

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

**MARTIN BOWLER
W42980**

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: June 9, 2020

DATE OF DECISION: October 29, 2020

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Karen McCarthy, Colette Santa

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 the 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 a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is granted to the Farren Care Center with special conditions.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On November 21, 1986, in Middlesex Superior Court, Martin Bowler was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole for the second-degree murder of Richard Farnese.

On October 27, 1985, Watertown police arrived at an apartment on Charles Street and found Richard Farnese on the living room floor with a knife wound in his upper chest. Witnesses on the scene reported that Martin Bowler forced his way into the apartment, and an altercation ensued. Mr. Bowler argued with the apartment's resident and then, without provocation, stabbed Mr. Farnese with a large steak knife and punched him several times. Mr. Bowler then fled the scene. Mr. Farnese died nine days later as a result of his injuries.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON JUNE 9, 2020

Martin Bowler, now 64 years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on June 9, 2020, for a review hearing. He was represented by law students, Megan Corrigan and Diana Haigney from the Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project. Mr. Bowler was first paroled in 2004 to a sober house, where he faced difficulty adjusting. Approximately two months later, he was returned to custody for drug use. Mr. Bowler was re-paroled contingent on his participation and completion of a rehab program and mental health counseling. In 2005, however, Mr. Bowler was again returned to custody due to drug use. He was subsequently denied parole after his 2010 and 2016 review hearings. At this hearing, Mr. Bowler's counsel provided the Board with an opening statement outlining his positive change regarding his mental health and substance abuse issues.

When Board Members addressed the details surrounding the day of the murder, Mr. Bowler testified that he began drinking and using drugs early in the morning and remained intoxicated throughout the day. Although he did not know Mr. Farnese, Mr. Bowler stated that he "takes full responsibility" for his death. When asked about incidents of violence prior to the murder, Mr. Bowler admitted to stabbing another victim in the stomach. Board Members inquired as to whether or not Mr. Bowler has explored victim empathy. Mr. Bowler explained to the Board that he does so through group therapy. The Board asked, specifically, what he shares and Mr. Bowler told the Board that he talks about his responsibility in "taking a man's life." Board Members also questioned Mr. Bowler as to why he had not been successful on his prior parole supervision. Mr. Bowler explained that, at the time, he had not addressed his mental health or substance abuse issues and would often self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. When asked to explain how it would be different today, Mr. Bowler stated that he is now "fully accountable," having addressed his mental health issues through appropriate medication and counseling. Mr. Bowler told the Board that he will remain medication compliant, if granted parole, and that they should have "no concerns" regarding decompensation. In the event he relapses, Mr. Bowler stated that he will reach out to his parole officer and sponsor, which he had not been able to do in the past. Moreover, Mr. Bowler insisted that if he remains medication compliant, he will not endure the same urges for drugs and alcohol as he had previously.

Board Members further discussed concerns as to Mr. Bowler's mental health and his primary diagnosis (in 2008) of schizophrenia. Mr. Bowler displayed a sufficient understanding of his diagnosis and indicated that he has been medication compliant since 2015. Under his current regimen, Mr. Bowler explained that he is stable and does not suffer from negative side effects. He sees a counselor about once a month, as well as a psychiatrist once every three months. Mr. Bowler asserted that, due to his current medication, he no longer suffers from anger issues and his substance abuse issues are now under control. The Board noted that Mr. Bowler's parole revocation was mainly due to his drug use. Prior to his 2016 hearing, Mr. Bowler had not addressed his substance abuse issues through AA/NA, despite the Board's encouragement. However, he has since joined the program and, when asked what precipitated the change, Mr. Bowler indicated that he decided to take the Board's advice. Mr. Bowler explained that when he experienced hallucinations or paranoia, his usage would significantly increase. His triggers in the past included when he thought people were talking about him. Mr. Bowler explained to the Board that, previously, he had not been able to talk about his substance abuse problem to anyone. As such, he was not able to recognize his triggers or gain any insight as to why he was using. Mr. Bowler indicated to the Board that he now discusses his issues with a clinician and/or counselor,

which has helped him gain a full understanding of his responsibility and the contributing factors of his crime.

Mr. Bowler has been evaluated and approved by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for services. He understands that he will need the help of the DMH to integrate back into the community. He plans to remain medication compliant and continue to see clinicians on a regular basis. Additionally, Mr. Bowler and counsel indicated they will supply the Board with an alternative risk assessment. Such assessment was submitted following the hearing.

The Board considered testimony in support of parole from Mr. Bowler's sister. The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from Mr. Farnese's brother. The Board also considered testimony in opposition to parole from Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Adrienne Lynch.

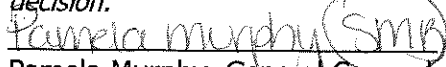
III. DECISION

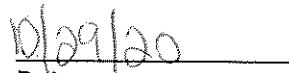
Mr. Bowler has served approximately 34 years for the murder of Mr. Farnese. Mr. Bowler has remained compliant with his medication regimen since 2014. He recognizes the importance of adhering to his medical/mental health case plan. It is the opinion of the Board that he has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. His suitability for parole supervision is contingent on his placement at Farren Care Center. There, the staff will be able to meet his health needs. The Board did consider the evaluator's recommendation in rendering its decision. However, the Board viewed placement at the Farren Care Center more suitable and structured to meet his needs.

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. Bowler'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. Bowler's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Bowler's case, the Board is of the opinion that Martin Bowler merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to the Farren Care Center with special conditions.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Waive work for Farren Care Center; Must be at home between 10 pm and 6 am; Electronic monitoring at PO's discretion; Must take prescribed medication; 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; Mandatory – must adhere to medical/mental health case plan; Long-term residential treatment - Farren Care Center.

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.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel


Date