

Southwest Veteran's Home Update #99

By Mike Lawson

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

This past week was full of activities concerning our Veteran's Home. One was with Sen Tester bringing the VA Secretary Denis Richard McDonough to Montana on his first visit since being sworn in. They visited our SW MT Veteran's Home on Tuesday at 4:00 PM. Because of Covid-19 and the tight security, there were only about 20 people allowed in the Community Center's large meeting room for a round table question and answer session. This was mainly made up of SW MT Veteran Home Foundation members, a few Eduro Staff members as well as Staff of both the VA Sec. and Sen. Tester. Sec. McDonough was very friendly, listened intently and his staff took notes. He didn't dodge any questions and responded to those of us who made statements about Veteran issues that we were concerned about. We took him to the newly completed Cottage #2 where I was able to be his tour guide and explain the different aspects of this Cottage. I really have a good feeling about him and feel good things are coming for the veterans of America.

The next activity was Dave Williamson and I testifying for HB5 And HB14 before the Senate Committee hearing them. One dealt with "The Covered Walkways" between the Cottages and the other was concerning the possibility of getting Cottage #6 to become a reality. Both HB's didn't have anyone testifying against them. The Committee will have voted on them on Monday of this week.

I did a walk-through of the Cottages with Liaison Mark Gollinger, with John Kotka joining us.

These walk-throughs really are eye opening and allow me to visit with the different crafts folks doing their individual parts of the construction. Seeing the changes from week to week and having both these guys, along with Mike Ascheman, explain what's been done, what is expected to be done in the next week or so, and what it's going to take to get it done is always an eye-opener.

Construction Updates:

Community Center, Cottages #1 & #2, and the Receiving/Maintenance Building have all been turned over the state. Eduro has them staffed and are in control of them.

Cottage #3: The Painters are finishing their painting punch-list. The Cleaners are doing the final thorough cleaning. The Carpenters are finishing up on the FF&E package, consisting of assembling carts for the laundry/medicine/meals/etc. They also are assembling and hanging the resident bathroom shower curtains and setting up the garbage cans. This is about done, and the expectation is that Cottage #3 will be turned over to the state this week.

Cottage #4: Things are really moving along toward the finish line in this Cottage. The drywall taping is finished. The Painters have all the walls and ceilings painted. The Tile Layers have all the east-wing resident bathrooms tiled and are starting to do the same in the north-wing resident bathrooms. The Plumbers have finished installing the zone valves/hot water lines/gas lines. This week they have installed the hot water tank which finishes their work in this Cottage. The Pipe

Insulators are now insulating the piping. The Carpenters are building window/door jambs and trimming out the windows/doors. The Electricians can now start trimming out the light-switches/outlets/etc. The Floor Layers are starting to put flooring in the resident rooms.

Cottage #5: The seismograph T-Bar metal ceiling framework in the resident bedrooms has been completed. The Electricians are installing their light-cans in this framework as well as pulling wire to these ceiling lights. The Sprinkler Fitter is adjusting the sprinkler heads coming through the framework. The Sheet-rockers are following these guys and hanging the ceiling sheetrock. The Plumbers have all the domestic water lines ran and are running hot water lines to the air exchangers. They are also running the gas-line. The Sheetmetal guys are installing metal ductwork in the attic. The work in this Cottage is really moving at a good pace.

Another point of interest is the new Veterans CBOT Medical Center being under construction by Three Bears. It isn't far from our SW Montana Vet Home to the north of us. Driving by this site, a person can see all the white sewer and vent piping stubs sticking up out of the ground. Lockmer Plumbing is doing the plumbing work. Hoffman Excavating is doing the dirt work. They filled in/compacted the dirt around these piping stubs and are bringing the dirt to grade before bringing the gravel too grade. The next step will be in getting the footing inside the foundation framed and poured with cement. These footings will be for the steel columns that will carry the steel support beams running through the center of this building. These steel beams will support the roof trusses that go across them. Once this is done, the cement finishers will pour the cement for the floor. Wayne Paffhausen, the owner/contractor, said that they expect to start framing the walls on May 1st. While the inside work is going on, Hoffman Excavating will be working on leveling the parking lot with a bulldozer, using laser technology to bring the parking lot to the proper grade. This will be followed by gravel and the cement finishers putting in curbing and sidewalks. Sounds like Wayne has things well thought out as this isn't his first rodeo. This project is easy to keep an eye on as you drive by on Highland View Drive or Continental Drive.

The Covid19 numbers are coming down with most of us having received our vaccines. If you haven't got one, please do. With these numbers dropping many of the Covid Restrictions we've been living under are being lifted. Getting back to a more normal way of living is refreshing, but masking and distancing from those we don't know is still a cautionary recommendation. Some states like Michigan are seeing their Covid numbers surging with not only the first Covid 19, but now with the more deadly new variant that originated in England. With the tourist season starting, it's especially important to use caution in keeping Montana's Covid numbers down.

Everyone take care until next time.