

SOUTHWEST MONTANA VETERANS HOME. UPDATE #86

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.

The overall perspective of what's going on at our Veteran's home is in the continuing transition from the Construction Phase, giving way to the actual Veteran Nursing Home Operational Phase. My main two go to guys, Mike Ascheman and John Kotka, have been the eyeballs on the day-in/day-out construction activities from the very beginning of construction. Mike is the Markovich's Site Construction Superintendent, and John is the Carpenter General Foreman. (John is a right-hand man to Mike.) The other important key person for information is the State Liaison for this vet home, Mark Gollinger. Every week he takes me for a walk-through of the complete site, during which we can see the building process on a week to week basis. We also have the opportunity to talk with all the crafts people and the sub-contractors who they work for. We get to know some of them and get an intimate knowledge of what the end goal of what they're working on is. It's been an incredible journey to experience every week for this old Vet. The eyes of Mark are more important than ever now, especially in the Operational Phase of our Vet Home and for the care of our Resident Veterans. Eduro, the Company who is operating our SW MT Vet Home, now has complete control of the Community Center and Cottage #1. They have very strict control of both buildings due to Covid-19. The rules of going into either building is on a need to be there basis, and all visitors have to sign-in at the Community Center. Because of the Covid-19, extreme caution for the welfare of our resident Veterans is in place. Cottage #1 is only allowing Eduro personnel and a few workers doing touch-up completion work to come in. The other key person coming and going is Liaison Mark Gollinger. If something needs to be addressed, he is the person keeping on top of things and is the chief problem solver. I'm not allowed to go into Cottage #1, and only on a limited basis concerning the Community Center. I am good with that, so now I go to Mark concerning those two buildings. It's a Covid-19 health safety precaution, and that is good.

This week he told me that the Eduro folks have been preparing Cottage #1 for the first anticipated resident veterans. The beds are made, towels are on the racks, the pantry is stocked, and all the medical equipment is assembled and ready to be used. He's very impressed with John Kotka, who makes sure that everything that he points out, his people take care of it. Whether it's a spot of paint or making a door adjustment, John just smiles and sees that it gets done. He told Mark that he wants the Veterans to have a beautiful and comfortable place to live in. If any of you run into John, give him a pat on the back and thank him.

Concerning the Eduro personnel, Mark is impressed by the staff that Brenna Anderson, the Veteran's Home Administrator, has put together. He said that they all pitch in together and help each other in taking care of the million little things that have to happen before the first Resident Veteran steps through the door. These folks are willing to step out of their particular job parameters and ask how they can help each other. He's encouraged/happy to see this level of commitment, as this is what's going to make our Veterans truly feel at home. Some construction items and final reports are in review. Once these are completed, our first Resident Veterans will make Cottage #1 their home. It's hoped that this is the week it will happen!

Construction Updates:

Community Center: Construction is finished and is now under the control of the operating contractor Eduro.

Cottage #1: Construction finished and under the control of the operating contractor Eduro. Anticipation of the admittance of first Resident Veterans, this week.

Cottage #2—Interior: The Tapers and Painters are doing touch-up on their work. The painters were painting the resident rooms/bathrooms' ceilings white. Yellowstone Accoustical has started installing the ceiling tiles. Markovich personnel are buffing/scraping/cleaning the cement floors in preparation for the floor layers to start the laying of floor linoleum in the resident rooms. The building has to be warmed up for this to take place. Plumbers were working on the boilers. Electricians continue to do their trimming out of lights/switches/outlets. The Carpenters are hanging doors/casing, building door jams, installing door hardware/trim and installed bi-fold doors. Have ADA automatic door openers and key-fobs to install. The tile layers are tiling on the resident bathroom/shower walls. Complete Communication is hooking up their data cable wires in the electrical room. Start-up is in progress, with the Mechanical Control folks having the mechanical system ready to fire-up with permanent heat, once the flooring is completed. Johnson Control is doing their system control programming. Cleaners are doing the initial cleaning called dusting. The Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing is close to being completed.

Exterior: The Siders are putting metal sheathing on the laminated roof beam as well as putting the siding on the support column in the rear patio area. This Column connects this beam to a ground cement footing. Fencing crew dug fence post holes and set the fence posts in cement around this same rear patio.

Cottage #3—Interior: Everything happening to Cottage #2 is happening to this Cottage, except for the Carpenters and the Tile Layers, as their work is pretty well done, and they did not work here this past week.

Exterior: The Fencing Crew dug the fence post holes and set the fence posts in cement around the rear patio.

Cottage #4—Interior: Drywall taping continues with the Painters ready to start painting. The Plumbers are doing their gas-line rough-in.

Exterior: The Siding crew is installing rain gutters. The Carpenters have some front entry framing to do.

Cottage: #5—Interior: The Sheet-Rockers have started to install the Corridor Ceiling sheetrock. These ceilings get a double layer of sheetrock.

Exterior: The Siding Crew is working on the roof soffits. The Carpenters have some front entry framing to do.

Maintenance/Receiving Building: Some Sheetrock was hung on the interior walls. The rough-in plumbing was inspected on Thursday, which allows the sheetrock to be finished with taping and painting to follow. The Electricians and Plumbers will do their trim-out afterward. The Carpenters will then hang a few doors, and this building will be turned over to the state as completed.

Zemljak Excavating: Mike worked on the signage areas as well as putting topsoil around the edges of the patio sidewalks for safety.

Things are moving right along and the Veterans who will occupy this building will get to experience a quality of life they deserve. So many have worked so hard for so many years to make this Vet Home a reality. Cottage #2 and #3 should be in Eduro's hands by the end of the month. Hopefully that will see thirty-six resident veterans admitted by the end of February. The reality of the Southwest Montana Veterans Home being fully occupied by summertime could very well happen. A dream come true, for sure! Visitation will be limited until this Covid-19 is brought under control. We must protect the health of these Resident Veterans. The day will come when we can visit with them and do things to enhance their living experience while there. We have to be patient. I'll close for now and wish you and your families good health and happiness. Until next time.