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Tina M. Hurley
Chair

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

DAMIEN LAMB
W88441

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: August 13, 2024

DATE OF DECISION: December 4, 2024

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, Tina M. Hurley,¹ James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

VOTE: Parole is granted on/after 6 months in Western Mass. Recovery Center to approved home plan.²

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On October 4, 2006, following a jury trial in Berkshire Superior Court, Damien Lamb was convicted of assault and battery, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery to collect a loan, and murder in the second degree for the death of Brandon LaBonte. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole on the murder charge, along with concurrent 3 to 4 year state prison sentences to be served on and after the murder sentence for the two assault and battery felony counts. The misdemeanor assault and battery count was placed on file.

Mr. Lamb was denied parole after his initial parole hearing on August 1, 2023. On August 13, 2024, Damien Lamb, age 43, appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was represented by Northeastern University Law Students Renée Hancock and Eliza Hatch. The Board's decision fully incorporates, by reference, the entire video recording of Mr. Lamb's August 13, 2023 hearing.

¹ Board Member Hurley was not present for the hearing, but reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

² Two Board Members voted to deny parole with review in two years.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On the evening of February 16, 2005, Damien Lamb and his co-defendant, Steven Fish, drove to Brandon LaBonte's apartment seeking money that was purportedly owed by Mr. Labonte to a mutual friend. When Mr. Labonte informed Mr. Lamb that he did not have the money, Mr. Lamb grew angry. At approximately 5:20 p.m., the three men then drove to Mr. Lamb's father's house in Becket. Upon arrival, Mr. Lamb instructed Mr. Fish and Mr. LaBonte to wait inside the car, while he went to call his brother. About ten minutes later, at approximately 6:15 p.m., Mr. Lamb returned to the car and asked Mr. LaBonte to follow him into the house to speak with his brother on the phone. Mr. Lamb instructed Mr. Fish to remain in the car.

Approximately a half hour later, Mr. Lamb approached the car and led Mr. Fish to a brown Chevrolet pickup truck parked on the property. Mr. Fish observed Mr. LaBonte's breathless body on the ground near the truck with a shovel over his face and a rope around his neck. Mr. Lamb told Mr. Fish, "If the rope didn't do it, the shovel would tell me." Mr. Lamb and Mr. Fish then rolled Mr. Labonte's body onto a blue tarp. The men then dragged the tarp to the car that Mr. Lamb had borrowed earlier that night and stuffed the victim's body into the trunk.

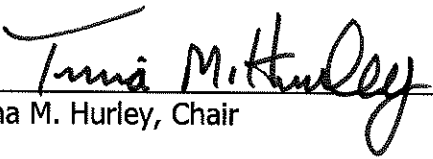
APPLICABLE STANDARD: Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. In making this determination, the Board takes into consideration an incarcerated individual's institutional behavior, their participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of incarceration, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize the incarcerated individual's risk of recidivism. M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. The Board also considers all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the incarcerated individual at the time of the offense, the criminal record, the institutional record, the incarcerated individual's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing and/or in written submissions to the Board (if applicable).

DECISION OF THE BOARD: This was Mr. Lamb's second appearance before the Board. He has been incarcerated for over 18 years and has one disciplinary report. During his incarceration, he has completed over 50 programs to address his history of violence and dehumanization. Mr. Lamb explained the relationship between his family history, influence of his father, and the normalization of violence to his offense. Mr. Lamb engaged in vocational training and is now a certified welder. Since his last hearing, Mr. Lamb has completed VOGUE, which enhanced his level of accountability and empathy. The Board notes Mr. Lamb's risk assessment is low. Mr. Lamb has a strong support network and release plan. Mr. Lamb requested to transition to the Western Mass Recovery Center to assist with a positive re-entry.

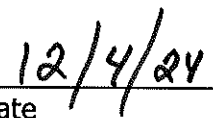
The Board heard testimony in support of parole from a previous student attorney, three friends, and Mr. Lamb's step-father. The Board also heard testimony from several individuals in opposition to parole, including Brandon LaBonte's sister and Bristol County ADA Joseph Pieropan.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Approve home plan before release; Waive work for two weeks; Curfew - must be home between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. for six months upon release; Electronic monitoring for six months upon release; Supervise for drugs with testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence with testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim(s)' family; Must have substance abuse evaluation and follow recommendations; Counseling for PTSD, trauma, and transition.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above-referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.



Tina M. Hurley, Chair



Date