



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



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

**MICHAEL MARPLE
W41130**

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **September 2, 2021**

DATE OF DECISION: **September 14, 2022**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, 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 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 three years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 17, 1986, after a jury trial in Norfolk Superior Court, 32-year-old Michael Marple was convicted of the second-degree murder of 31-year-old John Blais. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Just before jury empanelment, co-defendant Stephen Haynes pled guilty to manslaughter.

Michael Marple, Stephen Haynes, and John Blais were inmates at MCI-Cedar Junction.² On April 13, 1984, Mr. Marple and Mr. Haynes attacked Mr. Blais on a stairwell landing by strangling him and beating him with a pipe. Mr. Haynes held Mr. Blais, while Mr. Marple beat

¹ One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in two years from the date of the hearing.

² On January 19, 1981, while serving a sentence in Connecticut, Mr. Marple was convicted of second-degree assault and battery on a corrections officer. Mr. Marple was identified as a threat to security and was subsequently transferred to the custody of the Massachusetts Department of Correction.

him. During the beating, Mr. Marple repeatedly asked Mr. Blais, "Where are the ludes [a reference to drugs]?" Mr. Blais did not reply. After the beating, Mr. Marple and Mr. Haynes threw Mr. Blais down a flight of stairs. A correctional officer later discovered Mr. Blais' body with a cloth garrote around his neck. Mr. Blais died as a result of strangulation.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2021³

Mr. Marple, now 68-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on September 2, 2021, for a review hearing. He was not represented by counsel. This was Mr. Marple's fifth appearance before the Board. In his opening statement, Mr. Marple expressed remorse for taking the life of the victim, stating that "Mr. Blais was a friend of mine, and there is no punishment greater than living with the knowledge that I am the one responsible." He noted that most, if not all, of his criminal activity was fueled by drugs and alcohol. Mr. Marple maintained that he has been sober since 1992.

The Board spent much of the hearing attempting to discern which, of the multiple versions of the governing offense offered by Mr. Marple, was accurate. Although he admitted to lying in the past, Mr. Marple assured the Board that he was honest during his 2021 pre-parole interview when he provided a revised account of the murder. He described how he and Mr. Haynes lured Mr. Blais into his (Mr. Marple's) cell to "smoke." They hatched a plan, whereby Mr. Haynes caught Mr. Blais off-guard when he purposely dropped the joint for him to pick up. While Mr. Haynes attacked Mr. Blais, Mr. Marple left the cell. Upon his return, Mr. Marple saw Mr. Haynes "jumping off the bed onto Blais' head." He thought Mr. Blais was alive, but unconscious, as he hadn't noticed the boxing tape around Mr. Blais' neck. The men decided to carry Mr. Blais' body down the stairwell, hitting his head multiple times on the steps as they descended.

The Board noted that Mr. Marple has had a problematic institutional adjustment, as evidenced by the accrual of 67 disciplinary reports. Since his last hearing, Mr. Marple was disciplined for unauthorized use or possession of drugs, engaging in or inciting a group demonstration, and conduct which disrupts that poses a serious safety and security threat. When Board Members suggested that he minimized his responsibility for these infractions, Mr. Marple claimed that he has been continuously set up to fail by other inmates, stating that he is "not the devil they make [me] out to be." Mr. Marple is currently enrolled in Graduate Maintenance Program and has recently completed programs to include Criminal Thinking and Anger Management. Nonetheless, Mr. Marple has a history of minimal program involvement. He is also employed as a unit runner.

A representative of the Victim Services Unit read into the record a letter in opposition to parole from Mr. Blais' sister. The Norfolk County District Attorney's Office testified and submitted a letter in opposition to parole.

³ The entire video recording of Mr. Marple's September 2, 2021 hearing is fully incorporated by reference to the Board's decision.

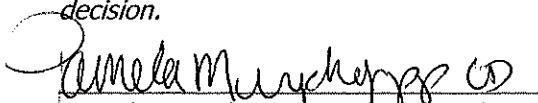
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Michael Marple has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Marple has served 36 years for the murder of John Blais. The crime was committed while he was in custody at MCI-Cedar Junction, while serving a Connecticut sentence for burglary. He was transferred to Massachusetts after a serious assault on a corrections officer in Connecticut. Mr. Marple has had an overall problematic adjustment as evidenced by several serious disciplinary reports, including a disciplinary report for being involved in a riot in 2017, a positive drug screen in 2019, and additional disciplinary issues. The Board noted he incurred 9 disciplinary reports since his last hearing. He presented as minimizing his problematic behavior or blaming others. He has also completed minimal rehabilitative programming throughout his incarceration. The Board strongly encourages Mr. Marple to engage in meaningful programming, remain disciplinary report-free, and maintain a positive adjustment. He should engage in rehabilitative programming to gain insight.

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. Marple'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. Marple's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Marple's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Michael Marple is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Marple's next appearance before the Board will take place in three years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Marple 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.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

9/14/22
Date