



Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Daniel Bennett
Secretary

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Telephone # (508) 650-4500

Facsimile # (508) 650-4599



Paul Treseler
Chairperson

Michael J. Callahan
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

RICHARD KACHADORIAN

W64885

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: October 15, 2015

DATE OF DECISION: January 19, 2016

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sheila Dupre, Tonomey Coleman, Ina Howard-Hogan, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying 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 June 30, 1998, in Middlesex Superior Court, Richard Kachadorian was convicted of the second degree murder of Laurence Cooper. Subsequently he was sentenced to life in prison, with the possibility of parole. Mr. Kachadorian is currently 69 years old.

During November of 1996, Mr. Kachadorian was living in Cambridge. On the evening of Mr. Cooper's death, November 22nd, Mr. Kachadorian walked by Mr. Cooper who was sitting on a cement wall in front of 1033 Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Cooper was a homeless gentleman who was well known in the Harvard Square area. As Mr. Kachadorian walked by he uttered a

¹ Five of the seven members of the Parole Board voted to schedule a review hearing on Mr. Kachadorian's petition for parole in three years. The remaining two members of the board voted to hold a review hearing in two years.

racial epithet at Mr. Cooper, resulting in a face to face confrontation between the two men. At the time, Mr. Kachadorian was carrying a large flashlight and buck knife.

After jumping off the wall and throwing his backpack to the ground, Mr. Cooper approached Mr. Kachadorian empty handed. Mr. Kachadorian struck Mr. Cooper in the head and neck with his flashlight. Subsequently, he removed the buck knife concealed on his waistband and used it to slash open Mr. Cooper's throat. Finally, Mr. Kachadorian stabbed Mr. Cooper in the heart. Mr. Cooper succumbed to his injuries five days later.

After fleeing the scene, Mr. Kachadorian went to a nearby bar and when he saw police lights outside, he tried to flee through the kitchen. After leaving the bar, Mr. Kachadorian disposed of his buck knife in a dumpster. When he learned the police wanted to speak to him, Mr. Kachadorian fled the country. After traveling throughout Europe and South America he re-entered the United States. Mr. Kachadorian returned to Massachusetts and was living under the assumed identity, "Steven Becker", when he was apprehended by authorities.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON OCTOBER 15, 2015

Mr. Kachadorian came before the Parole Board on October 15, 2015 for a review hearing. This was his second appearance before the Board. Mr. Kachadorian's initial hearing took place on October 16, 2012 and resulted in parole being denied with a 3 year set back.

Mr. Kachadorian gave an opening statement to the Board, in which he apologized for his actions. During the course of the hearing, he spoke about the night of the murder. A confrontation ensued in which Mr. Kachadorian "stood his ground". Mr. Kachadorian told the Board he never used his flashlight to strike Mr. Cooper, despite what witnesses testified to at trial. Mr. Kachadorian further challenged the testimony of witnesses who described the wound to Mr. Cooper's neck as "gaping". Mr. Kachadorian, however, did admit to cutting Mr. Cooper's neck with his knife and stabbing him in the heart.

When questioned by the Board, Mr. Kachadorian described his life as being at a low point in 1996. At the time of Mr. Cooper's death he was unemployed and on disability due to a heart condition. He also reported having a life long struggle with drugs and alcohol but claimed to have been sober for 6 months at the time he murdered Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Kachadorian acknowledged the role his failure to address his anger and substance abuse issues played in the Board's decision making at his last parole hearing. When asked what he has done to address these issues, Mr. Kachadorian reported that he has completed 4 programs and continued his participation in Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous. The programs completed by Mr. Kachadorian are Health Awareness, Alternatives to Violence, Able Minds, and Countdown to Freedom. He has also pursued his education through courses offered by Boston University. Mr. Kachadorian reported he was terminated from his position in the library, due to a conflict with other inmates, and has not been able to obtain new employment.

When asked why he thought he was a suitable candidate for parole, Mr. Kachadorian responded that he has learned "a whole lot more" since his last appearance before the Board. Mr. Kachadorian reported that he is now more aware of the triggers for his anger issues and that he has made an effort not to let "little things" irritate him. Mr. Kachadorian reported he was too old to have any long range plans for parole, but that he was interested in possibly doing volunteer work, obtaining a driver's license, and pursuing his woodworking hobby. Mr. Kachadorian also reported that he intended to continue participating in Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous. When asked if he had any plans to address his anger management issues, Mr. Kachadorian responded: "As far as anger management is concerned I

did not really think of any structured program out there for it, but I suppose I could avail myself of that."

In addition to Mr. Kachadorian, the Board also received live testimony from numerous witnesses, both in support of and in opposition to Mr. Kachadorian's petition for parole. The Board considered testimony from Mr. Kachadorian's family and friends, all of whom expressed support for his release. Mr. Kachadorian's niece described his troubled upbringing and the role she felt it played in his life. Mr. Kachadorian's sister gave testimony in which she challenged the accusations of bigotry and racism that occurred at his trial. She also described the abuse Mr. Kachadorian suffered as a child. One of Mr. Kachadorian's friends described the kindness he displayed to his disabled son, while another friend told the Board she and her family were willing to help support him during his re-entry into society. She also outlined the medical conditions affecting Mr. Kachadorian's health. A third friend offered testimony that described the transformation Mr. Kachadorian has gone through since his incarceration began.

An Assistant District Attorney testified on behalf of the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office. The district attorney's office expressed opposition to Mr. Kachadorian's release.

III. DECISION


The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Kachadorian has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. The Board believes a longer period of positive institutional adjustment and programming that addresses his anger management and substance abuse issues would be beneficial to Mr. Kachadorian's rehabilitation.

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. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Kachadorian's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Mr. Kachadorian is not yet rehabilitated and therefore does not merit parole at this time. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Kachadorian'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 whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Kachadorian's risk of recidivism.

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


Michael Callahan, Executive Director


Date