

Special Commission on State Institutions

July 18, 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 5/30/24 meeting
4. Response to the Letter of Inquiry
5. Recent developments
6. Update from Workgroups
7. Scope of Work/History of Institutions
8. Next steps
9. Vote to adjourn

Welcome

- ▶ Introductions and Goodbyes
 - ▶ Welcome Bill Henning-BCIL
 - ▶ Thank you, Conor Snow-MA Archives
- ▶ Recap of Last Meeting
 - ▶ Fall Meeting times: 2:30-4:30
 - ▶ Fall Meeting dates: 9/12, 10/17, 11/14
- ▶ **Vote** to approve 5/30/24 meeting minutes

Response to the Letter of Inquiry

- ▶ Response from Secretary Walsh to the Letter of Inquiry from the Special Commission on State Institutions was received on 7/15/24
- ▶ Summary of the Response
- ▶ Open Discussion

Recent Developments

- ▶ WBUR: Ongoing vandalism on the grounds of Fernald State School

Updates from Workgroups

- ▶ 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.

Records and Records Access

Updates

- ▶ Current Legislative Activity
- ▶ Status of Record Request from Family Members
- ▶ Foxboro State Hospital
 - ▶ Working with DMH to explore the possibility recreating a list of the people buried at the state hospital cemeteries.
- ▶ Response to the Letter of Inquiry
 - ▶ Working with state agencies to verify what is in the response.

Burials and Burial Locations

Update:

- ▶ Listing of known burial locations
 - ▶ 26 cemeteries have been identified across the state
 - ▶ Some are on the grounds of the institution
 - ▶ Some burials took place in city/town cemeteries in plots purchased by the State
 - ▶ The status of each cemetery needs to be evaluated
 - ▶ Wide variation in relation to the care and maintenance of the grounds
 - ▶ Wide variation regarding whether the graves are marked
 - ▶ Several cemeteries and/or institutions are rumored to have unmarked graves on the grounds
- ▶ Requested assistance from the MA State Archeologist Office to collect guidance on what steps to take if a possible unmarked grave is suspected at any of the sites of former institutions.

What is evaluated in the Gap Analysis?

Condition of the Cemetery

- ▶ Signage
- ▶ Evidence of ongoing maintenance
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Trash/Vandalism

Burial Locations

- ▶ Presence of grave markers
- ▶ Memorial
- ▶ Possible unmarked graves

Records

- ▶ Are records available that contain person's name, cemetery section, plot #?

Summary of Northampton State Hospital Cemetery (Example)

The Northampton State Hospital burial ground was used from 1858 to 1921. Records mention it as the "hospital cemetery" or "hillside cemetery." It is an inactive cemetery. It is currently managed by Smith Vocational Agricultural School. It is owned by the city of Northampton under permanent agricultural use restriction.

DMH staff research in 1997 found 181 confirmed burials using hospital records and city registers. Another 413 burials were unclear but possibly on the hospital grounds. After 1921, some patients who weren't claimed by family were sent to medical schools under state laws.

The hospital closed in 1993. The cemetery area, called "cemetery hill," is now used by Smith Vocational Agricultural School for farming instruction. It's protected for agricultural use and has no grave markers. The exact location and number of burials are unknown.

Sources:

McCarthy, K. E., *Psychiatry in the Nineteenth Century: The Early Years of Northampton State Hospital*. PhD Dissertation in Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1974.

Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries*, June 2002, Second Edition, Expanded and Revised, 2009 Third Edition

Northampton State Hospital Burial Site Project <http://users.rcn.com/tclement/NSH/Main.html>

Burial and Burial Locations Workgroup

Discussion

- ▶ How does the Commission want to complete the gap analysis for each cemetery?
- ▶ How does the Commission want to explore the likelihood and possible locations of unmarked graves?
- ▶ Other areas to discuss?

Framework for Remembrance

Update

- ▶ Attended a Presentation by the Willowbrook Mile steering committee on June 7th.
 - ▶ Presentation was recorded if members would like to view the presentation
- ▶ Discussion of Presentation
- ▶ Next steps

History of MA Institutions

Warning on use of words

- ▶ The upcoming slides use words to describe people with disabilities that are offensive.
- ▶ The words will be shown as they were used in the past to label schools, asylums and other institutions to show the full history of institutions in the state.

Historical Timeline-

Colonial times to mid 1800's

- ▶ Care of the Poor
 - ▶ People who needed help were cared for by family and/or the town's people
 - ▶ In the 1700's the care of the poor became "custodial care", and the towns would pay families to provide room and board and to look after poor members of town
- ▶ Early to mid 1800's - Formal Institutionalization of the Poor
 - ▶ State sponsored Almshouse built to house "state paupers"
 - ▶ Many people with a mental illness or a developmental disability lived in Almshouses. They were not served in separate facilities.
 - ▶ By the mid-19th century, these groups made up a large part of the almshouse population.

Historical Timeline

1830's-1860's Institutional Care

- ▶ The State created different types of institutions after calls for better care and treatment of the many people labeled as “insane” and “feeble minded” in Almshouses and prisons
- ▶ State created schools for children who were poor, were involved in the court system or were considered “unteachable”.
 - ▶ “Industrial”, “Training” or “Reform” Schools created for youth charged with minor crimes. “Crimes” could include being truant (not going to school) or being a stubborn child.
 - ▶ The Industrial Revolution required many able-bodied workers, led to creation of vocational education and training programs
 - ▶ The “Reform” and “Training” schools struggled with what to do with “feeble-minded” children and eventually built separate housing for them
 - ▶ Multi-year Commissions studied whether it is possible to educate children with disabilities (blind, deaf and “feeble minded”)
 - ▶ Creation of the “Training School for the Blind” (Perkins) and the “School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth” (Fernald)

Historical Timeline

Late 1880's-Early 1930s Expansion of Institutional Care

- ▶ Approximately 15 institutions for the “insane” and the “feeble-minded” were built across the state
 - ▶ Use of IQ tests to screen and categorize people
- ▶ Eugenics gained popularity in the US
 - ▶ Eugenicists believed that society would be better off without people they considered “unfit”, including people with disabilities
 - ▶ People with disabilities were grouped and isolated so as not to integrate into society and reproduce

Historical Timeline –

Early 1900's – “Defective Delinquents”

- ▶ “Department of Defective Delinquents” established
 - ▶ A new class of (broadly described) “mentally deficient” criminals
 - ▶ Placed under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Prisons (later called Dept of Corrections) at the State Farm at Bridgewater and two other “reformatories”
 - ▶ Recommended placing people (including children) in this class under “permanent custodial care”
 - ▶ “Inmates” from prisons, “Asylums for the Insane” and “Schools for the feeble-minded” could be transferred to the “Department of Defective Delinquents” by the superintendent of the facility if they were deemed “not proper” for the institutions
 - ▶ Resulted in the incarceration of teenagers/young adults for a lifetime even after the first offense, if the court felt the person would be likely to reoffend.

Formal Specialized MA State Institutions

Mental Health (DMH Facilities)

- ▶ Boston State Hospital
- ▶ Danvers State Hospital
- ▶ Foxboro State Hospital
- ▶ Gardner State Hospital
- ▶ Grafton State Hospital
- ▶ Medfield State Hospital
- ▶ Metropolitan State Hospital
- ▶ Northampton State Hospital
- ▶ Taunton State Hospital
- ▶ Westboro State Hospital
- ▶ Worcester State Hospital

I/DD (DDS Facilities)

- ▶ Belchertown State School
- ▶ Paul A Dever State School
- ▶ Fernald Developmental Center
- ▶ Glavin Developmental Center
- ▶ Hogan Developmental Center
- ▶ Monson Developmental Center
- ▶ Templeton Developmental Center
- ▶ Wrentham Developmental Center

Discussion

- ▶ In Summary:
 - ▶ People with mental illness and developmental disabilities were included in many different types of institutional settings in Massachusetts over time. Separate institutions for people with these conditions were created starting around the 1900's.
- ▶ For example, the following institutions served many people with mental illness and developmental disabilities before separate institutions were created.
 - ▶ Almshouses
 - ▶ Primary, Reform and Training Schools
 - ▶ Defective Delinquent class
- ▶ Let's discuss what should be included in the work of the Special Commission.

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