

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #88

By Mike Lawson

Greeting once again to you, the Veterans/Counties/Communities of SW MT who have been and are the organizers/supporters of this, our Southwest Montana Veterans Home.

I have a couple of topics to write about before I concentrate on our Vet Home Construction Site. Many of you have seen/read the news coverage concerning the Veteran's Amphitheater, located at Butte's Stodden Park, being defaced with graffiti by a man and women in broad daylight. I was part of a Vietnam Veterans group called "Trip Wire" in the middle 1980's. We organized, fund raised, got the prints/plans drawn, bought the material and then built this Amphitheater with volunteer help of veterans mixed with help from throughout our community/surrounding communities. It was a labor of love, built to be used by both the community and all veterans. Our "Tripwire" group dissolved after this project was completed. This Amphitheater has been well used for many Community and Veteran Events since 1986. When the grants were received to rebuild Stodden Park, the Veteran's Park Section of it was included to be done in the last phase of this incredible park renovation. The Engineers consulted the Veterans by coming to our United Veteran's Council meetings, took notes and went on to have the contractor renovate not only the Amphitheater, but the grounds around it. This included Memorial Monuments from WWI, WWII and the Korean War, surrounding it. Room is available for other military conflict memorials since Vietnam, to be added. This whole Veteran's Corner area of Stodden Park is a reverent place to remember the veterans who gave their lives, and those who served this amazing country called America. Because of the generous grants from the Dennis Washington Foundation, this Amphitheater was renovated from the ground up with a new roof, cement work throughout and around this site, and addressing such things as the handicapped access/walkways/etc. It was wired for sound equipment/lights, it was painted, and the list goes on. It really turned out beautifully and is a showcase of a place to be used by the Community and our Veterans. Unfortunately, in the middle of the day, a tall man in a red jacket/sweatshirt along with a woman dressed in black, came into this beautifully renovated Veteran's Amphitheater and painted graffiti on the freshly painted walls. Much of it was vulgar and a slap in the face to all veterans and our community.

I have to say I was more than gratified to see our Chief Executive/the Silver Bow County Park and Recreation Department workers quickly take action to start cleaning this mess up! Chief Executive JP Gallagher's office is offering a \$500 reward, the United Veteran's Council matched it with \$500, Robbie Baker from Baker Auto added \$500, and Lori and Bill Patrick added \$100. That's a total of \$1,600 to bring these two perpetrators to justice! We as Veterans are grateful and know our Community supports us in times like these. It's sad that these two individuals would stoop this low and deface these walls like they did. Hopefully someone will turn them in, and they'll be punished appropriately! If anyone learns of who they are, please call Crime Stoppers at 406-782-7336.

On to next topic: Recently submitted action at our State Legislature, HB-14 was submitted: Long Range Building Bonding Program. Part of that Bill concerns our SW MT Veteran's Home. Because we struggled for over a decade to get our Veterans home built, the money that was appropriated to begin with didn't keep its value (Attrition) over the 11 years that it took to finally get it to the breaking ground stage. We didn't have enough money to build the planned six Cottages and had to settle for five. Eventually we'll attempt to get legislated money for Cottage #6. Before that happens, a very needed project for the safety/socialization of our Resident Veterans/Staff is the construction of protective covered walkways connecting the Cottages. There wasn't enough money to include them during this construction phase. It is critical for the staff and resident veterans to safely move from one building to another without having to be out in the inclement weather. With many of them being in fragile health, their safety is of the utmost importance. When this article comes out this week, several of us (Veterans) will testify before the House Committee hearing about the HB-14 Bill. Through the last dozen years, we have done this exact same thing in the getting of our SW MT Veterans Home and it becoming a reality. Hopefully we'll be well received, our walkways will be funded, and then be able to be built.

Now I'll get to our SW MT Vet Home. As always Mike Ascherman and John Kotka bring me up to date on things. I do a walk through on the construction side with Mark Gollinger and then can put this update article together. We're all on the same page in making this the showcase of Veteran Homes in this NW part of America. I must add that I met Bill Markovich, who owns Markovich Construction, when we were doing our walk-through. I was a bit surprised, in a good way, when he said these buildings were some of the best they had ever built. They've

built a lot of them, so it was a verification of what I've written about throughout these updates concerning the quality of engineering/architecture/construction that has gone into this Veteran Home Complex.

Construction/Operation Site Updates:

Community Building/Cottage #1: Both buildings have been turned over to the State and are staffed by the Operations Contractor "Eduro". Markovich may need to do minor things that may come up.

Cottage #2—Interior: Some of the construction workers were pulled off Cottage #3 to get this cottage ready for the state to take possession of within the next 2 weeks.

The Tile-layers have tiled all the Resident Rooms and are now doing the grouting. Once that's done, they'll tile the walls/floors in the Spa Room/Spa Bathroom. They will be close to having it finished this week. The Carpenters have all the doors hung, installed all the FF&E Dispensers in the resident bathrooms/rooms, installed the shower curtain rods/shower folding chair/shower grab bars, and installed fold down toilet grab bars. They also installed TVs in all the Resident Rooms and throughout this cottage. The Floor-layers have moved into this cottage and are laying the linoleum in the Resident Rooms as well as the Kitchen/Dining area. The Carpet will be in the Living Room/Nursing Station/Corridor Hallways. Exterior carpet will be in the front entryway vestibule. Painter is doing final touch-up. Tri-County Sheetmetal turned on the fans to the Air-Handlers, and Cottage #2 is now self-heating. Complete Communications are hooking their Data Cable wire to the plug-in boxes for the TVs Computers, etc. as well as programming. Electricians are continuing to do their trim out work. Custom Cabinets installed counter-tops in the kitchen area and are now installing the bathroom sink counter-tops, in all the resident bathrooms. The Cleaners are doing dust cleaning. ADA Handicapped door opener buttons were installed as well as the exterior door card-readers.

Exterior: Rear patio area fence was installed.

Cottage #3—Interior: The Painters are doing their punch list painting. Floor-layers have all the linoleum laid and will lay the carpet areas after they're done in Cottage #2. The Carpenters have all the doors installed as well as the FF&E installation of dispensers completed. Insulators did duct-work insulation in the Mechanical Room. Complete Communications were hooking their Data Cable to their data cable panels.

Exterior: Fence installed around the Rear Patio Area.

Cottage #4—Interior: Plumbers were working on their rough-in piping. Electricians were pulling wire. Complete Communications were pulling their Data Cable wire bundles. The Tapers are putting their final skin-coating of mud on to get the walls to what they call a Level 5. The Painters are working in the East Wing Resident Rooms, spray-painting the primer on and will follow up with the painting. Once this is done, it gives the Tile-layers a place to go after finishing Cottage #2. The Carpenters will also be able to move in and start building/installing window jambs, install door jambs, and hang doors.

Exterior: The Carpenters finished framing the Front Entry Columns. The Siders will follow-up with siding these columns.

Cottage #5—Interior: The Sheet-Rockers continue sheet-rocking the ceiling and upper walls. The Sheetmetal guys will be working on running their ductwork this week.

Exterior: The siding crew were working on soffits and fascia.

The Receiving/Maintenance Building: Work was on temporary hold but should resume this week.

We, the local veterans, are hoping the state is resolving the issue they have been in a debate about concerning Cottage #1. The day the first Veteran Residents can be admitted will finally be a reality we have waited for these past many years. It's also hoped that the incoming Resident Veterans will have their Covid-19 Vaccine shots before they arrive or very shortly thereafter. Their health and well-being is what this Veteran's Home is all about. Please try and keep yourselves and your loved ones as healthy as you can in following your Health Department's guidelines. Until next time.