

Special Commission on State Institutions

March 21, 2024

3:00 - 4:30 pm

Virtual / Zoom

Evelyn Mateo

Co-chair

Matt Millett

Co-chair

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Recap of Last Meeting
3. Vote to approve minutes from 3/21/24 meeting
4. Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms Document
5. Timeline for SCSI Work and formal report
6. Recent developments
7. Update from Workgroups
8. Next steps
9. Vote to adjourn

Welcome

- ▶ Recap of Last Meeting
- ▶ **Vote** to approve 3/21/24 meeting minutes

Timeline for SCSI Work – Next steps

- ▶ Research and information gathering in progress
- ▶ Next steps
 - ▶ CDDER is writing a report this summer. A draft is due 9/30/24.
 - ▶ Report needs to be reviewed by Commission members
 - ▶ Ask questions for CDDER to follow up on, provide feedback
 - ▶ Final report from the CDDER to the Special Commission is due 1/15/25
- ▶ The Special Commission will use this report to decide on the design the framework for remembrance and any other recommendations for next steps to the legislature.

Timeline for SCSI Work – Meetings

- ▶ Next planned meetings: July, September, November
- ▶ Commission members will get CDDER's report after the September meeting. There is one planned meeting between the draft report and the final report.
- ▶ Discussion – Do Commission members want more time together for discussion?
 - ▶ Should the Commission add any open meetings in October or early December?
 - ▶ Should some of the open meetings be longer (to 5 pm)?

Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms

- ▶ Reference tool to help clearly communicate and share complex information.
- ▶ To be updated regularly

Recent Developments

- ▶ WGBH: Concerns about lack of community input into plans for Fernald property
- ▶ Boston Globe: Confidential files from MA State Police found unsecured in the buildings at Fernald
- ▶ WGBH: Update on man who asked Gov Healey for help in accessing his brother's records from Fernald.
- ▶ Worcester Telegram and Gazette: Citizen searching for unmarked graves on ground of the former Westboro State Hospital/Lyman Reform School

Updates from Workgroups

- ▶ Letter of Inquiry
- ▶ Records and Records Access
- ▶ Burials and Burial Locations
- ▶ Framework for Remembrance
- ▶ Please contact CDDER at SCSI_Support@umassmed.edu if you would like to join a workgroup.

Letter of Inquiry- Reggie Clark

- ▶ Letter was delivered via email on 3/27/24
 - ▶ Posted on the SCSI page on mass.gov website
- ▶ The Special Commission requested an initial response in 90 days –by June 25, 2024
- ▶ When the response is received it will be shared with Special Commission members.

Records and Records Access- Mary McCauley

Discussed:

- ▶ Current legislative activity re: Public Records Law
 - ▶ Most recent amendment was rejected by legislature
 - ▶ Would have opened historical records after 75 years.
- ▶ Concerns about items from former state schools being sold on sites like eBay.
 - ▶ Should there be an amnesty period for people to return any items taken from sites of state institutions?

Updates:

- ▶ Update on family member's request for his brother's records from Fernald

Next Steps:

- ▶ Map out state by state record access guidelines
 - ▶ Received responses from 36 states to date.

Burials and Burial Locations- Kate Benson

Update:

- ▶ Completed Gap Analysis tool to evaluate institutional cemeteries.
- ▶ Compiling a listing of known burial locations
- ▶ Collected current practices from Hogan and Wrentham

What we learned:

- ▶ Local towns and city officials need to understand the steps to follow related to searching for possible unmarked graves.

Two Options may include:

- ▶ The Special Commission creates the educational materials
- ▶ The Special Commission recommends making educational materials in their final report

Framework for Remembrance- Rania Kelly

Update

- ▶ Learned about the work of the Friends of Belchertown State School Association to create a disability history museum.

Next Steps-

- ▶ Tewksbury State Hospital Museum of Public Health.
- ▶ Presentation by the Willowbrook Mile steering committee on June 7th. All Commission Members are invited to attend!

Next Steps

- ▶ Looking for more Commission Members to participate in the work groups
 - ▶ Please contact CDDER at SCSI_Support@umassmed.edu if you would like to join a workgroup.
- ▶ Vote to Adjourn