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Press Release

Guilty plea in 2018 Needham murder

A Needham man pleaded guilty today (March 28, 2022) to the September 10, 2018 murder of 20-year-old Olivia Bergstrom in her Needham home.

Benjamin E. Walsh, now 28, pled guilty to the second-degree murder of Bergstrom in the Needham apartment they shared and then driving to a Millis, Mass., restaurant and attacking his parents while armed with a knife.

Judge Beverly Cannone sentenced Walsh to life in prison with the right to seek parole after he has served 25 years for the murder, with lesser sentences on the assault charges to be served concurrently.

The Commonwealth's written sentencing memorandum to Judge Cannone reads in pertinent part: "The Commonwealth has agreed to reduce the first degree murder charge to second degree murder with the support of the victim's parents because the plea to second degree murder ensures the safety of the community, avoids the challenges and stresses of a trial, acknowledges the defendant's brutal acts and the twenty-five year minimum sentence prior to the possibility of parole is significant and substantial."

District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey said that Assistant District Attorneys Lisa Beatty and Tracey Cusick, working with Victim/Witness Advocates Kristin Collins and Beth Dobrutsky, had consulted with Olivia Bergstrom's surviving family and the surviving stabbing victims before the decision was made to allow Walsh to plea to second degree.

"This brings its own finality to the proceeding," District Attorney Morrissey said. "The outcome of a trial is never assured, and appeals procedures in murder cases span many years. I cannot imagine the pain of Olivia's parents, and my thoughts are very much with them today."

District Attorney Morrissey said that the Needham and Millis Police departments had been excellent partners for the Massachusetts State Police homicide detectives working in the Norfolk DA's Office in a "complex investigation, involving multiple crime scenes and jurisdictions. Their work was excellent."

The plea came on the morning that jury selection was slated to begin.