

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

PAUL JONES
W62484

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: July 30, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: January 12, 2026

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, and Rafael Ortiz

VOTE: Parole is denied with a review in four years from the date of the hearing.¹

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On April 11, 1997, following a jury trial in Middlesex Superior Court, Paul Jones was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Stephanie Santerre. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Mr. Jones 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. Jones' life sentence carries the possibility of parole after 15 years. On July 20, 2025, Mr. Jones appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Gilbert Nason. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Jones' July 30, 2025, hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:² Paul Jones (age 19) killed 16-year-old Stephanie Santerre on January 28, 1996, with the assistance of her older sister, Heather Santerre.³ Heather and Mr. Jones had been in a relationship for about four years. The killing was motivated by Heather's suspicion that Stephanie Santerre and Mr. Jones were involved in a sexual relationship. At the

¹ Former Acting Chair Coleman participated in the hearing but departed the Board prior to the decision.

² The Statement of the Case is a summary of the offense derived from *Commonwealth v. Jones*, 439 Mass. 249 (2003).

³ Heather Santerre is referred to by her first name to distinguish her from the victim. She was charged and convicted for her role in the murder (9681CR00276).

time of the murder, Stephanie Santerre was living with Mr. Jones, his mother, his three siblings, Heather, and another male. On January 26, 1996, Mr. Jones, Heather, and a friend took a drive in which they discussed plans for killing the victim and searched for spots to dispose of the victim's body. Two days later, Mr. Jones called a friend and stated, "Today is the day. We're going to do it."

After the murder, Mr. Jones told the friend that he killed Stephanie Santerre by luring her into his bedroom under the guise of having sex. He bound her with duct tape, gagged her, and strangled her with a bicycle chain. The victim's body was removed from the home and put in a trash bag. The body was discovered on February 7, 1996, in a wooded area in Ashby. A bicycle chain was wrapped around the victim's neck, her ankles and wrists were bound with duct tape, and her hands were bound to her body. The medical examiner opined that the cause of death was strangulation by ligature. Mr. Jones' fingerprints were found on the duct tape.

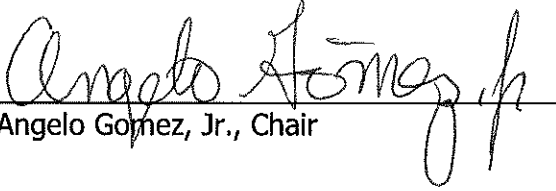
APPLICABLE STANDARD: Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain 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. Jones presented to the Parole Board for his initial hearing. He was 19-years-old at the time of the offense. He is currently 49-years-old and has served 29 years. Mr. Jones has accrued 37 disciplinary reports. The most recent disciplinary report was in 2023 for

a positive drug screen. The Board is most concerned with Mr. Jones' level of insight and accountability regarding the offense. Given the nature and circumstances of this offense, the Board reviewed the facts of the offense and his motivation for committing the offense. The Board was troubled with his responses. He appeared to lack insight and candor, calling into question his level of rehabilitation. The Board considered the forensic evaluation and testimony of Dr. Nason in rendering its opinion. The Board also considered the testimony of Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Adrienne Lynch in opposition to parole. The Board encourages Mr. Jones to engage in CRA, Hi-Set, and Victim Empathy, which he was on waitlist for at the time of the hearing. The Board also encourages Mr. Jones to invest in programming and/or self-development to advance his insight and address the Board's concerns. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Paul Jones has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

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

January 12, 2026
Date