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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

GEORGE CAMERON

W35886

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 11, 2017

DATE OF DECISION: February 1, 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 five years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On December 2, 1976, in Worcester Superior Court, George Cameron was found guilty of six counts of second degree murder, following a jury trial. He received six concurrent life sentences. He was also convicted of two counts of arson, resulting in concurrent 10 to 15 year sentences. The arson sentences were from and after the life sentences. The victims of these offenses were Lisa Grandmaison (age 8), John Grandmaison (age 5), Daniel Grandmaison (age 3), Christine Grandmaison (age 10), their mother Florence Grandmaison (age 31), and Colleen McCarthy (age 16).

On April 2, 1976, George Cameron, who was assisted by Michael Moody, set a fire that resulted in the deaths of six people. Examination of the fire scene revealed that the fire originated on the first floor rear porch. The fire quickly raged out of control, shooting up the rear porches of each floor to the top of the four story building. The McCarthy family lived on

the third floor and the Grandmaison family lived on the fourth floor. John Grandmaison, a survivor, lost his entire family to the fire: his wife (who was 8 months pregnant) and three of his children, all of whom perished that night, as well as his daughter Lisa, who died two months later at the Shriner's Hospital in Boston. Colleen McCarthy tried to make her way to the fourth floor to help the Grandmaison family. She died while trying to save them. Mr. Cameron admitted at his 2007 parole hearing that he was obsessed with two of the occupants of the building, Colleen McCarthy and her sister, Kathleen. He described his lust for the two young women, stating that if he could not have the young girls, then nobody would.

George Cameron and Michael Moody each blamed the other when they were arrested and interviewed two weeks after the fire. It was undisputed that George Cameron called 911 soon after the fire started. His call was recorded, and he described the fire "I just lit."

II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 11, 2017

George Cameron, now 60-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on April 11, 2017, for a review hearing. He was not represented by counsel. Mr. Cameron appeared for an initial hearing in 1991, which resulted in the denial of parole. He subsequently appeared before the Board for review hearings in 1994, 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2012, all of which resulted in the denial of parole.

In Mr. Cameron's opening statement to the Board, he apologized to the surviving members of the Grandmaison and McCarthy families and recounted his actions on the night of the fire. According to Mr. Cameron, he and Michael Moody had met earlier that day at a mall. Subsequently, both men stole a car and drove around aimlessly until that night, when they became involved in a motor vehicle chase involving the Worcester Police Department. According to Mr. Cameron, he and Mr. Moody abandoned the stolen car in Worcester and traveled on foot to a boarded-up building that they thought was abandoned. While standing in the hallway of the building, Mr. Cameron lit a match that fell to the ground, igniting a trash bag. According to Mr. Cameron, he and Mr. Moody did not intentionally light the fire, but rather, acted recklessly for the "fun of it."

Presently, Mr. Cameron is employed in the sewing shop at MCI-Shirley, where he works five days a week. Although Mr. Cameron told the Board that he engaged in programming to address anger issues (following his last parole hearing in 2012), he is not presently engaged in any programming or counseling. According to Mr. Cameron, his anger issues stem from verbal and physical abuse he experienced during his upbringing at the hands of his father. The Board asked Mr. Cameron his thoughts on why he believed he had been denied parole in the past. Mr. Cameron's response was that he believed it related to his failure to admit responsibility for the deaths of the Grandmaison family and Ms. McCarthy, as well as his failure to address his motivation in committing arson. The Board subsequently asked Mr. Cameron to address these issues during the current hearing, to which Mr. Cameron responded that his involvement in the arson "was just a stupid mistake." When asked by the Board if he believes that he merits parole at this time, Mr. Cameron answered in the affirmative, stating that he merits parole because he has changed over the years. He claims that he is calmer now, knows what he wants in life, and hopes to start over again in a positive manner.

Mr. Cameron denied knowing that the building he and Mr. McCarthy set on fire was occupied. He also claimed that he did not know, nor have any prior relationship with, Colleen McCarthy. Mr. Cameron's statements are in direct contradiction to his prior statements to the police investigating the arson, as well as to a parole investigator interviewing Mr. Cameron in preparation for his 2007 parole hearing. When confronted with these prior statements, Mr. Cameron alleged that they were fabricated by the police. Further, Mr. Cameron denied involvement in a prior arson that occurred in 1971, despite being convicted of the incident.

There were no witnesses who appeared in support of parole. The Board considered testimony from Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King, who expressed opposition to parole.

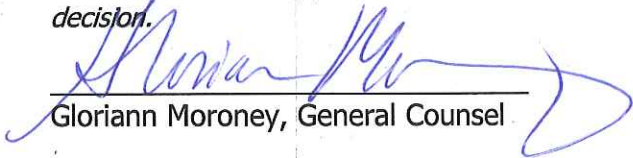
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Cameron has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. The Board noted that Mr. Cameron shows no signs of rehabilitation in setting a fire that killed six people.

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 Mr. Cameron's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Cameron's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Cameron's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that George Cameron is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Cameron's next appearance before the Board will take place in five years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Cameron to continue working towards his 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

2/1/18
Date