Paffhausen framing crew are doing impressive work. With the exterior walls standing, the focus has been on framing the interior walls and getting them stood up. Lots of walls to do and they have made a good dent in this interior framework. Easy to check out if you're going to Three Bears or just driving by on Highland View Drive.

With Memorial Day happening this week-end, please remember our Veterans who gave so much and are no longer with us. Many of our Veteran Organizations and local volunteers in our communities throughout Southwest Montana and beyond will be putting flags on our Veteran graves. If any of you can give a hand in this solemn endeavor, it would be more than appreciated. Thanks to those of you who do this and have done this year after year! Check your local news sources for Memorial Day Ceremonies in your areas and consider attending.

The Covid-19 numbers are coming down in most areas but not so much in some. Please be careful, please respect one another, lets beat this virus with a resounding yes!!

Until next time, take care.