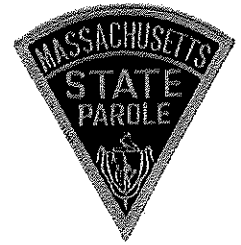


*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*

**PAROLE BOARD**

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*Natick, Massachusetts 01760*



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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**LAZELL COOK**  
**W52188**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** February 27, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** July 9, 2025

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Edith J. Alexander,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, Tina M. Hurley,<sup>2</sup> James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

**VOTE:** Parole is granted on or after 90 days in lower security to CRJ for at least 90 days.<sup>3</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** Lazell Cook was convicted of two counts of murder in the first degree and one count of unarmed robbery on March 17, 1992, in Middlesex Superior Court. Mr. Cook was sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for his first-degree murder convictions and 20 to 30 years in prison for unarmed robbery. Each of the sentences were ordered to run concurrently.

Mr. Cook 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 in regard to Mr. Cook's first-degree murder convictions, each mittimus was corrected to reflect that his life sentences permitted parole eligibility after 15 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Alexander was not present for the hearing, but reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

<sup>2</sup> Chair Hurley participated in the vote on this matter prior to her departure from the Board.

<sup>3</sup> Two Board Members voted to parole but not before 6 months in lower custody.

On February 27, 2025, Mr. Cook appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Molly Strehorn. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Lazell Cook's February 27, 2025, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**<sup>4</sup> Lazell Cook participated in an attack on Jesse McKie and Rigoberto Carrion on January 25, 1990, in Cambridge, which resulted in the deaths of Mr. McKie and Mr. Carrion. Four other co-defendants participated in the attack. Mr. Cook was convicted of both murders. Between the late evening hours of January 24<sup>th</sup> and the early morning hours of January 25, 1990, six individuals traveled in a van from Boston to Cambridge. Mr. Cook was a passenger in the van. The group intended to "rob some people" in Cambridge.

The men exited the van, which was parked on a side street, and walked towards Newtowne Court, a housing complex. Jessie McKie was confronted by the group when he walked by the entranceway to Newtowne Court. The group punched and beat Mr. McKie to obtain the leather jacket that he was wearing. Mr. Cook was identified as one of the assailants. Mr. Lee obtained Mr. McKie's jacket, and Mr. Gordon repeatedly stabbed Mr. McKie. One stab wound penetrated Mr. McKie's heart. Although he collapsed into a snowbank, the group continued to assault him. The second victim, Mr. Carrion, witnessed the attack on Mr. McKie. The men turned their attention to Mr. Carrion and carried out a similar attack on him. Mr. Gordon stabbed Mr. Carrion in the chest. Mr. Lee and another were apprehended by police while attempting to flee the scene. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Cook went to the police station to bail out Mr. Lee and Mr. Parks. An eyewitness to the murders was present at the police station and identified Mr. Cook as one of the assailants.

**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

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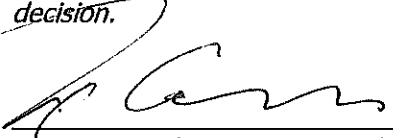
<sup>4</sup> The recitation of facts is derived from *Commonwealth v. Cook*, 419 Mass. 192 (1994). The Statement of Facts is not intended to be an exhaustive recitation of all facts and details surrounding Mr. Cook's convictions.

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. Cook's first hearing before the Board. He was 19-years-old at the time of the offense. He is currently 54-years-old. Mr. Cook was forthcoming about his lifestyle and his history of criminal conduct that led to his conviction under a joint venture theory. He has been incarcerated for 34 years. Mr. Cook engaged in self-development prior to the *Mattis* decision. Mr. Cook presented with insight into the factors that led to the offense and has invested in treatment and programming to address his need areas. The Board considered his age at the time of the offense and the expert evaluation of Anna Bulkin, MSW, LISCW. Mr. Cook has developed occupational skills during his incarceration to assist with future employment. Mr. Cook has a support system to assist with his re-entry into the community. In addition to the expert evaluation of Anna Bulkin, the Board considered testimony in support of parole from Mr. Cook's cousin and sister. The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Alicia Walsh. In addition, three letters of opposition were read by the Victim Services Unit on behalf of victims' family members at the hearing.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** CRJ for a minimum of 90 days; Waive work for 2 weeks; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; 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 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.*

  
Toromey Coleman, Acting Chair

  
Date