

Southwest Montana Veteran Home Update #33

By Mike Lawson

Greeting once again, to you the Veterans/Counties/Communities who are represented as the organizers and chief supporters of the SWMT Veterans Home.

The temperatures were below zero, only one day this week, which delayed the starting time for a couple of hours. It warmed up and the work resumed. I was privileged to do a "walk through" of our Veteran's Home Construction Site, this week, with our **Vet Home Liaison Mark Gollinger**. We visited Construction **Site Superintend Mike Ascheman** and his **General Foreman John Kotka**. They are an impressive team and the quality of work taking place, on our Vet Home, is a tribute to them and their crews... The pride, in making this one quality built "showcase" of a Veteran Home, is evident wherever you go on this site. After visiting **Mike Ascheman**, we met up with **John Kotka** who gave us a tour through Cottage #1 & #2. The interior framing and attention to detail, in these Cottages, is incredible. John keeps a checkoff list of the (literally) hundreds of construction steps, that have to be completed in each building. Once completed he then checks them off, one by one. His statement was, "we don't take shortcuts but take pride in doing it right". Hope to visit with him often and watch him and his crews do the "carpenter dance" of putting our home together. The other unique exciting event that happened at our vet site, was a drone flew over and around it, taking a video of it, Our **Liaison Mark Gollinger** got a friend of his, with a drone, to do this video. It's on our **Vet Home web-site, SWMVH.mt.GOV**. **Mike Ascheman** e-mailed it to his wife, who put it on Facebook, where it's getting all kinds of hits. The plan is to do it every week or so. Check it out.

Construction Update time:

Community Center; Sheetmetal Workers are doing the heating ductwork which will be both inside and outside the drywall. Looks like the in-wall piping and vents, installed by the plumbers, are in. All the firewall blocking, in the walls, are in. Once the electricians get their wiring in the walls, the sheet-rockers can then, sheetrock the walls. When the sheetrock is up, the beauty of the inside of this place, will really become evident. Walking through this building, with the tall ceilings, wide halls, large spacious rooms, large windows and open areas, it really makes one's spirits, be lifted up. On the outside of this, our Community Center building, we're seeing the 3M peel and stick wrap going on the exterior walls. **Mike Ascheman** said there's a foam board that will go over this, followed by pre-finished cement siding board. Windows, for the whole project site, are scheduled to be delivered on the 10th or 12th of February. This building will be ready for them. The door frames are going in shortly and need to be in for the sheetrock to butt up against. All the administrative offices, therapy areas will be in this building, and more to be mentioned in future updates.

Cottage #1; The roof is on and the beautiful "Gable Entry" is completed. The shingles, weather permitting, are being put on as you read this article. The color will be different than the Community Center. **Mike Ascheman** said that there will be three different colored shingles, used on our cottages. It was neat to get a walking tour, with **John Kota** being our guide. He explained what was going on and why they needed to frame different sections differently than others. An example is the firewall blocking, that I was talking about in the Community Center. The Building Codes specify, that any wall over 10' has to have blocking. This is a piece of 2"x6" board that fits in between two 2x6 wall studs. The purpose is in case a fire starts and gets into the wall, it won't travel up the entire wall and then into the upper floors or ceiling/attic. The short

of it is, is there's a tremendous amount of detailed framing that goes into the inside of these buildings. **John Kotka** has to be sharp on his check-list, to make sure it all gets done. He said the inspectors are tough, so attention to detail is paramount.

Cottage #2: The trusses are all rolled into place, ready for the rest of the fire-resistant plywood sheeting to be laid down and nailed. The crew who worked/finished the Gable Entry on Cottage #1, are now working on Cottage #2's Gable Entry. Some of the roof sheeting and fascia is nailed in place. The rest should be on this week and maybe into next week. A lot of carpenters were working on the interior, doing the different kinds of carpentry framing. The amount of work it takes, is more than mind boggling. These carpenter crews work hard, and it shows. The Dining/Living/Kitchen areas are open to each other, with high ceilings and large windows, that have beautiful views of the Highland Mountains, as well as the East Ridge. Our Veterans who are going to live here, will love it, for sure.

Cottage #3; The exterior walls are ready to be stood up and braced into place, with the interior walls to follow. **John Kotka** said, he'll have a crew working on it this week. The exterior walls should go up pretty quickly. The interior walls are what really takes the time. The roof trusses will be here this week, but it will be a couple of weeks before they're rolled into place, on top of this building.

Cottage #4 & #5 are waiting their turn, but the way these carpenter crews are moving, it won't be long.

Building this Vet Home is one big undertaking and as **Mike Ascherman** stated, "it's taking a lot of trees" to get it built.

Our **Liaison Mark Gollinger**, is busy doing all he does, especially getting the bids ready to be sent out to the potential contractors, who will bid on operating our Veteran Home. Those should be out within two weeks. He was having fun in getting the Drone Fly-Over to happen. It was nice of his friend to be gracious, in doing it. This friend has agreed to continue to do it. This really gives us a different perspective, from up in the sky.

Don't forget about our "Viewing Hooch" located between the road (Blacktail Loop) and the west boundary fence. It's located just north of the mailboxes. Go in, look out the windows, sign the logbook, relax, have a cup of tea/coffee, have a cookie or two and on your way out, you might drop a buck or two in the coffee donation can, if you're so inclined.

This whole building process of our Veteran Home is fun to watch on a weekly, if not a daily basis. A person gets caught up in it, and it becomes part of you. It's too the point for some of us, to becoming the highlight of our day. We just have to stop, at the little "Viewing Hooch", and see what's been going on. It's something to smile about, anyway. Until next time, stay warm and stay happy too.