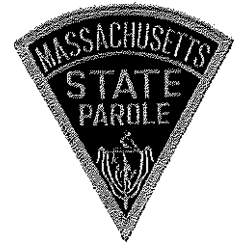


The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

JOHN CARTER
W53222

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 29, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: October 29, 2025

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

VOTE: Parole is denied with a review in 2 years from the date of the hearing.²

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On September 21, 1992, following a jury trial in Hampden Superior Court, John Carter was convicted of murder in the first-degree and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. On June 17, 1998, in Norfolk Superior Court, Mr. Carter (while incarcerated) was sentenced to 6-8 years to be served from & after his life sentence for both assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and assault and battery on a corrections officer. On that same date, Mr. Carter was sentenced to 2-3 years, to be served concurrently, for malicious destruction of property.

Mr. Carter 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 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, with regard to Mr. Carter's first-degree murder conviction, he was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

¹Board Member Alexander and Board Member Bonner were not present for the hearing, but both reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

² Two Board Members voted to grant parole to Interstate Compact after 6 months in lower security.

On May 29, 2025, Mr. Carter appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Mary Rogers. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Carter's May 29, 2025, hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:³ On March 3, 1991, 18-year-old John Carter shot and killed 22-year-old Jerry Hughes in Springfield. Mr. Carter was associated with a known narcotics dealer, who wanted Mr. Hughes killed. Prior to the date of the murder, the dealer had a firearm delivered to Mr. Carter. At approximately 6:30 p.m., on March 3, 1991, Mr. Carter and co-defendant Donald Vanhook drove to the Rainville Hotel in Springfield. Mr. Vanhook dropped Mr. Carter at a street corner near the hotel and waited. Mr. Carter, who was armed, walked toward the hotel and emerged several minutes later with Mr. Hughes. After a brief exchange of words between the two, Mr. Carter stepped back, reached into his jacket, pulled out a firearm, and shot Mr. Hughes at point blank range, killing him. Mr. Carter later admitted to killing Mr. Hughes.

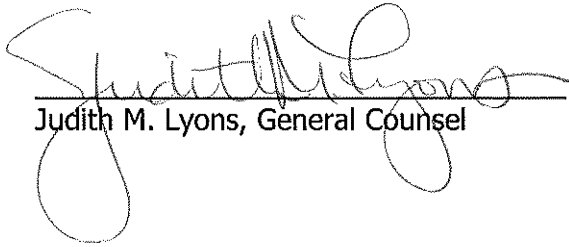
APPLICABLE STANDARD: Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain 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.

³ The following was taken from Commonwealth v. John J. Carter 423 Mass. 506 (1996).

DECISION OF THE BOARD: This is Mr. Carter’s first appearance before the Board. He was 18-years-old at the time of the murder. He is now 52-years-old and has been incarcerated for the past 33 years. Mr. Carter’s initial term of incarceration was troubling, including disciplinary reports for violence and weapons, and a 10 year term in the Disciplinary Unit for an organized, violent assault of a corrections officer. The Board is also concerned with Mr. Carter’s honesty, due to his filing of a fraudulent affidavit in a 2020 motion for a new trial in which he asserted his actual innocence of the murder. Since Mattis, Mr. Carter has spent considerable time engaging in rehabilitative programming, and the Board encourages him to continue those efforts. The Board also appreciates that he earned his Hi-Set in 2023. The Board also considered the psychological consultation provided by Dr. Jeffrey Long. The Board concludes that John Carter has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. In rendering their decision, the Board considered public testimony from those who spoke in support of parole, as well as ADA Lee Baker, who spoke in opposition to parole.

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.


Judith M. Lyons, General Counsel

10/29/25
Date