

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home, Update #15

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By
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Greeting once again to you the Veterans/Communities who make up the six counties in SW Montana who are represented as the organizers and chief supporters of the "SW MT Veteran's Home". This is the 15th update on our Veterans Home.

Despite the cool, rainy weather we're experiencing, the construction work on our Veteran's Home has taken some great strides forward, this week. I was privileged to be invited to the weekly walk-through meeting at our Vet Home Construction Site between the Montana Dept of Public Health and Human Services, the MT. Dept. of Administration - Div. of Architecture & Engineering Division, General Contractor Markovich Construction and the CTA Architecture Firm. Walking through the site to each part of the construction building sites and getting an updated assessment for each, by Mike Ascheman, was very revealing. Our group consisted of Shaunda Hildebrand (Mt. Dept of Public Health & Human Services (Owner), Mike Ascheman (Markovich), Chris Ames (Mt. Dept. of Admin. Div of Architecture & Engineering), June Stuver (CTA Architecture Firm), Janko Mitric (US Senate's "Director of Oversight") from Washington DC) and Mike Lawson (myself) a veteran member of SW MT Vet Home Foundation).

Before the breakdown on the Vet Home construction I would like to tell of an interchange I observed between Sen. Testers Rep. Janko Mitric and Mike Zemljak the Excavating Contractor on our Vet Home site. It seems that Janko's father immigrated to America from Yugoslavia. Janko said he had relatives named Markovich in Yugoslavia and recognized the name Zemljak being a Yugoslavian name from there. He introduced himself to Mike (Mike was sitting in his big "excavator backhoe") , and asked him if he knew what his name meant. Mike said all he knew was one of his past grandfathers came from Yugoslavia in the late 1800's. Janko, after telling Mike his own background history, told Mike that Zemljak meant earth and found it fascinating that Mike's business was moving and working with the earth's dirt. So all you Zemljak's out there, you now know the rest of the story concerning your name (: .

We'll now get serious and cover what's happened on our Vet Home construction site this week;

Cottage #1 is on hold for now as the concentration is on getting the other Cottage's "foundation and floor slab work" completed before the freezing cold weather hits later this fall. Mike Ascheman did say he hoped to have some workers grinding the outside of the foundation walls smooth next week. Once this is done, a black foundation coating will be applied, followed by insulated foam board. Zemljak Excavating can then backfill around the foundation and bring the ground elevation to the level specified on the architecture prints.

Cottage #2 Had its “floor slab” poured/finished on Tuesday and Wednesday. The final step was the slab floor being scored about an inch or two inches deep, in ten foot sections, across the whole floor, with big cement saws mounted on wheels cutting these grooves. This helps keep the cement from cracking. Once the building is completed, these floors will be covered with different specified types of floor covering.

Cottage #3's walls were poured with cement on Monday and the interior wall forms are being put in place for a projected pour this week. The next phase to happen, same as with #1 and #2, is the plumbers putting in their water/sewer lines with Zemljak digging the ditches and backfilling after. Following this of course is the vapor barrier/rebar/slab cement pour/finish, etc..

The electricians will also put in the main electrical conduit line as the plumbers are doing their line-work.

Cottage #4's footings are scheduled to be poured this week by Phillips Concrete so things are moving in the right direction. Having done #1, #2 and #3 the construction workers have the routine pretty well figured out and are able to get things done in a shorter more efficient amount of time. That's a good thing and says a lot for the working folks on our Vet Home project.

Cottage #5, the last one projected to be built, is pretty quiet for now although I thought I saw some survey stakes in the ground. Mike is hoping the footing will be dug by the end of next week.

The Community Center Building I saved for last as a lot of observable things are happening there. The foundation coating and insulation board is in place and Zemljak Excavating is free to backfill to the specified ground elevation levels, whenever he can get to it. All the exterior walls are in place and the interior walls are being built and put in place. If you drive by you'll see the window openings. It won't be long and the roof will magically appear and really give us a new exciting prospective of what's to come.

On our walk-through of our Veteran construction site I couldn't help but notice all the different aspects involved, one might never notice, that are engineered and being worked on. An example is that each Cottage starting on the west side, next to Black Tail Loop, and progressing to the east, toward the East Ridge of the Continental Divide, is about two feet higher than the one before it and it is pleasing to the eye. I was told that this was to conform to the original slope of this property. The other benefit of this is the overall site will have good drainage.

I'll leave you with this, in a conversation I had with Mike Ascherman, I mentioned that there was a lot of different types of things being worked on and to keep up with. His reply was “You can eat a whole elephant, but you can only eat it one bite at a time” and that's the way this construction site job is “one step at a time”. Patience is everything.

Have a great week and check the “Viewing Hooch” out on Blacktail Loop.