



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

**PAROLE BOARD**

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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**MICHAEL THOMPSON**

**(formerly Bernard Bessette)**

**W40891**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** November 5, 2024

**DATE OF DECISION:** March 18, 2025

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

**VOTE:** Parole is granted to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation to Canada but not before District Attorney clearance.<sup>2</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On February 12, 1985, in Middlesex Superior Court, Michael Thompson pleaded guilty to three counts of armed robbery for three separate robberies that took place in 1982 and 1983. He was sentenced to three concurrent life terms with the possibility of parole. On that same date, Mr. Thompson received multiple sentences related to these robberies, including two 18 to 20 year sentences for armed assault with intent to murder and three 9 to 10 year sentences for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, kidnapping, and larceny of a motor vehicle. Mr. Thompson also received three 3 to 5 year sentences for two counts of possession of a dangerous weapon and one count of assault with a dangerous weapon. These sentences were all ordered to run concurrently with each other and with his life sentences. Additional charges were filed, including two counts of assault with intent to rape.

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<sup>1</sup> Board Members Kelcourse and Bonner were not present at the hearing, but reviewed the footage of the hearing and participated in the vote.

<sup>2</sup> Three Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in 2 years from the date of this hearing.

On March 15, 1985, in Middlesex Superior Court, Mr. Thompson pleaded guilty to escape from the Middlesex House of Correction and was sentenced to 9 to 10 years, ordered to run concurrently with his life sentences. On June 11, 1990, in Norfolk Superior Court, Mr. Thompson pleaded guilty to escape for another escape attempt from MCI-Norfolk in March 1990. He received a 1 to 3 year sentence to run from and after his life sentences.

The Board denied Mr. Thompson's parole after his initial hearing in 2009, and after his review hearings in 2014 and 2019. On November 5, 2024, Mr. Thompson appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He represented himself. The Board's decision fully incorporates, by reference, the entirety of the recording of Mr. Thompson's November 5, 2024, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On April 1, 1982, Michael Thompson (age 31) entered Coolidge Bank and Trust in Cambridge in disguise and armed with a firearm. He approached two tellers, pointed the gun, and demanded money. Each teller complied and provided Mr. Thompson with just over four thousand dollars before he fled.

On August 10, 1982, Mr. Thompson approached Sally,<sup>3</sup> while she was locking her car door after returning to her Somerville home. He grabbed her around the waist and, while holding a double-edged knife, threatened to kill her if she did not lower herself to the ground. Mr. Thompson dragged Sally across the street and into a yard alongside a house. After stating that he was going to rape her, he proceeded to lift her shirt and skirt and fondle her. Mr. Thompson told her again that he was going to rape her and asked numerous questions about her sexual activities. Startled by the sound of a nearby car, Mr. Thompson told Sally to get behind the house, but to leave her tote bag with him. He then fled. The bag held her purse, which contained about \$30 and jewelry. Remembering that the jewelry included her grandfather's antique ring, Sally began to run after Mr. Thompson. Turning, Mr. Thompson chased her back behind the house and, again, threatened her life. When Sally screamed for help, a man nearby brought her into his home to call the police.

On March 19, 1983, Mr. Thompson, who was working for a local loan shark, was directed to collect money from Jill.<sup>4</sup> As Jill was walking on a Cambridge street, Mr. Thompson grabbed her, told her that he had a gun, and that he was going to rape her. Mr. Thompson tried to drag her into a driveway and push her between some parked cars. Frantic to get help, Jill told him that she was willing to have sex with him, if they could go to her nearby home. She falsely assured him that she lived alone. Mr. Thompson drove them to Jill's house, where her husband and other family members were sleeping. When Jill was able to momentarily separate herself from Mr. Thompson, she went to her husband for help. Mr. Thompson ran to the door outside the bedroom, where Jill and her husband were talking, and shot into the room multiple times. A number of those bullets entered the headboard, just behind the head of Jill's husband, while the other bullets went through the walls and ceiling of the bedroom. Mr. Thompson then ran down the hall toward the front door, continuing to fire back in the direction of children who had come downstairs. Mr. Thompson was later arrested in Belmont after a high-speed chase through several towns. During the chase, he was driving a stolen car and threatened to run down two police officers.

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<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to G. L. c. 265, § 24C, a pseudonym will be used to identify the victim, because in addition to the armed robbery and kidnapping, there is an accompanying charge of assault with intent to rape. This charge was filed.

<sup>4</sup> "Jill" is a pseudonym. See FN 1.


In August 1983, during a trial recess in Essex Superior Court, Mr. Thompson was able to escape custody by following the jury out of the courtroom. He fled, evading capture for three months until his arrest in Watertown in November 1983. Following his arrest, Mr. Thompson was held in the Middlesex House of Correction in Cambridge, awaiting trial on other charges. In May 1984, Mr. Thompson escaped from this institution and remained at large until November 1984, when he was arrested in Melrose.

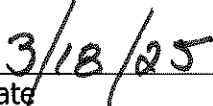
**APPLICABLE STANDARD:** Parole shall be granted "only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." G. L. c. 127, § 130. The Board considers multiple factors in making its decision, including the incarcerated individual's institutional behavior; their participation in available work, education, and treatment programs during their incarceration; and whether the incarcerated individual's chances of recidivism could be reduced by participation in risk reduction programs. G. L. c. 127, § 130. The Board considers all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the incarcerated individual at the time of the offense, the entirety of the incarcerated individual's criminal record, the incarcerated individual's institutional record, the incarcerated individual's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public expressed at the hearing and/or in written submission to the Board.

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** This was Mr. Thompson's 6<sup>th</sup> appearance before the Board. He is 74-years-old and has been incarcerated for 41 years. He has had no supported findings on disciplinary reports since the 1990s. He has participated in individual counseling. He has completed Violence Reduction, Criminal Thinking, Jericho Circle, and Alternatives to Violence. He participated in Vocational Training, having earned his ServSafe certificate in January 2024, and completed the Culinary Arts program in September 2024. Mr. Thompson has outstanding warrants on legal matters in Canada and has a deportation order to Canada.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Release to other authority: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detainer - Canada, Parole Violation Warrant (Canada), and Canadian Murder Warrant; Approve home plan before release, if released by Canada; Report to Assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; Restrict work; Curfew: must be home between 10 PM and 6 AM at parole officer's discretion; Electronic monitoring at parole officer's discretion; Supervise for drugs with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence with testing in accordance with Agency policy; No contact with victim(s); No contact with victim(s)' family; Must have mental health evaluation and follow recommended treatment plan; Must have substance use evaluation and must follow recommended treatment plan.

*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.*

  
Tina M. Hurley, Chair

  
Date