



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

**PAROLE BOARD**

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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**LEON STEWART**  
**W69634**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** October 21, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** March 12, 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 3/9/26 to Interstate Compact New York.

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On June 20, 2001, following a jury trial in Barnstable County Superior Court, Leon Stewart was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Jennifer Perkins. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On that same date, he was convicted of unlawful possession of a firearm, which was placed on file.

Mr. Stewart 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. Stewart was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On October 21, 2025, Mr. Stewart appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney John Appruzzese. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Stewart's October 21, 2025 hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** In the early morning hours of August 19, 2000, Leon Stewart (age 18) shot and killed 20-year-old Jennifer Perkins, while she sat in her vehicle outside a home in East Falmouth. In the days before the murder, Mr. Stewart had been looking for an individual who shot his friend a year prior. A witness observed Mr. Stewart with a loaded firearm, making

statements as to what he would do the next time he saw the targeted individual. On the night of the murder, Mr. Stewart directed a friend to drive him and his co-defendant to a home in East Falmouth, where he believed the targeted individual to be. Mr. Stewart was wearing gloves, and he was in possession of a loaded firearm. He directed his friend to park several houses away from the targeted home. When a car passed, Mr. Stewart and his co-defendant left the car saying, "That's them," and began shooting. They ran back to the car saying, "We got [the targeted individual]."

After the shooting, Mr. Stewart and his co-defendant wiped two firearms with a towel and hid them in a wooded area. They also disposed of the clothing and gloves they were wearing. Mr. Stewart threw a baseball batting glove from the window of the car, similar to a glove later found by police outside the targeted home. Ms. Perkins was found slumped over the wheel of her vehicle in the driveway of the home with the motor running and the headlights on. She did not survive her injuries. Numerous shell casings and spent bullets were found on the driveway and windowsill of a neighboring house. The casings found in the driveway were determined to be from a nine-millimeter handgun that the police later recovered (at Mr. Stewart's direction).

**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:** Mr. Stewart has served 25 years. He completed 14 programs and demonstrated remorse. Mr. Stewart was evaluated by Dr. Emily Prinzo and was determined to be low risk for recidivism and future violence. He has not received a disciplinary report in more than a decade, and he has been sober for 25 years. He has family support and a strong re-entry plan. The Board considered his forensic evaluation. The Board considered testimony in support of parole from a social worker, community supporters, and friends. The Board considered the oral and written submissions of Ms. Perkins' family and friends in opposition to parole. The Board also considered the opposition letter of Cape and Islands District Attorney Robert Galibois. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Leon Stewart has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Release to other authority - Interstate Compact New York; Waive work for 2 weeks or program; Electronic monitoring at Parole Officer's discretion; 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; May have contact with [2 named individuals]; 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 12, 2026  
Date