



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF
ELBERT NEWSON
W99774

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: December 9, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: March 18, 2026

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

VOTE: Parole is granted on or after 6 months in lower security to an approved home plan.¹

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On December 14, 2011, following a jury trial in Suffolk County Superior Court, Elbert Newson was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Thomas Webb. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On that same date, he was found guilty of possession of a firearm without an FID card. He received a 3-to-5-year sentence to run concurrently with his life sentence.

Mr. Newson became parole eligible following the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024), where the court held that sentencing individuals who were ages 18 through 20 at the time of the offense (emerging adults) to life without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional. As a result of the SJC's decision regarding his first-degree murder conviction, Mr. Newson was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On December 9, 2025, Mr. Newson appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Michelle DeCoursey. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Newson's December 9, 2025, hearing.

¹ One Board Member voted to grant parole to a Long-Term Residential Program after 6 months in lower security.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On September 15, 2008, 19-year-old Elbert Newson and his co-defendant participated in the shooting death of 17-year-old Thomas Webb in Boston. Mr. Webb was shot while petting a neighbor's dog outside an apartment building. Boston police officers responded to the area after hearing gunfire and observed a man running toward a vehicle parked in the middle of the road. The officers attempted to block the suspect's vehicle using their cruiser, but the vehicle evaded police and drove off.

A chase ensued, and the officers saw an object being thrown out of the vehicle's passenger side window. A .45 caliber semiautomatic pistol was later recovered from that spot along the chase route. The suspect's vehicle eventually entered a housing development in Boston and stopped abruptly. Two individuals stepped out, and the chase continued on foot. However, officers lost sight of both individuals. A short time later, officers observed Mr. Newson emerging from hedges onto a nearby sidewalk. He was "sweating profusely" and "gasping for air."

In the right front pocket of Mr. Newson's jeans, officers found a key to the vehicle that had been abandoned following the pursuit. Forensic examination of the vehicle's contents also identified several objects with Mr. Newson's fingerprints, including a .38 caliber revolver found on the floor of the front passenger area. The co-defendant's fingerprints were found on the .45 caliber pistol that was thrown during the pursuit. Five shell casings were recovered from the scene of the shooting.

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 inmate'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 inmate'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 inmate at the time of the offense, the criminal record, the institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing and/or in written submissions to the Board.

Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). Individuals who were emerging adults at the time of the offense must be afforded a "meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation" and the Board evaluates "the circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, including the age of the offender, together with all relevant information pertaining to the offender's character and actions during the intervening years since conviction." Id. (citing Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk Dist., 466 Mass. 655, 674 (2013) (Diatchenko I); Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 471 (2012); Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48, 75 (2010)). Since brain development in emerging adulthood is ongoing, the Board also considers the following factors when evaluating parole candidates who committed the underlying offenses as an emerging adult: 1) a lack of impulse control in emotionally arousing situations; 2) an increased likelihood to engage in risk taking behaviors in pursuit of reward; 3) increased susceptibility to peer influence which makes emerging adults more likely to engage in risky

behavior; and 4) an emerging adult's greater capacity for change. See Mattis, 493 Mass. at 225-229.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: This was Mr. Newson's first appearance before the Board. He was 19-years-old at the time of the offense; he is currently 37-years-old and has served 17 years. Mr. Newson has engaged in meaningful programs to address his need areas. Mr. Newson had significant adverse childhood experiences that were directly related to his offense and dysfunctional lifestyle. He appears to have matured and benefitted from programming that began prior to the Mattis decision, including achieving his GED in 2007. Mr. Newson is a facilitator in Second Thoughts and has established a significant support system that includes individuals who specialize in re-entry needs. The Board considered the testimony of Mr. Newson's family and friends in support of parole. The Board also considered the testimony of Mr. Webb's family members in opposition to parole. The Board concludes that Elbert Newson has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Approve home plan prior to release; Waive work for 2 weeks; Must be home between 10PM & 6AM or at Parole Officer's discretion; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence, testing in accordance with Agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim's family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment.

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.


Angelo Gomez Jr., Chair

March 18, 2026
Date