

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

**PAROLE BOARD**

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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**PHILLIP JONES**  
**W62640**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** April 10, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** September 8, 2025

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

**VOTE:** Parole is granted to Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) after 90 days in lower security.<sup>2</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On May 12, 1997, following a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court, Phillip Jones was convicted of being an accessory before the fact to the first-degree murder of Jesse Shamele Baker. Mr. Jones was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.<sup>3</sup> 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 in regard to Mr. Jones' first-degree murder conviction, his mittimus was corrected to reflect that his life sentence carried the possibility of parole after 15 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Chair Hurley participated in the hearing in this matter but departed the Board prior to this decision.

<sup>2</sup>Two Board Members to parole after 6 months in lower security.

<sup>3</sup> On October 1, 1997, Mr. Jones received a concurrent 3-5-year sentence for carrying a dangerous weapon. A conviction for possession of ammunition was placed on file. These charges stem from an offense predating the murder.

On April 10, 2025, Phillip Jones appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Melissa Celli. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entirety of the video recording of Mr. Jones' April 10, 2025, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On September 5, 1995, 20-year-old Phillip Jones ordered the shooting of 21-year-old Jesse Shamele Baker. He provided the shooter, Corey Walker,<sup>4</sup> with the firearm used to kill the victim. Mr. Jones, who was the leader of [Security Threat Group], believed that Mr. Baker arranged a shooting that targeted a member of the STG. Additionally, Mr. Baker owed Mr. Jones money.

On the day of the murder, three men affiliated with the STG, including Mr. Walker, met Mr. Baker while traveling to Navillus Terrace in Dorchester, where Mr. Jones lived. The men confronted Mr. Baker regarding his alleged involvement in the shooting of an STG member. The group reached Mr. Jones' front porch, where Mr. Jones and other individuals from the neighborhood were standing. Mr. Jones joined in and argued with Mr. Baker, stating that he "always wanted to do something to [Mr. Baker]." Although Mr. Jones was not the shooter, he nonetheless retrieved a loaded .357 magnum revolver, handed it to Mr. Walker, and instructed him to "do what you got to do," if Mr. Baker continued arguing. Mr. Walker hid the gun beneath his shirt. Eventually, Mr. Jones affirmatively nodded to Mr. Walker, signaling him to shoot Mr. Baker. After Mr. Walker shot Mr. Baker, he fled the scene. Mr. Jones subsequently admitted to a witness that he provided Mr. Walker with the gun, instructed him to kill Mr. Baker, and gave Mr. Walker the signal to shoot.

**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

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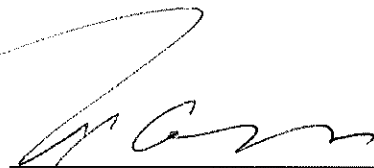
<sup>4</sup> Mr. Jones' co-defendant, Corey Walker, was convicted of second-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

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:** The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Jones has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Jones presents with strong vocational commitment through the Barber Program. He earned his GED while incarcerated. He has been disciplinary report free since 2008. He has completed Alternatives to Violence and Jericho Circle. He was involved with the formation of the Youthful Offender Group. He has been involved with Restorative Justice. The Board considered the Mattis factors of the emerging adult brain in evaluating the underlying offense and subsequent rehabilitative efforts. The Board also reviewed and considered the reports of Dr. Michelle Lockwood and Social Worker Sara Spooner. The Board notes his development of rehabilitative efforts in the past 29 years. The Board considered testimony from one individual, who spoke in support of parole. The Board considered opposition testimony from Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Montez Haywood. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Jones has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for 2 weeks; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Supervise for drugs with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact or association with [name of co-defendant]; No contact with victim's family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment; Residential Program Requirement - CRJ; May have contact with [two named individuals].

*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.*

  
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Tonomey A. Coleman, Acting Chair

9/8/25  
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Date