

Southwest Montana Veterans Home Update #73

By Mike Lawson

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

Great on-site happenings this past week with all the paving being completed late on Thursday. I came to the site later that night and could see the steam coming off the asphalt surface in my headlights, which was impressive. The three flag poles are up and as soon as it's allowed, having the flags whipping in the breeze will be a big inspiration to all of us. Each of these flag poles have a solar panel light system mounted on them which will provide lights on each flag during the night. When the Community Center and Cottage #1, will be turned over to the state is still a question mark. That scheduled date is December 22nd but Cory Markovich, of Markovich Construction, hopes to have it sooner than that, if the right pieces of the construction puzzle fall into place, before then. We in the veteran community are chomping at the bit, hoping for a closer date of opening than in December. Liaison Mark Gollinger, Enduro's Maintenance Superintendent Rodger Staley and myself did our weekly walk-through on Thursday. We visited with the different construction trades-workers as we viewed the progress throughout the Vet Home Site. I'm always impressed at their skills and expertise, in relation to their craft-work-skills on this job. Again, this update wouldn't happen if not for the input of Site Construction Superintendent Mike Ascheman and Carpenter General Foreman John Kotka, for which thanks is given, many times over.

Construction Updates:

Community Center: — Interior: The electricians have been doing the finish work to get this building ready for the start-up contractor folks, to do the mechanical start-up, beginning Wednesday. The Monday, preceding this Wednesday article release, they'll have the lights turned on. Johnson Controls have the heating units programed. The "Start-Up" is critical as the start-up crew will be checking that everything is running as is expected too, will make adjustments where needed and won't sign-off on anything until everything is operating as it's required to. They'll start-up the heating units, the boilers, the air system, the hot water tanks and Johnson Control will adjust the damper system accordingly. This is really a huge final step. Other things happening in this building; John had some of his guys install the fireplace, which looks great. The carpet layers have all the office areas carpeted and are working on the Community Room.

Exterior: The three Flag Poles are up, as I mentioned before, the sidewalks from the Community Center to the Maintenance/Receiving Building have been poured.

Cottage #1: — Interior: The electricians are continuing to trim out lights as well as hooking up wiring to the breaker panels. The plumbers are installing sinks, the carpenters are waiting on three doors and by-fold jams. They did install the fireplace insert. Spa-Tub install complete and ARJO installed the man-lift rails in all the resident rooms. Start-up could happen this week if the start-up goes well in the Community Center, otherwise it will be next week.

Exterior: The Entryway Column siding trim is complete. The back patio column is getting the recess trim framed out. This will be followed by the siders trimming it out with siding.

Cottage #2:— Interior: JA Brothers are taping and painting. John is ready to move his carpenters into this cottage, to install doors with hardware, trim-out of doors/windows and get the picture/handrail installed. This will keep them busy for a while.

Exterior: The siders were working on the front-entry-way columns.

Cottage #3: — Interior: This building is really moving forward and is not that far behind Cottage #1, except for the tile work. The tile layers are working on the floor tile in the twelve resident bathrooms. Tile is labor intensive/time consuming work and they need warm temperatures for the tiling process to work. These cooler temperatures are a challenge and John gets them temporary heat. Once the building heat systems get fired up, a lot of headaches will disappear. These guys are good at what they do and are moving forward. John is close to being done in this Cottage and ready to move his guys into Cottage #2. They pretty well have the doors, hardware and trim completed. The Custom Cabinet guys from Great Falls, have most of the cabinets in and are ready to install the counters, which might happen this week. The plumbers are working in the mechanical room. ARJO was working on installing the man-lift rails.

Exterior: The siders were working on the front entryway columns and applying the caulking on all the siding seams.

Cottage #4: — Interior: The metal seismograph ceiling framework has been started. The Sheetmetal and Plumbers did some work on the piping and HVAC systems. The Johnson Control Systems install is in progress. The insulation of the mechanical system is in progress.

Exterior: The siding/caulking installation is continuing.

Cottage #5: — Interior: Plumbers are mainly doing their rough-in piping/etc.. Not much for the Sheetmetal guys, the electricians did some rough-in work but were pulled to work in some of the other cottages to get caught-up in preparation for the start-up phases.

Exterior: The siders have started the siding on this cottage. The color portions will be a different blue than what is on Cottage #1. Anxious to see it.

Site-Work: The big story was the completion of the paving. The cement finishers continue on the sidewalks. Zemljak Excavating was busy doing the grade/gravel prep for the paving as well as sidewalk prep for the cement finishers. They also worked on the storm drain ditch located on the south perimeter of the Vet Home site. The next thing of interest that should happen this week is the Silver Bow County Road Department milling the Blacktail Loop Road from Highland View Drive to the southern edge of the SW MT Vet Home Site and then widening/paving this section of road. This will really make the entry road to our Vet Home look great.

Other Veteran points of interest:

The big new American Flag for the new Flagpole at the Veteran's part of Stodden Park, was raised by the United Veteran's Council Honor Guard with assistance from the Engineers/bystanders involved with this Veteran Project. This Flagpole is the same size as the Perkins Restaurant's flagpole and was donated by the Perkins owner in Bozeman, when that Perkins was closed. It was such a huge flag that it took about twenty of us to cradle it in our arms as it was hooked up. As it was raised up, the wind filled it and lifted it from our arms and to see it ripple out into the wind, was an awe-inspiring moment. No matter the turmoil this country experiences, to be an American and seeing our flag flying in the wind is a privilege, we're blessed to have a part of. Drive down and see how beautiful this flag is, in this Veteran-Sit setting.

The Veteran's Medical Center (IBOC) building construction has seen the footing being dug and compacted. Hopefully the weather will allow the building shell to be framed and dried in for winter construction.

The Covid-19 numbers continue to go up with Montana being near the top. One of our long time Veteran VFW members is hospitalized at St James Hospital with it, at this time. His daughters can't go see him and thankfully the nursing staff relay messages back and forth. Please be safe and follow the mask and distancing protocol recommended by the medical community.

Take care until next time.