



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety



Parole Board

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Secretary

Josh Wall
Chairman

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

BERESFORD ATWELL

W66032

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing
DATE OF HEARING: August 16, 2011
DATE OF DECISION: September 12, 2012

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied with a review in five years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Beresford Atwell, at age 35, stabbed Anthony Norman, age 38, to death at approximately 2:30 a.m. on August 17, 1996 in Mattapan. In July of 1996, Sherry Atwell informed Beresford Atwell that she wanted a divorce and Atwell was escorted by the police from the marital home after threatening Mrs. Atwell with a knife. In the early morning hours of August 17, Atwell returned to the home, climbed in the bedroom window of his estranged wife armed with a knife, acid and ropes while wearing several layers of clothing and rubber gloves. Atwell stabbed Mr. Norman, Mrs. Atwell's new companion, in the chest and abdomen while Mr. Norman tried to protect Mrs. Atwell. Atwell cut Mrs. Atwell in both the hand and chest. Atwell was arrested that same morning.

On February 9, 1999, Atwell pled guilty to the murder of Anthony Norman and received a life sentence. For the crimes against Mrs. Atwell, he pleaded guilty to assault with intent to murder, for which he received a 10 to 15 year sentence, and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, for which he received a 9 to 10 year sentence. Those two sentences are concurrent with each other but from and after the life sentence.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON AUGUST 16, 2011

At his August, 2011 hearing Atwell, age 50, made an opening statement noting "I have made a lot of progress in my actions, thinking and behavior." Yet, his responses to the Board's inquiry about the murder of Mr. Norman and the assaultive behavior towards Mrs. Atwell, revealed little remorse for his actions and minimal understanding of the causative factors of his criminal behavior. Atwell informed the Board, "maybe I stabbed him, I can't remember," "if I cut my wife, not sure how," "I was not controlling and abusive with my wife." At the hearing, Atwell for the first time admitted that he brought the knife to Mrs. Atwell's home. Prior to the hearing, Atwell informed parole staff that he was not in possession of the knife, falsely claiming that Mr. Norman had the knife.

The Board further noted Mr. Atwell's limited ability to describe his institutional programming, particularly in the area of violence reduction. In his 15 years of incarceration Atwell has attended one violence reduction program, law clerk training, educational studies program and secured employment as a kitchen worker. Atwell is not currently involved in any rehabilitative programming.

III. DECISION

Mr. Atwell's minimal programming and lack of remorse give no indication that he is addressing the causative factors of his criminal behavior. It is the unanimous opinion of the Board that Mr. Atwell's release is incompatible with the welfare of society and that it is reasonably probable that he will re-offend if released on parole. Because he has so much rehabilitative work remaining, it would serve no purpose to shorten the five-year statutory review period.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.


Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff


Date