



**TOWN of BROOKLINE**  
Massachusetts  
**Walnut Hills Cemetery**  
**Old Burying Ground**

**Trustees**

Lisa Farber  
Gerard Hayes  
Peggy Maguire  
Randolph Meiklejohn, Chair  
Joslin Ham Murphy

**Director of Parks and Open Space**  
Alexandra Vecchio

Walnut Hills Cemetery Trustees Meeting  
Wednesday, June 21, 2023  
8:30 AM  
Zoom Webinar

**Trustees Present:** Gerard Hayes, Lisa Farber, Randolph Meiklejohn, Peggy Maguire, and Joslin Ham Murphy

**Trustees Absent:**

**Staff Present:** Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Parks and Open Space; Jessica White, Parks Assistant;

Please click below to access all meeting documents:

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4291>

1. Tree Replacement Master Plan, draft 06/21/2023, Halvorson
2. Sections 21 and 22 Study, 06/21/2023, Halvorson
3. Tree Replacement Master Plan Services Proposal, 05/24/2021, Halvorson
4. Inventory Proposal, 11/07/2023, Bartlett Tree Experts
5. A copy of the general terms for commercial consulting services-Jan 2020, Bartlett Tree Experts
6. April 11, 2023 and April 26, 2023 Draft Meeting Minutes

**Welcome and Approval of the Walnut Hills Cemetery Trustees Meeting Minutes**

Randolph Meiklejohn opened the meeting. He confirmed that all Trustees and other persons anticipated to participate on the agenda are present and can hear him. A roll call was taken. All Trustees and staff confirmed. This public meeting of the Walnut Hills Trustees is an open session; it is being conducted remotely in a manner that is consistent with Governor Healey's March 29, 2023, which extends to March 31, 2025 the temporary provisions about the Open Meeting Law that were initially put in place by Governor Baker's March 12, 2023 executive order concerning the outbreak of Covid-19. The Governor's bill authorizes this body to meet remotely so long as public access is provided for this meeting. The Trustees are convening by video conference via Zoom. This meeting is posted on the Town's calendar, identifying how the public may access the meeting. All supporting materials provided to members of this body are available on the Town website and attached to the invitation for this meeting.

Alexandra Vecchio introduced Aaron Kraemer, Landscape Architect. Aaron has been working with Vesna Maneva Spoelhof (Halvorson) for the last few months since the Trustees' previous

meeting on the landscape master plan. Aaron Kraemer provided the Trustees with his professional background.

Joslin Murphy stated that all meeting materials should be listed and have a connecting link within the minutes. Moving forward, this will be added to all Walnut Hill Cemetery Trustees Meeting Minutes, including the April 11 and April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Lisa Farber moved to approve the April 11, 2023, Walnut Hills Cemetery Trustees Meeting minutes. Gerard Hayes seconded it. Peggy Maguire abstained; all others in favor.

Gerard Hayes had edits to Page 4 on the first paragraph of the April 26, 2023, Walnut Hills Cemetery minutes. He wants to ensure it reads that it is only his suggestion to proceed with identifying the ledge and the extent of the ledge in those areas. He was not recommending to proceed with the buildout. Gerard Hayes stated that at the bottom of the page, he would like to edit where he discussed Green Burials. He stated that he would like to read that as a Board of Trustees at some point in time, we discuss what we mean by the term Green Burials. Gerard Hayes thinks that we can proceed with background data / general knowledge. Alexandra Vecchio believes that it is important that the minutes reflect that part of the scope of work is already underway with Halvorson to look at Green Burials.

Lisa Farber moved for approval of the April 26, 2023, meeting minutes with the amendments made by Gerard Hayes, seconded by Gerard Hayes. A roll call vote was taken. Joslin Murphy and Peggy Maguire both abstained; all others in favor.

### **Presentation of Draft Tree Replacement Master Plan by Halvorson**

Alexandra Vecchio stated that this master plan is within the original scope of services from Halvorson, taking into account the tree inventory that Bartlett Trees did, and the goal of this presentation today is to get any final questions and comments from the Trustees about the information before the master plan is finalized. Alexandra Vecchio stated that the original proposal was from May of 2021; this part of the project was put on hold last year in 2022 in order for Halvorson to work on the potential upright marker lot buildout options. She said we are returning to the Landscape Master Plan based on the inventory and their assessment.

Vesna Maneva Spoelhof, Senior Landscape Architect at Halvorson, presented the Trustees with a Walnut Hills Cemetery Tree Replacement Master Plan slideshow. Halvorson was asked to do this because there was a concern that the trees in some regions of the cemetery were starting to decline. She stated that there needs to be a slightly more systematic way of thinking ahead of what to do with those areas and how to plan for the eventual replacement of the cemetery trees. She stated that we realized that Halvorson cannot just do it by observing the existing trees; that needs to be a professional assessment by an arborist. The Town hired Bartlett Tree Experts to do a whole evaluation of all the cemetery's trees. She will now present a final draft, dated 06/21/2023, of the Tree Replacement Master Plan document, incorporating information from Bartlett Tree Expert's assessment, which can be found here: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4291>.

Peggy Maguire asked if there were any species-identifying markings/tags on the trees. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof stated that it is all done electronically through a database. Peggy Maguire asked about taking care of these trees for the future; she wanted to be clear on the focus. She wondered if the focus is going to be on maintaining the good ones and taking care of those by the appropriate measures or if it is to remove the dead, so the less mature trees can grow. She thinks it would be helpful to have some tag on there. Alexandra Vecchio replied, noting that all our trees are cared for

by our forestry team and maintained through a GIS database rather than tags on the trees themselves. Regarding the management plan questions, she stated that Vesna Maneva Spoelhof and the Bartlett plan's recommendations include what the arborist and consulting team would be using. Alexandra Vecchio and Peggy Maguire discussed the makeup of the in-house and contracted tree crews.

Randolph Meiklejohn and Vesna Maneva Spoelhof discussed the Prouty-Oakes and E.W. Blake burial lots as possible restoration CPA Projects. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof and Joslin Murphy pointed out where these lots are within the cemetery.

Joslin Murphy and Peggy Maguire discussed the row of hemlocks in Section 24, abutting residences on Bellingham Road, that were threatened by disease a number of years ago. They were treated throughout the Town and survived. Alexandra Vecchio and Peggy Maguire discussed the balance when dealing with diseased trees. Alexandra Vecchio stated that how far along the disease has spread, whether or not treatment can preserve the tree, or whether or not we would have to do removal is all taken into consideration and decided upon by the Town's certified arborist. Alexandra Vecchio state that you would not want the disease to spread.

Randolph Meiklejohn asked Vesna Maneva Spoelhof if Bartlett Tree Experts or Town Staff would translate Bartlett's number of two hundred and eighty-two recommended removals into an actual timeframe for implementing that number of removal and replanting. Alexandra Vecchio that it would be a prioritization that would be made with staff internally based on the highest need and the highest impact of the trees that need to be removed. Alexandra Vecchio stated that it would take longer than a few years to process; it would take a significant amount of time.

Peggy Maguire thanked Vesna Maneva Spoelhof for a very comprehensive presentation. Peggy saw many rabbits around and wondered if they would impact the new plantings. Vesna stated that they would eat the bottoms of the trees, so with new plantings, you can add mesh fencing to prevent such things.

Randolph Meiklejohn asked Vesna about the Mount Walley (Section 8 and 9) area on the hillside between the graves and the boundary abutting residential lots, where the plan shows many dead and dying trees; he wondered if it's the case that they had grown naturally. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof replied with a yes. She thinks it could be remnants of the indigenous forest that existed there. She did try to walk this area, but there were some significant drops. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof stated that it does look much denser when you're there, there is some natural succession going on, and she feels then this is a good area that perhaps you don't cut all of the trees. She stated that you would have to focus on the areas where they might impact the visitors and their resources.

Randolph Meiklejohn thanked Vesna Maneva Spoelhof for a very comprehensive presentation. He stated that depending on the process that Alexandra Vecchio sees in finalizing this Walnut Hills Cemetery Tree Replacement Master Plan, he wondered if this document should be shared with the Trustees and if Alexandra would be open to receiving comments between now and the September meeting. Alexandra Vecchio agreed and said it would make the most sense because there was no time in today's meeting to transmit comments.

Joslin Murphy stated that she was walking through the cemetery the other day and came upon a representative of Eversource who is in the area to prune and remove trees along the periphery of the cemetery where there are overhead wires. She wondered whether there had been coordination between Tom Brady, Town Arborist, and Eversource and this plan concerning the trees that have been identified. Alexandra Vecchio stated that about a year ago Tom came before the Trustees and walked through the recommendations and assessment from Bartlett Tree. This plan has yet to be shared with Eversource, but Tom has reviewed the Preliminary recommendations and

is very much aware of the evaluation being done there. Alexandra Vecchio noted that any actions taken from this plan would be done so under the direction of Tom and coordinated with Eversource.

### **Continuation of Upright-Marker Burial Lots as an Internment Option at Walnut Hills Cemetery: Discussion and Possible Vote**

Randolph asked Vesna Maneva Spoelhof to talk a little about her recommendations. He would like her to review the recommendations of where the Trustees could consider developing new upright marker full burial lots. He stated that at the end of the April 26, 2023 meeting, the Trustees asked for Halvorson's recommendations about potentially adding upright marker lots to sections 21 and 22. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof walked the Trustees through a Sections 21 and 22 Study, dated 06/21/2023, that shows the sections and recommendations, which can be found here: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4291>.

Randolph Meiklejohn stated that in April 26, 2023, meeting minutes Lisa Farber had explicitly asked a question about the southwest area of Section 21 along Beech Avenue and that being a possibility for development for upright marker burial lots. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof stated that you might be running into ledge issues there, but it might be possible. She said that to preserve the entrance, you could add another 20 upright marker lots likely in the area, but it would need further investigation from the cemetery staff to see if that is possible.

Joslin Murphy stated that she is very familiar with the area just above Beech Avenue and thinks it is worthy of investigation. She wondered if there was a possibility for upright markers underneath the Pine Avenue section of the slide. She stated that immediately across the street are all upright markers, and she wondered what Vesna Maneva Spoelhof concluded about that section. Vesna Maneva Spoelhof noted that they didn't want to propose upright markers in that area because she felt it was impacting too much, with only adding 30 graves simultaneously. She stated that the visual impact is disproportionate. It is more of a question of the visual experience of the landscape.

Randolph Meiklejohn stated that the next steps would be for the Trustees to take in Vesna Maneva Spoelhof's comments and recommendations and visit the cemetery. The September Meeting will be a field meeting.

### **Adjourn**

Joslin Murphy moved to adjourn. Lisa Farber seconded it. A roll call vote was taken. All in favor.