

Southwest Montana Veterans Home Update #94

By Mike Lawson

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

When this article comes out on this Wednesday, the overwhelming joy among all of us veterans will have been the welcoming of the first two resident veterans being admitted into our Southwest Montana Veterans Home. The third resident veteran will be admitted this Friday. This celebration will see Governor Gianforte at our Vet Home to welcome the first Resident Veteran to be admitted. Hopefully he'll be there for the second Veteran, who will be admitted an hour later. The Flag Ceremony starting this special occasion, will have seen the Southwest Montana Veteran's Council doing the honors of raising the flags on the three flag poles in front of the Community Center. The center flagpole will see the American Flag raised with the MIA Flag flying right beneath it. The flagpole standing to the west of the center flagpole, will be flying the Montana State Flag and on the flagpole standing to the east of the center flagpole, will be flying the SW MT VET HOME flag. These flags will have been raised in unison, as part of the Flag Ceremony by the SW MT UVC Honor Guard. The Governor will have made some comments and the procession will have moved to the entrance sidewalk to Cottage #1, where our first Resident Veteran will have been admitted. Governor Gianforte will have given this Veteran his welcoming gift along with a donated quilt. (These quilts were made and organized by Montana women quilter groups). Once this has been done, then I'll have tag-teamed with Cory Markovich, (Markovich Construction), and given the Governor a tour of Cottages #2, #3, #4, and #5. Hopefully the 2nd Resident Veteran will have arrived by then and Governor Gianforte will have welcomed him as he did the 1st Resident Veteran. We're appreciative that Governor Gianforte made the time to honor the Veterans in this way. The next steps in getting more Veterans admitted after the first three, will be getting the Montana State Department handling the Medicare/Medicaid Certification to do their inspection and for this facility to get their certification/license to operate. This should happen next week. Once this Certification/License is in effect, our Vet Home Operator, EDURO, can then admit up to 22 Resident Veterans, which means 10 more veterans will be admitted to Cottage #1, and 10 Veterans will be admitted to Cottage #2. This should happen in the next two or three weeks. Once all the 22 Resident Veterans are admitted and settled in, the VA will come and do their certification inspection. From what I can gather, this is a tough and thorough inspection, but once passed and certified, the Cottages with the 38 rooms that are left, can be opened for admittance. This will happen as each Cottage is turned over to the state when completed by Markovich Construction. The Operating Contractor EDURO, will then take control and operate/staff these Cottages. The importance of the Inspections and Certifications/Licensed to operate, is that both entities doing the inspections will start paying their share of the costs for each Resident Veteran in our SW MT Veteran's Home. Things are moving in the right direction, for sure!

My go to guys, Mike Ascherman and John Kotka, continue to use their expertise in getting this project moving toward completion, as well as keeping me in that loop. I appreciate their weekly briefing. Liaison Mark Gollinger and I did our walk through, and as usual saw impressive progress, especially in Cottages #4 & #5. Mark retired from the Navy as a Senior Master Chief and was a SeaBee his entire time serving. I wished him a Happy Birthday on March 5th due to that being the SeaBee's "Can Do Since 42" Birthday. If you see him, you might do the same.

Construction Updates:

Community Center and Cottage #1 are completed.

Cottage #2: The Painters continue to do final touch-ups. The Electricians completed the Kitchen Appliances hook-ups and are waiting on two lights to come in, to install. Their work will then be completely finished in this Cottage. The Carpet Layers have all the flooring completed and are installing the (wall to floor 4"/6") rubber base throughout this building. The Wallpaper guy, Brad, and his wife have the wallpapering done in the Den/Living Room area. The Office Supply Company from Helena is placing all the furniture throughout this building. The Cleaners are about finished with the thorough cleaning. The Architects have done their inspections and have created a punch-list of minor things they want to be fixed or changed.

Cottage #3: The Painters are doing final touch-up. The Carpet Layers are finished or close to being finished on laying all the carpet in the corridors, living room/nurses office/front entry, including the gluing of the wall-to-floor rubber base. The Wallpaper Hangers finished hanging the wallpaper in this building. The Electricians are completely finished. The Cleaners have washed all the windows and are in the final cleaning mode. The Architects have done their inspections and created a minor punch-list of things they want fixed/changed.

Cottage #4: The Sheetrock Tapers are doing some finish taping/mudding. The Painters have spray painted the corridors and North-Wing rooms. The Plumbers have their gas lines run and are hooking up the zone valves. The Carpenters are setting door jams/installing the doors/trimming outdoor casing in the East-wing. Electricians are caught up until they can come back and do their trim-out work. The folks installing the nurse calling system, pulled all their wire and won't be back until all the painting and carpenter trim-out work is completed. The Johnson Control Guy was pulling wire for the control system for the heating damper controls and thermostats. The Tile guys are prepping the resident bathroom floors for tiling. ARJO, the out of state installer of the Resident Room "man-lift" system, will have their personnel on site this week to install the overhead anchor bolts that the man-lift rails will be attached to.

Cottage #5: Plumbers are running domestic water lines. The Sheet-Rockers are continuing to hang sheetrock. The Tapers have the Mechanical Room to fire tape. The Insulators are insulating the sound bats in the un-sheet-rocked side of the interior walls. Once this is done that side of the walls can be sheet-rocked. Electricians rough-in is complete. The sheet metal guys were in the rafters setting their Air-Handlers to the ductwork for the heating system, running throughout this building. The Johnson Control guys were pulling low-voltage wire through their conduit. The Carpenters are caught-up and on hold for now. The Fire Sprinkler guys are continuing the installation of the overhead fire-sprinkler piping/sprinkler-head system

Receiving/Maintenance Building: Painting is completed. The Electricians and Plumbers are doing their trim-out. The Carpenters are finishing the door hardware. This building is very close to being turned over to the state.

Spring is soon to be here and the Covid numbers are coming down. Hopefully we'll be able to socialize more by the time summer gets here. I have a buddy veteran who I took to the hospital and it turned out he had Covid. He said it wasn't anything a person would ever want. Fortunately, I had had both my vaccine shots and tested negative. I feel being vaccinated was a testament to not getting it. I did wear a mask and will continue to do so. He is out of the hospital and is doing a lot better. I say this to encourage all of you to mask and distance for you and your loved one's protection. Take care until next time.