

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #51

By Mike Lawson

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

This past week and this week we are now in, continues to see changes at this construction site which when finished, will be the Southwest Montana Veteran's Home. Later we'll talk about the SW MT VET HOME LOGO Contest winning entry, and the Lady Marine Veteran who drew it.

The big focus this week has been "Memorial Day", which happened on Monday, across this great land we call "America". It's a commemoration of all Veterans, past and present. It's especially a time to remember those who were killed and wounded, who unselfishly gave so much, for this country, so this country could and can remain free. This means that Americans can worship/freely live and not be under repression. The statement that "Freedom Is Not Free" is as straight to the American Heart, as any "truism" concerning our country, could ever be. Many times, while in combat and seeing my fellow vets be killed or wounded, the question came to my mind, as to the what and why? The answer was quickly realized. It enabled our folks back home, to have the privilege to be free and live in a country that allows the everyday citizen to live in a free lifestyle, that many countries would suppress. All veterans who have ever served in wartime or peace time, committed and gave their lives to the USA for whatever time they served. That unselfish signing of the dotted line and serving the length of that contract, to this country, deserves respect. With Memorial Day now past, don't forget to thank the Veteran you see in your travels, as it's a "spirit lifter" for each of them. This SW Mt. Veteran's Home is an example of our country and state "giving back" to our veterans who will be living there. As these veterans have gotten older and need more dignified long term care, this Southwest Montana Veteran's Home will become their home. They will be cared for in a beautiful, well run facility and this then, will truly become home. The excitement builds, so let's get on with the construction update.

It was a different experience this week, as we were on a guided press tour, led by Shaunda Hildebrand, (the Bureau Chief for Fiscal & Nursing Facility Services for Montana's Senior & Long-Term Care Division). The Group included Montana Standard writer Mike Smith and his lady photographer, Liaison Mark Gollinger, Site Construction Superintendent Mike Ascheman and myself, Mike Lawson. It was a good tour and as always an eye-opener, in seeing the different stages of construction of each of the buildings. I followed up afterward, with Mike Ascheman and GF John Kotka, for their usual great briefings.

Construction Update:

Community Center: The corridors were being painted when we walked through. The offices were also painted and the inside painting of the whole building is expected to be finished this week. Some wrong parts for the metal suspended ceiling framing system were delivered and sent back. This process was put off for a week and hopefully will go full bore this week. John Kotka said he might have some guys installing doors this week and hopefully start doing trim work next week. Johnson Controls were working on installing low voltage wire to the air duct control system.

Exterior: The siders are making good progress and the siding is attractive, which makes the building look good.

Cottage #1: Interior: Collin's Painting's sheetrock tape and mud guys are now moving from the Community Center Building to this building. They'll tape/mud all the sheetrock here and it is a massive job, to say the least. Tri-County Mechanical has both the Plumbing and Sheetmetal work on this project. The plumbers were working on the Boiler gas and water lines. The Sheetmetal guys were working on the ongoing duct work system.

Exterior: The siders put on some flashing and will have a crew working there this week.

Cottage #2: The Sheetrock Hangers “party”, is going full bore in this building. The ceiling is done. The inside of the exterior walls are being hung as well as one side of the interior walls. Remember once this is rocked on one side, the insulators can put the sound insulation in, which once done, allows this open side to be sheet rocked. ARJO worked in putting in the man-lift angles. Some Sheetmetal duct-work continues.

Exterior: The foam insulation blue board was finished, as well as the roof-eve soffit framing. This building is now ready for siding.

Cottage #3: Interior: The insulators have put the heavy plastic vapor barrier sheeting on the ceiling. They will wait for the sheetrock hangers to get the double layer of sheet rock over it, before blowing insulation behind this. The inside of the exterior walls are being insulated with the vapor barrier plastic sheeting applied over that. The Sheet Metal guys continue to work on their heating and cooling ductwork. Plumbers also, continue to work on the piping/boiler systems they’re involved with.

Exterior: A lot of the 3M Peel and Stick Vapor Barrier sheeting, has been applied. Again, as with the preceding buildings, the windows and door frames get installed as the 3M material application gets to those openings. As of the end of last week, there were three of the door frames installed with two to be installed this week.

Cottage #4. Interior: What a difference in the looks of this building over the past month. Things have slowed down somewhat, until the next phase. The Carpenter Framers are continuing to do the firewall blocking, backing for shower/bathroom grab bars/etc., and the shear backing for the sheetrock to be screwed 100% around. The Soffit wall frame-sections were being built on the floor and will be raised up to the correct ceiling height and framed in place. This is all part of the coffered ceiling, in the central common area of these Cottages. The Sheet Metal guys as well as the Electricians are caught up on the phase their working on, until some of the other sub-contractor work is done. This will then enable them to continue to the next phase.

Exterior: The Carpenters framed the sections, they call eyebrows, above some of the outside windows. These sections give shade and protection for those particular windows. The Roofer is working hard on the roof and will probably be done with it this week. When work is completed, in the other cottages, to the point of moving personnel back into this building, this building will be a beehive of activity.

Cottage #5: The trusses got put on hold for a week, but Mike Ascheman was assured they would be here on Wednesday. Carpenter GF John Kotka said he hopes to start rolling them up into place, on the resident wings, on Wednesday after they arrive and on Thursday. On Monday, he hopes to be rolling trusses on the higher walls of the Common Area. Remember, as mentioned before, the complete roof construction process, takes about three weeks to complete. John will have lots of carpenters on this, as this is an important/critical cottage construction event. In the meantime, the delay of the trusses allowed the framers to build and stand most of the interior walls. There’s an important steel beam/post section, that spans a large open area in the central/common area of this cottage, that was put together and erected in place. The purpose of this section is to place and carry trusses placed on top of it. GF John Kotka does another positive thing on this site, in that he requires each cottage job site, his guys are working on, to have a daily clean-up. His motto is “A clean job-site is a safe job-site”.

Zemlijak Excavating is and continues to be busy putting in the Storm Drain System, which forks off from each building to the main drain line and then to a catch basin pond being build for that collection purpose. They’ll also, in all probability, be digging for footing/cement pads for the Electric Vault (Power House), Boiler and Air Handler, small buildings.

Mike Smith from the Montana Standard wrote a great article on our Southwest Montana Veterans Home in the Sunday, May 24th, Edition. I would encourage you to read it, if you haven’t already done so. It is also online. Woman Marine Veteran Lyndsay Alt won the SW MT VET HOME LOGO Contest, so a big congratulations to her. The Foundation is planning on a meeting in June, depending on the Pandemic Covid-19 guidelines. Until next time, please be safe and be respectful of one another.