

**Notes<sup>1</sup> from Meeting at T.H.E Farm at Tewksbury State Hospital, with:**

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**Telephone Call with: M J (Mary Jane) Maracucci, Founding Director,  
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**Tour on July 24, 2013 by Gil Rodgers and Ros Smythe; Visit by Gil Rodgers on August 8, 2013**

**Website: [www.t-h-e-farm.org](http://www.t-h-e-farm.org)**

### **Introduction**

T-H-E Farm is a therapeutic equestrian center located on 11 acres leased from the grounds of the Tewksbury State Hospital (now called Tewksbury Hospital) that has remained a working hospital to this day (160 years old) located about 24 miles north of Boston. It opened in May 1854 as one of the earliest State operated hospitals for the poor and chronically physically and mentally ill patients managed by the State of Massachusetts. Similar to Medfield State Hospital, it is on a huge, campus-style setting located on 800+ acres including 450 acres of conservation land, surrounding farmland, all owned by DCAMM.

The architecture of the older buildings is quite attractive and distinctive with elaborately constructed red-brick and field stone foundations and walls, slate roofs, decorative cornices, cupolas, and Romanesque archways, while some of standing buildings are in very bad condition. It has retained the open-campus style feeling. Farm land is leased to local farmers for growing corn and grass for hay. (See photos at the end of this report.)



Group therapeutic riding lesson being held at T-H-E Farm

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<sup>1</sup> Notes prepared by Gil Rodgers.

## **Tewksbury Hospital<sup>2</sup>**

Tewksbury Hospital operates a 350 bed Joint Commission accredited hospital. Approximately 220 complex chronic medical adult patients reside on seven (7) inpatient units and 150 psychiatric clients reside on five (5) inpatient units. A full range of ancillary services are available at the site, including 24/7 nursing and medicine as well as clinical laboratory, psychiatry and psychology, radiology, respiratory care, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, clinical dieticians, clinical social workers and pharmacy, and on-site dialysis clinic.

In addition to the main hospital site, the hospital campus is home to six (6) residential vendor programs which provide services on a 24/7 basis. The residential programs consist of six (6) substance abuse programs serving 270 residential clients (24/7), with two (2) of the six (6) programs serving women with children. Additionally, the hospital campus hosts two (2) locked young adolescent programs. These programs serve approximately 300 clients daily with a compliment of 140 staff.

82% of patients have been denied by other facilities, 56% are active substance abusers, and a high proportion of patients have complex, co-occurring medical and psychiatric diagnoses.<sup>3</sup>

A number of the original buildings are being used for hospital-related services, vendors, and other state organizations. For example, we entered the Anne Sullivan Building that has been renovated for offices for the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety.

## **History of T.H.E. Farm<sup>4</sup>**

Tewksbury Hospital was one of the first almshouses in Massachusetts and was once a self-sustaining farm. In 1994 the hospital campus was added to the National Register of Historic Places, in part, due to the significance of its past agricultural use. In the application filed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Old Dairy Barn, dating from 1898, was cited as “the most important extant agricultural building” on the campus.

The concept of establishing an equestrian therapy program called T.H.E. FARM (Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm) arose in 1997 among a group of local citizens who wanted to integrate philanthropic and conservation goals. Tewksbury Hospital is situated on nearly 800 acres of beautiful open fields and woodlands. The founders’ appreciation of Tewksbury Hospital’s historic campus and open lands, together with their recognition of patients’ needs, inspired them to offer a series of small equestrian events to the hospital community to help individuals with disabilities enjoy the beautiful countryside surrounding the hospital.

T.H.E. FARM's existing facility was created by restoring the Old Dairy Barn, which had fallen into disrepair over the years. Through donations from individuals, businesses, and private charitable foundations, this historic barn was renovated, preserving its traditional structure and external appearance. The barn’s interior was converted into a modern, wheelchair-accessible stable and therapeutic facility (see photo below.)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/hospitals/tewksbury-hospital>.

<sup>3</sup> Tanya Pospisil, PhD., M.J. Marcucci, MSM, and Hy Diep, MS, Tewksbury Hospital and T-H-E- FARM: Integrating and Documenting EAAT in an Inpatient Setting; <http://www.pathintl.org/images/pdf/conferences/national/2012-handouts/A5-Tewksbury.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> This section provided by M. J. Marcucci, Founding Director of THE Farm

As an operating horse farm, the agricultural integrity of the site has also been preserved. In addition to revitalizing an historic building, T.H.E. FARM is conserving open land for public recreational use.

At the urging of T.H.E. FARM volunteers, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted legislation preserving 451 acres of the Tewksbury Hospital property in perpetuity as conservation land (Chapter 206, Acts of 2004). Written into this law, "for purposes of this act, the phrase "passive recreation" includes activities and uses related to the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian FARM, Inc. and its therapeutic equestrian programs.

The culmination of the T.H.E. FARM's Board of Directors efforts towards sustainability came in September 2006 when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted legislation (Chapter 296, Acts of 2006)<sup>5</sup> granting T.H.E. FARM a 99-year lease for the land on which it is situated. This law was the result of legislation passed by both the House and Senate and signed by then Governor Mitt Romney.

Then, in October 2008, after several years' of work by the Board of Directors, community leaders, and advisors to fine-tune details of the lease, T.H.E. FARM officers signed the lease with the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). Terms of that lease state that within five years after the signing, T.H.E FARM must

- construct an indoor equine arena and barn
- establish fenced outdoor riding and pasture areas

The fulfillment of these terms enables continued operation of T.H.E. FARM in its current location for 99 years.

### **Activities and Operation**

The staff is mainly composed of volunteers including a volunteer coordinator, barn manager, office manager, and the president, David Wahr, supplemented by 5 part-time equine therapists, and 3 Massachusetts certified riding instructors who are paid on an hourly basis.

The program provides therapeutic riding (which is typically not covered by insurance) and recreational riding (that is paid for privately.) They would like to also provide hippo therapy, which is a certified, reimbursable program prescribed by doctors and therefore attractive because insurance reimburses therapists and the farm receives a portion of these fees, and beneficial to the clients since lesson costs are covered. Currently 65% of the lessons are therapeutic riding (including 15% that are donated to Hospital patients at no cost as required in the DCAMM lease,) while the remainder is recreational riding. David Wahr told us he would like to get therapeutic and hippo therapy riding up to 85%.

Therapeutic riding is helpful for a number of disorders including autism, communications and speech disorders, schizophrenia, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, depression, bone and joint ailments, and many others. At this time of the year they have about 105 riders per week, but David thinks there is opportunity to grow; he believes they have an upside capacity for about 150 riders per week, and he can probably accommodate two more horses outside in a run-in shed that would need to be built. Ten (10) horses are now stabled indoors and graze in large grassy paddocks. However, because there is no in-door arena, the winter season is much

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A below for copy of legislation.

smaller -- but still there are some year-around, non-riding activities such as therapeutic horse-care which includes feeding, stall maintenance, and grooming. He also expressed there is a big demand in this area for therapeutic equestrian programs - he has a waiting list of 50 riders that he cannot currently accommodate.

David was quite blunt in commenting on the economics and said there is no profit in therapeutic equestrian centers, even at very large ones such as the High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center in New Lyme, CT that he had visited. THE Farm loses about \$200,000 per year that must be subsidized by donations and contributions.

Seeking funding for building an in-door riding building is a mammoth undertaking and was virtually impossible during the recession at the time they signed the lease. They are trying to renegotiate the lease with DCAMM to give them more time to meet their obligation to build an in-door arena near the barn -- an explicit condition of their agreement with the State.

# Appendix A

## Acts of 2006, Chapter 296

### CHAPTER 296 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE DIVISION OF CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE TO LEASE CERTAIN PROPERTY IN THE TOWN OF TEWKSBURY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, including chapter 30B and sections 40E to 40I, inclusive, of chapter 7 of the General Laws, the division of capital asset management and maintenance may lease, in consultation with the department of public health, for a term not to exceed 99 years certain land located in the town of Tewksbury to the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm, a non-profit organization. The parcel is shown on a plan entitled "T.H.E FARM, Livingston Street, Tewksbury, MA", dated December 1, 2005 and prepared by Cuoco Cormier Engineering Associates. The Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm shall use the property to provide therapeutic equestrian programs for the clients of the Tewksbury Hospital, public riding programs, special events for individuals of all abilities and for such other purposes consistent with the mission of the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm.

SECTION 2. Any lease shall permit the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm to access rights of way and roads to facilitate ingress and egress. Notwithstanding chapters 30B and 149 of the General Laws or any other laws governing public design or construction procurement, the lease agreement shall contain provisions authorizing the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm to construct an indoor equine arena and barn and to establish fenced outdoor riding and pasture areas, provided that the costs of construction, operation, improvement, repair and maintenance shall not be born by the town or the commonwealth.

SECTION 3. No lease agreement entered into under section 1, by or on behalf of the commonwealth, shall be valid unless the agreement provides that the property shall be used solely for activities directly related to the purposes described in section 1. If for any reason the property ceases to be used for the purposes described in section 1, the department of public health may terminate the lease. If the lease is terminated, the property shall revert to the commonwealth, under the care, custody and control of the division of capital asset management and maintenance, in consultation with the department of public health.

SECTION 4. Any lease agreement entered into under section 1, by or on behalf of the commonwealth, shall be terminable at the commonwealth's sole discretion upon 6 months advance written notice in the event that the Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm fails to raise substantially all of the funding required to begin construction to establish accommodations suitable for year-round operation within 5 years after execution of the lease agreement. If the lease is terminated, the property shall revert to the commonwealth, under the care, custody and control of the division of capital asset management and maintenance, in consultation with the department of public health.

SECTION 5. The Tewksbury Hospital Equestrian Farm shall be responsible for all costs associated with any appraisal, survey or other expense incurred by the commonwealth relating to the lease of the parcel, and for any costs, liabilities or expenses of any kind for the development, improvement, maintenance or operation of the parcel as may be determined by the commissioner of capital asset management and

maintenance in consultation with the commissioner of public health.

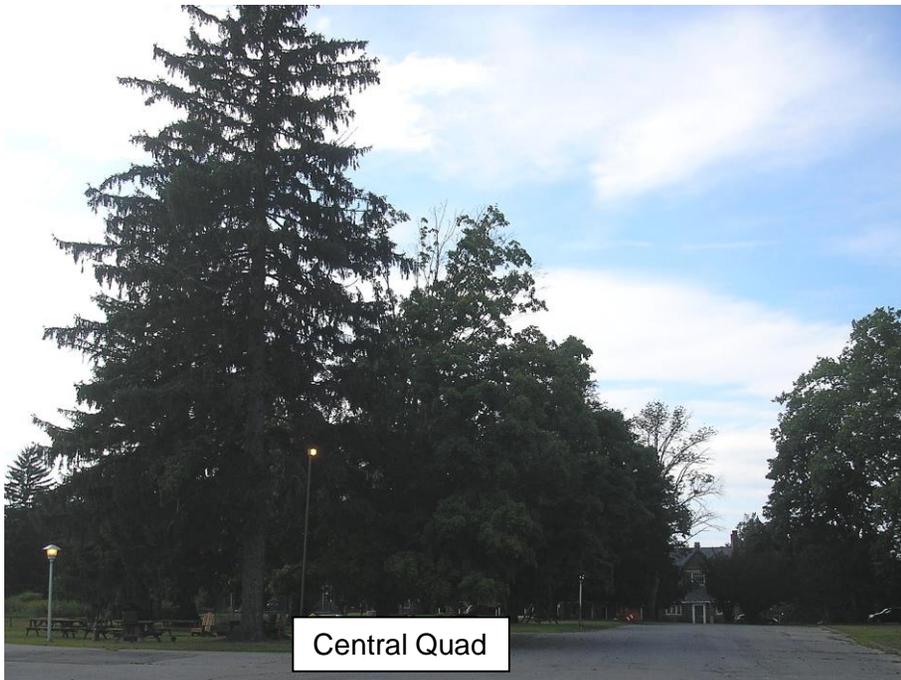
SECTION 6. Any lease agreement entered into under section 1 shall require that the lessee maintain adequate insurance and shall contain such other provisions as the commissioner deems appropriate.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Approved September 14, 2006.



Southgate



Central Quad

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Famous Anna Sullivan Building (Cared for Helen Keller when she was a patient)



The old main entry gate with overhead sign: "Tewksbury State Hospital"



Central electric power and boiler plant with electrical capacity of 1,500 kw



Old Dairy Barn renovated as stable for therapeutic riding program



David Wahr, President of The Farm, inside beautifully renovated barn with 10 stalls