The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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PAROLE BOARD
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Paul M. Treseler
Chairman

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

DEBRA SKARPOS

F35221

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **November 9, 2017**

DATE OF DECISION: **September 13, 2018**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in four years from the date of the hearing.

I.STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 3, 1992, in Bristol Superior Court, Debra Skarpos pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree for the shooting death of 60-year-old Reginald Desnoyers. Ms. Skarpos was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On April 19, 1990, at approximately 9:30 p.m., police responded to the Rawhide Lounge in Dartmouth on reports that a man had been shot. When officers arrived, they found Reginald Desnoyers lying between two parked cars with apparent gunshot wounds to the head. Earlier that evening, Mr. Desnoyers and his wife had gone to the Rawhide Lounge, where they had a few drinks and listened to the band. At around 9:00 p.m., his wife said she began to feel sick, so they left the bar and walked to their car to go home. When Mr. Desnoyers opened the passenger side door, Debra Skarpos (who was lying on the floor in the back seat) sat up and

said, "Hi." She then stepped out of the vehicle, raised her right hand, and shot Mr. Desnoyers twice in the head. Over the course of the next several weeks, police learned that Mr. Desnoyers' wife was involved in a romantic relationship with another woman. Further investigation led police to conclude that Debra Skarpos had been responsible for shooting Reginald Desnoyers.

II.PAROLE HEARING ON November 9, 2017

Debra Skarpos, now 61-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on November 9, 2017. She was not represented by counsel. Ms. Skarpos was denied parole after her initial hearing in 2005, but was paroled after a review hearing in 2008. Ms. Skarpos was returned to custody in 2013 for using narcotics and for failing to take her medications as prescribed. She was denied parole after a review hearing in 2014.

In her opening statement to the Board, Ms. Skarpos apologized for her "attitude" at her last hearing. Ms. Skarpos told the Board that she was paroled for 5 years and incarcerated for 24 years. She agreed that when she was on parole, there were three instances where she consumed alcohol. In addition, Ms. Skarpos spoke of an incident involving prescribed pain medication for her shoulder. She used a weekly pill dispenser that was separate from her pill bottle for Morphine. When she went to a doctor's appointment on July 30, 2013, she forgot to bring the pill dispenser. Instead, she brought the pill bottle, claiming that to be the reason she was 20 pills short. She also admitted that (while on parole) she used three bags of heroin on one occasion, via injection. Ms. Skarpos explained her medical history to the Board and said that she is approved to have shoulder surgery. She had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and has completed chemotherapy. She also had lung cancer and had surgery to remove a portion of her lung. She added that she is to be checked for possible colon cancer. Ms. Skarpos stated that she is on pain medication, specifically, Morphine and Ativan, which helps her sleep.

Since returning to custody, Ms. Skarpos said that although she participated in programming, she had to stop for a period of time due to her illnesses. Currently, she is a "pusher," which involves moving individuals around the facility in wheel chairs. In the past, she participated in the NEADS program, but, as she got sick, it was harder for her to stay involved. She said she participates in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)/Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and has completed Peer Pathway Mentoring and Woman's Recovery. Ms. Skarpos told the Board that she attends mental health counseling.

Board Members questioned Ms. Skarpos about the six disciplinary reports she incurred since her return to custody. In December 2014, it was noted that Ms. Skarpos had a disciplinary report for receiving funds from a third party. In July 2016, she had a disciplinary report for sending funds to another inmate through a third party. In March 2015, Ms. Skarpos received a disciplinary report for accumulation of prescribed medication/keep on person. Regarding that report, Ms. Skarpos explained that she had two pills in her undergarment. She claimed that she didn't take them and fell asleep. During a raid the following day, the pills fell out. In October 2015, Ms. Skarpos received a disciplinary report for an assault of another inmate. She told the Board that it was not a physical fight, but, rather, a verbal altercation. In November 2015, Ms. Skarpos received a disciplinary report for possession of one pill of Buspar. She explained that it was not her pill, but rather, another inmate put the pill in her pants. In February 2017, Ms.

Skarpos received a disciplinary report for being out of place. She stated that she was in the wrong area because she looked at her paperwork incorrectly.

Board Members questioned Ms. Skarpos about the events surrounding the governing offense. When a Board Member asked her why she agreed to shoot Mr. Desnoyers, she stated, "I think about it all the time." She indicated that the victim's wife wanted to be with another woman. When asked if she got anything out of it, she stated, "no." She went on to say, "I thought I would fit in" and "I just made a bad decision." If paroled, Ms. Skarpos told the Board that she wishes to continue "one on ones," outpatient groups, meetings, and medical treatment. She would like to "get the help [she] need[s]" and would prefer placement in a Long Term Residential Program. She stated, "I am willing to do anything that the Board sees fit for me to do." Ms. Skarpos indicated that she would do everything different and ask for more help. She also said that she has a network she can rely on.

The Board considered testimony in support of parole from a member of the community. The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from Mr. Desnoyers' daughter. Bristol County Assistant District Attorney Dennis Collins spoke in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Ms. Debra Skarpos has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make her release compatible with the welfare of society. Ms. Skarpos' adjustment since her return to custody remains a concern for the Board, as she continues to incur disciplinary infractions and engage in manipulative behavior.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Ms. Skarpos' institutional behavior, as well as her participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of her incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Ms. Skarpos' risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Ms. Skarpos' case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Debra Skarpos is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Ms. Skarpos' next appearance before the Board will take place in four years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Ms. Skarpos to continue working towards her full rehabilitation.

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.

Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

9/13/18
Date