

Southwest Montana Veterans Home Update #17

By Mike Lawson

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

It's Sunday, Sept 29th and it's snowing outside. Sitting here on the East Ridge I usually have a beautiful view of Butte, but not today as Butte is socked in by the storm we're experiencing. With that being said, our Veteran's Home Construction Site was a very busy place this past week. Site Construction Superintendent Mike Ascheman really pushed to get Cottage #3 ready and slab floor poured before this storm hit. Markovich Construction and their sub-contractors crews really got a-lot done which will leave less headaches when they come back to a snow covered site on Monday. I was in Billings on Thursday/Friday, gave my go to guy, Mike Ascheman a call and got a good run-down of the weeks progress.

Cottage #1- The Carpenter framers are building exterior walls/headers on the floor and once they are put together they'll be stood-up, forming the exterior walls of the Cottage #1. The interior walls will then be framed and erected. They're an element of excitement when you can visibly see walls go up and then the roof.

Cottage #2 - Cottage #2 was pretty quiet this week except the outside foundation walls were ground smooth, where needed, the foundation waterproof was applied and then the concrete foam panels were glued on top of that, on the exterior of these foundation walls.

Cottage #3 - This was a major focus of work this week, knowing the weather was going to be ugly. Phillips Concrete pulled the interior wall forms from the cement walls that had been poured the week before. Mike Zemijak and his crew got the backfill/compacting in, dug ditches for the plumbers/electricians and put the six inches of self compacting gravel in place. The Markovich Carpenters were pulled off the Community Center Building and concentrated on Cottage #3. Their focus was getting the heavy yellow plastic vapor barrier put on top of the gravel, around plumber/electricians pipe stubs sticking up in the air and glued to the interior of the foundation walls. Once that was done they then put the floor covering rebar in place. All this was done in record time which then allowed Steed Concrete from Helena to pour the Slab Concrete Floor, a big sigh of relief for everyone, especially Mike Ascheman.

Cottage #4 - Remember that the weather is a factor in getting the foundation and floor/slab cement work completed before some serious ground freezing takes place. The exterior walls were poured on Thursday and will have had the wall forms stripped by Phillips Concrete on the Monday of the week this article comes out. Zemijak will immediately dig the footings for the interior walls, then the footing will be put in and poured. Once that is done the wall forms will be constructed and then poured with cement. Mike Ascheman is hoping the process to get ready for a floor/slab cement pour will happen the week next. All these construction folks have gotten the different steps to this procedure down to an effective system.

Cottage #5 - Zemijak Excavating has this site level and ready to be dug as it's staked and laid out. The footings are expected to be dug this week and hopefully Phillips Concrete can get the footing in and

poured with concrete right away. This is the last Cottage on the schedule and the hope is for the weather to warm up for a good pour without having to tent things in with heaters.

Community Center Building will be concentrated on this week now that Cottage #3's slab/floor is completed. Expect to see Roof Trusses in the very near future. A-lot of carpenter interior work will continue to take place.

Mike Zemijak and his crew are busy with the dirt work all over the site. Digging ditches/ backfilling on the cottages, backfilling and bringing the ground level around Cottage #1/#2, Community Building to the required ground level, working on the storm drain system and now getting the footings dug for Cottage #5.

O'Keeffe Drilling drilled the site well to the depth of 150' with an 85 gallon a min return. That's a-lot of water and it sounds like they'll have to put some type of special pump in to control that amount of water. The good thing is there will be plenty of water for landscaping.

Another part of the puzzle of our Veteran Rest Home is awarding the contract to operate our facility. The State of Montana, through DPHHS, whose Bureau Chief is Shaunda Hildebrand, will put out a Contract Bid Package and then determine what Company will be awarded the bid. In relation to this, I met two well-dressed guys, one very distinguished looking, while I was outside the Viewing Hooch. It turned the older guy was Major General Peter S.Cooke (Ret.Army)) from Washington DC and his son, from Salt Lake City. I invited them inside the Hooch to see what we had and to view the site through the windows. He said that his wife had commented that "Hooch" was a Marine term but he told her it was an Army term also. When we went inside, he commented "Yes this feels like a "Hooch"). General Cooke was here checking our SWMT Vet's home out, as he is on the Board of Directors of Avalon Health Care that operate a number of Veteran Homes around the country. We talked Veteran talk and it didn't take long to realize he loves the veterans and is a Board member of Avalon Health Care as a way to serve the veteran. Very impressive, sincere man. Whoever gets the contract to run our Vet Home will be looked at very closely by DPHHS and I'm confident it will be a good choice. I like General Cooke and what he showed me but haven't become acquainted with any of the other interested parties as of yet. This came right out of the blue and was a very positive experience.

Until next time, take care and stay warm