

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home. Update #84

By Mike Lawson

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

It's a Saturday night, on the second of January, this new year of 2021. Our country is in an uproar between Covid-19 and our political nightmare that's going on. It's sad to see the divisions among our citizens, but here in Southwest Montana at our SW MT. VET HOME, we see a wonderful common cause supported by all of you. This is the coming of a dream, for a better beginning and new life, for our Veteran Residents who need special care and can make this Veteran's home be their home. These resident Veterans are coming home to live in a beautiful environment and will be wonderfully cared for. Politics will not be divisive among them, as they will be with other Veterans, in a peaceful atmosphere of sharing their lives together, as when they were active duty military. The plan is for the first few resident veterans to be admitted to Cottage #1 this week. Since the Community Center and Cottage#1 were turned over to the Contracting Company, Eduro, who will operate this vet home, these buildings are now being fully staffed. When Liaison Mark Gollinger and I did our walk-through last Thursday, the whole demeanor of these buildings was very much different than in the past. The staff led by our Veteran's Nursing Home Administrator, Brenna Anderson around, and is continuing to move the rest of the staff into their respective building, and getting things organized/put together. Food is being purchased for the incoming residents. John Kotka made me laugh when he said the Dietary Manager, Lena, who oversees the Food Services, has really bought some great food and the residents are going to "eat very well". This is as it should be!

Because of the Covid-19, this will probably be the last time for me to go through Cottage #1 for the foreseeable future. The resident veterans living there will need the utmost protection until they're vaccinated, and this Covid-19 pandemic is under control. Anyone working in Cottage #1 or anyone who is authorized to go into this Cottage, will be tested for Covid-19 on a frequent basis. All the best safety precautions will be followed including masking, distancing, frequent hand washing, etc. A lot will be going on in both buildings as people are being trained in their particular work areas and getting lined out as to what their duty performances will entail. Inspections will continue to take place as more operational steps are completed by the staff. This is to make sure Eduro is in compliance with a number of Government Agencies, from Local to State and Federal. Once some of these inspections are passed/certified, more resident Veterans will be admitted until this Cottage is filled with the allotted twelve residents. This process will continue when Cottage #2 is opened for occupancy. Once this Cottage is filled with residents and has passed the required inspections, the VA will come in to do their inspections, which are said to be very stringent. Upon the inspection/certification process being completed, the VA will start paying their portion of the cost for each Resident Veteran. This is a great protection for the well-being of our Veterans, who will call this home.

Construction Updates:

Community Center—Interior: After this week, very few if any, construction workers will be in this building. Most of the punch-list stuff is completed. The Data Cable people should be close to having their data communication cables hooked-up for the phones/internet/etc. this week or next. The different furniture pieces are completely set up in the different locations they were intended to be at. Everything works, the fireplace, tv's, appliances, etc. The Enduro personnel are making this building their own, as is evident in seeing them getting their individual offices organized as to how they want them. The Physical Therapists are setting up the different equipment they'll use for the resident's care, the warming kitchen being used for food preparation and the list goes on. This building is now open for business, to be used as it was intended.

Exterior: Mostly finished. Two metal benches were installed on each side of the Entry Door. Beautiful Metal Handrail Fence was installed along the back sidewalk. The Siding Crew still have a little bit of rain-gutter and down-spouts to install.

Cottage #1: Lots of punch-list finish work was completed. The ductwork and piping insulation in the Mechanical Room was completed. Painters finished their punch-list painting.

The patient man-lift motors were installed to the overhead rails in each of the resident rooms. A portable man-lift will also be in the Cottage for use. The supplier will train the Eduro personnel how to operate these man-lifts. The bay window bench pads are in place for the residents to sit on and look out their bay windows. The final cleanup is done. The furniture is in place throughout this Cottage and looks great. The kitchen equipment/utensils/dishes etc. are in place and being organized by Enduro's "Food Service" personnel. They are also purchasing/stocking food for the soon to be admitted resident veterans. This building is now under Eduro's control and the Contractors, with the exception of the Communication Data Cable guys and McKinstry doing some programming, will not be back into this Cottage except for minor adjustments. They'll have to mask/distance and get tested to be in this building.

Exterior: The fence around the back patio and the one on the top of the west retaining wall are installed. They look great! The rain-gutter installation is completed. All the fob actuators on all the exterior doors are working properly. Two exterior metal benches were installed.

Cottage #2—Interior: The Electricians continue to pull some wire, as well as doing some trim-out of lights/light-switches/outlets/etc. The Plumbers finished installing the Zone Valves in the Mechanical Room. Johnson Control finished the Zone Valve and Air-Handler low voltage wire hookups. They were also installing the thermostats in the resident rooms. The Carpenters were hanging doors/casing, working on the lighted shelves on the upper part of the walls, in the Dining Room, Living Room and the Den. They were doing the cut-outs for the door actuators, as well as running low-voltage wire to those and the card readers. The Data Cable guys were running wire that will eventually be hooked into the Charter Communications Network. Derrick, the Sheetmetal Foreman, trimmed out the louver vents for the Air-Handlers.

Yellowstone Acoustical installed the T-Bar metal ceiling framework, for the acoustical ceiling tile, in the Corridors and the Spa Bath. They also installed the border tile in this framework.

Exterior: The Siding Crew finished installing the rain gutter down-spouts. The Cement Finishers poured the Bench Pads as well as the cement for the Veteran Medallions, surrounding the rear patio. The Medallions were imbedded in this cement.

Cottage #3: Interior: The Plumbers were trimming out toilets/sinks in the resident room bathrooms. They were also working on the hot-water piping going to the Air-Handlers and the Zone Valves, in the Mechanical Room. Electricians were trimming out lights/switches/outlets. The Carpenters were installing the FF&E package, consisting of soap/towel/sharp needle/etc. dispensers, as well as the shower curtain. They also put bathroom doors back up and installed the TVs. Johnson Controls completed their work in this building. "Complete Communications", the data cable guys, continue to work on the low voltage communication wiring. Yellowstone Acoustical has all the metal T-Bar ceiling framework completed and have installed some of the acoustical tile. The Fire Alarm folks were pulling low voltage wire for their alarm systems.

Exterior: The Siding crew was working on the rain gutter down-spouts.

Cottage #4—Interior: To quote John "The Tapers are slinging mud". The sheetrock is hung, and the tapers are making good progress on the taping. It's very possible that the painting will start this week. The Plumbers are doing rough-in and running gas piping to the Air-Handlers.

Exterior: The Siders are working on fascia and rain gutter installation.

Cottage #5—Interior: The Sheet-Rockers started to hang sheetrock last week and will be in full force work crew there this this week.

Exterior: The Siders continue to work on fascia and soffits. The RK Cement Finishers poured the back patio.

Electric Vault Building: It was sheet-rocked. It will get taped and probably painted.

Emergency Generator; Factory Rep is scheduled to be in this week to oversee the hook-up of it to the electrical system as well as provide training to Eduro's Maintenance Personnel.

Receiving/Maintenance Building: Plumber did his rough-in. It is scheduled to get taped this week or next.

Entry gate construction fence along Blacktail Loop Road: This fence will be moved back inside the construction site. This will separate the Community Center and Cottage #1 from the active construction area of the other Cottages. It will also allow the Eduro Personnel to have their own parking and be separated from the ongoing construction activity.

This past week was busy and exciting with Eduro taking control of the Community Center and Cottage #1. The first few resident veterans will be admitted this week. Things are moving quickly, and Cottages #2 & #3 are scheduled to be turned over to the State at the latter part of this month. With that said, this is the year our Legislature will meet in Helena. We will be testifying for some bills that will seek money to build Cottage #6 which was on the blueprints. It wasn't built because we didn't have the money to build it due to attrition. This was a direct result of it taking ten years to get approved to be built. The other need is to have enclosed walkways that connect every two Cottages. This will provide a safe passage for food delivery and other services shared between the two Cottages. It's a big safety concern. These requests to the Legislature are needed to provide monies to address this and will need all your support. It's a bipartisan requested issue, as the SW MT VET HOME is non-political in that our residents will be of different persuasions. Our Veteran Home Foundation will have met at the SW MT Vet Home, "Community Center", the Monday before this paper comes out. We will discuss our political approach with some brainstorming. Whatever support/advice any of you can give in our efforts in making our Vet Home complete, please do so.

Take care, be safe and follow the Covid -19 guidelines, not only for your health but for your loved ones as well. Until next time. :)