



Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lieutenant Governor

Andrea J. Cabral
Secretary

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety
Parole Board

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Telephone # (508) 650-4500
Facsimile # (508) 650-4599



Josh Wall
Chairman

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

AARON WATTS

W49607

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: September 25, 2012

DATE OF DECISION: February 26, 2013

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Shelia Dupre, 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

Aaron Watts, age 21, shot James Moody, age 26, to death at approximately 12:30 a.m. on October 24, 1989, in Dorchester. On the previous day, Mr. Watts had gone to Moody's building to purchase marijuana, but was robbed in the hallway. Mr. Watts believed that Moody had set him up to be robbed and when he observed Moody in the passenger seat of the car the next night, Mr. Watts grabbed a shotgun from his car, walked to the passenger side of a car in which Moody was a passenger, and shot Moody.

On December 17, 1990, Mr. Watts pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and received a life sentence. He also pleaded guilty to unlawful possession of a shotgun for which he received a 3 to 5 year concurrent sentence. Mr. Watts filed a motion to withdraw his guilty plea, which was denied in 1997. The Massachusetts Appeals Court affirmed the denial in November, 1999.

Mr. Watts' criminal record includes the following juvenile delinquencies: assault to rob, unarmed robbery, knowingly receiving stolen property and operating to endanger. Watts' adult record includes prior convictions for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, distributing a class A substance, possession of a class A substance, manufacturing a class A substance, and possession to distribute a class B substance.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

Mr. Watts, now age 44, made an opening statement in which he apologized to Mr. Moody's family, stating that "there are no words that I can use to express to the Moody family. . . how sorry I am for the death of their loved one." Mr. Watts stated that he accepted "full responsibility" for Mr. Moody's death. Mr. Watts described the shooting as follows: "I took possession of a shotgun and pointed it at Mr. Moody. The gun went off, and as a result, Mr. Moody died." Board Members questioned Watts' claim that he did not intend to fire, pointing out his guilty plea to murder and other evidence showing intent to kill. Watts described a troubled childhood noting that he began smoking marijuana and committing crimes at the age of 13 which eventually led to his commitment to the Department of Youth Services by the age of 16.

Mr. Watts has been incarcerated for 23 years. Although Watts' work history has been sporadic, he currently works in the Maintenance Department at MCI-Shirley Medium. He has received 97 disciplinary reports and had two placements in the Disciplinary Detention Unit. He received ten disciplinary reports since his last parole hearing. He began programming in 2001, and, since his last hearing, he has completed Violence Reduction, Correctional Recovery Academy, Health Awareness, Toast Masters International, Adult Basic Education and Pre-GED classes. Watts' most recent classification report reveals that he is on the waiting list for Creative Writing, but is not involved in any other formal programming.

Board Members questioned Watts about his poor institutional conduct, including the ten disciplinary reports since his last hearing. Three reports involved threats to burn his cell, a group assault on an inmate resulting in head injuries, and an assault on a corrections officer. Watts responded that his conduct was "improved" because he has had no new reports since 2010.

The inmate was represented by Greg Bernstein and Chris Britten, student attorneys from the Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project. The inmate's mother and Attorney Eva Clark testified in support of parole. Suffolk Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni submitted a letter in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

This was Aaron Watts' third parole hearing. The two previous Parole Board decisions indicated that Watts needed positive institutional behavior and active program participation. Watts has improved his program participation, but his conduct continues to be problematic. Of his 97 disciplinary reports, ten have occurred since his last parole hearing. The reports document anger, violence, and active resistance to institutional rules. This behavior demonstrates that Watts is not rehabilitated. Evidently, his program participation has not had the desired effect. Aaron Watts would be likely to reoffend if released and his release is incompatible with the welfare of society. Accordingly, parole is denied. The review will be in five years, during which time Mr. Watts should commit to improved behavior and further program participation.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.


Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff

2/26/13
Date