

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #97

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.

Spring is here and the snow is starting to disappear, which is good for our SW Vet Home construction. It is also good for the many new construction projects around town, especially the new VA IBOC Medical Center, by Three Bears, that is ready to continue construction. I see Hoffman Excavating has moved some equipment onto that site and will keep you posted as things progress there. Tom Goyette and I talked with Lee Alt at the Highway Department about signage on the Interstates I-15 & I-90 that would direct folks to our SW MT Vet Home. He asked what we were thinking about, so we requested signage before I-15 gets to I-90 coming north from Dillion, signage on I-15 coming south from Elk Park, before taking the turn-off going east to Billings on I-90 and signage on I-90 before coming into Butte from the west and also coming from the east over Home-Stake Pass just before taking the Exit at Three Bears. We also asked that once on Highland View Road, after taking the exit off-ramp to it, that a sign be placed pointing to the VA IBOC Medical Center as well as another SW MT VET Home sign pointing to our Vet Home on Blacktail Loop Road. Lee submitted our requests to his higher-ups in Helena. Just another piece of the puzzle! Those of us from the Southwest Montana Veterans Foundation are really following the legislature in Helena with our fingers crossed concerning HB2 & HB5 & HB14. They each address money needed for the enclosed walkways we need between the cottages, money needed for maintenance/repair for all three Veteran Homes in Montana, money to build Cottage #6 and the authority given from the legislature for the appropriate state department to spend any possible donations/grants received to build Cottage #6. We very well may have to testify before the House or the Senate concerning any of these House Bills. On the seeking of donations/grants to build Cottage #6, if the Legislature doesn't come through, the SW MT VET Home Foundation will have to fine-tune the proposal I mentioned last week. Once we have this completed, we can then approach Foundations/Corporations/Wealthy Patrons/etc. who have a heart and desire to help in this worthy request. We Veterans have the spirit of never giving up, if it helps the veteran's needs to be met. Liaison Mark Gollinger and I did our walk through and my go-to guys, Mike Ascheman and John Kotka, briefed me on the latest construction progress. The political updates from Shaunda Hildebrand and Dave Williams are appreciated and help keep us aware of what's at stake concerning not only our SW MT VET home, but also the other two State Vet homes located in Columbia Falls and Glendive.

Construction Updates:

Community Center/Cottage#1: These buildings are turned over to the state and are being operated/staffed by the Vet Home contractor EDURO. Markovich did install the back-order front entry handrails on Cottage #1.

Cottage #2: This Cottage will have been turned over to the State when this article comes out on Wednesday. The punch-lists for all the crafts were completed and the cleaners did their deep cleaning of all surfaces. All the door locks are being changed from Markovich locks to Eduro locks. Eduro will now be able to staff and stock this Cottage so it's prepared for admitting resident veterans. On the outside, the front entry handrails were installed.

Cottage #3: Most of the crafts are close to having their punch-list work completed. The Painters have the most to do in their final touch-up painting. The Cleaners are doing the dust cleaning and windows. They'll do their final deep cleaning this week and next. 360 Office Solutions from Helena will be getting all the furniture put in place throughout this building. This building is getting closer to being turned over to the state. On the outside, the front entry handrails were installed.

Cottage #4: The Tapers were sanding the skin drywall coating to bring the walls to a Level #5 finish. The Painters have color-painted the first two rooms of the North Wing and will work their way toward the central

area of the building. The Carpenters are hanging/trimming-out the doors in the resident bathrooms. This will allow the Tile guys to butt their tile up against those inside door-trim edges. The Tile guys are tiling the bathroom walls in the East Wing. The Plumbers continue to do zone-valve work in the mechanical room. The Sheet Metal workers and Electricians are all caught up for now. Outside rear patio fence was installed.

Cottage #5: King Construction, out of Billings, started installing the T-Bar grid-metal framing for the seismograph ceilings. The Sheet Metal guys continue working on ductwork, throughout this building. The Plumbers continue working on domestic water lines. The Electricians have their rough-in completed for now. The Sheet-rockers are caught up and once the T-Bar seismograph ceiling framework and the ceiling-light rough-in is completed, they can then finish the ceiling sheet-rock hanging.

Maintenance/Receiving Building: This building is now being used by EDURO for receiving and storage.

Flag Poles: Shining bright in the middle of the night. The new wired lighting really made a great difference!

The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter and brighter as our Vet Home construction is coming to an end in the next 2 or 3 months. The sun's spring-time warmth is opening the doors for outside construction to go full force. Zemljak Excavating and Becker Landscaping can now get serious about doing their dirt work. The landscaping is quite extensive and will require a lot of man-hours. This summer should see this site being completely finished and all five Cottages fully occupied with our resident veterans. Hopefully we'll see new construction on Cottage #6 and the Covered Walkways. The other build site right down the road, that should be in full swing, will be the VA CBOC Medical Center.

I'll go for now. Until next time.