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PAROLE BOARD

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Josh Wall
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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ALEX HOLMES

W64573

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 8, 2012

DATE OF DECISION: February 19, 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: Reserve to a Long Term Residential Program after two years in lower security at the Department of Correction. The remaining period of incarceration must be completed without disciplinary incident and in compliance with the Department of Correction's expectations for programs, activities, and employment. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Alex Holmes appeared before the Massachusetts Parole Board for an initial hearing on the life sentence he is currently serving at MCI-Norfolk. Mr. Holmes received this sentence in Hampden Superior Court on May 1, 1998, after pleading guilty to second-degree murder in the beating death of 38-year-old Todd Richardson.

Todd Richardson had an ongoing dispute with Haynie Harris and Willie Johnson, both of whom lived at 513-515 Hancock Street in Springfield. On June 3, 1997, Todd Richardson walked by the Hancock Street house and yelled at the occupants. Willie Johnson, Haynie Harris, and Alex Holmes each picked up an object to use as a weapon and went outside to confront Mr. Richardson. The three men severely beat Mr. Richardson. Willie Johnson, using a board, and Alex Holmes, using a baseball bat, inflicted most of the injuries. Mr. Richardson lapsed into a coma and succumbed to his injuries nine days later. Mr. Richardson died of brain injuries resulting from blunt force trauma to the head.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 8, 2012

Alex Holmes admitted that he used a bat to strike Todd Richardson, and that Willie Johnson and Haynie Harris stopped him from continuing the attack after Mr. Richardson was already seriously injured. He said that he is an alcoholic whose life has been seriously affected by his alcoholism. He described a dysfunctional family life caused primarily by his father's abusive behavior. He began drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana at age 13. He said that he drank heavily rather than "deal with issues from the past."

The inmate has a good institutional record. He has only two disciplinary reports, the last one in 1998. He said that he "made it a mission to address issues with alcohol and the reasons he acted out; I know I had to start talking" rather than acting out angrily. He has worked many institutional jobs and currently works 30 hours a week in the clothing shop at MCI Norfolk. Since 2009, he has completed the Correctional Recovery Academy, Alternatives to Violence (four phases), Jericho Circle, and Able Minds. He attends AA weekly and has made considerable progress towards a Bachelor's degree in sociology from Boston University.

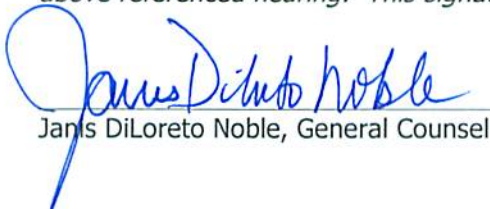
Mr. Holmes' sister spoke in support of parole, as did three volunteers from the Harvard Divinity School Prison Education Project, who described Alex Holmes as a humble and mild-mannered person. One of the witnesses said that Holmes told him that "prison was the best thing for me." Hampden Assistant District Attorney Dianne Dillon provided information about the crime and submitted a letter of opposition.

III. DECISION

Alex Holmes, in concert with others, used a bat to beat Todd Richardson to death. Mr. Holmes has no other criminal convictions. Mr. Holmes' prison record shows compliance and productivity. He has active program participation that has addressed his anger and substance abuse issues. Because the murder is an isolated act of violence, and Mr. Holmes has committed himself to rehabilitation throughout his incarceration, he has established his suitability for parole. He does not present a current risk for violence. The four goals of sentencing – punishment, deterrence, public protection, and rehabilitation – will have been met if Mr. Holmes completes two additional productive years in lower security. Alex Holmes is granted parole because he is unlikely to re-offend in the community and his release is compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Parole to long term residential program after two years in lower security; those two years must be completed without disciplinary incident and in compliance with the Department of Correction's expectations for programs, activities, and employment (including possible step down through Hampden County Sheriff); no alcohol use; no drug use; AA three times per week; one-on-one counseling for at least one year to address substance abuse and transition issues; no contact with victim's family.

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.


Janis DiLoreto Noble, General Counsel

2/19/13
Date