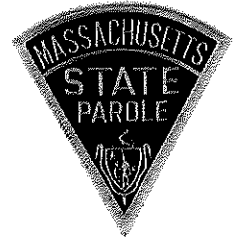


*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*



PAROLE BOARD

*12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760*

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Telephone: (508) 650-4500

Facsimile: (508) 650-4599

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Chair

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

RICHARD KACHADORIAN

W64885

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **October 23, 2018**

DATE OF DECISION: **July 31, 2019**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Colette Santa, Lucy Soto-Abbe,¹ Paul Treseler

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 that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole.² Parole is granted to an approved home with special conditions, but not before 18 months in lower security.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On June 30, 1998, after a jury trial in Middlesex Superior Court, Richard Kachadorian was convicted of the second-degree murder of Laurence Cooper. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Mr. Kachadorian unsuccessfully appealed his conviction.³

¹ Board Member Soto-Abbe was present at the hearing, but was not a Board Member at the time of vote.

² One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review hearing in 3 years. One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review hearing in 2 years.

³ *Commonwealth v. Kachadorian*, 49 Mass. App. Ct. 1112 (2000), cert. denied 432 Mass. 1105 (2000); *Commonwealth v. Kachadorian*, 55 Mass. App. Ct. 1109 (2002), cert. denied 437 Mass. 1108 (2002)

On November 22, 1996, Richard Kachadorian (age 50), stabbed 51-year-old Laurence Cooper to death. On the evening of the murder, Mr. Kachadorian uttered a racial epithet at Mr. Cooper, who was sitting on a cement wall in front of 1033 Massachusetts Avenue. As a result, a face to face confrontation ensued between the two men. At the time, Mr. Kachadorian was carrying a large flashlight and a 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. Mr. Kachadorian then removed a 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, fled through the kitchen and disposed of his buck knife in a dumpster. When he learned that 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 23, 2018

On October 23, 2018, Richard Kachadorian, now almost 73-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing. He was represented by Northeastern Law Students Bruce Duggan and Eugene Kim. Mr. Kachadorian had been denied parole after his initial hearing in 2012 and after his review hearing in 2015. In law Student Kim's opening statement to the Board, he emphasized that Mr. Kachadorian was a good candidate for parole due to his age, education, lack of disciplinary reports, and programming efforts. When Board Members discussed his childhood in the Mission Hill neighborhood of Boston, Mr. Kachadorian explained that his father both physically and emotionally abused him daily, which greatly contributed to his lifelong anger management issues and, eventual, heroin addiction. Growing up in Boston during a period of racial strife had left him with certain "biases" that he has worked hard to overcome.

When Board Members questioned him about the murder of Mr. Cooper, Mr. Kachadorian said that he "looks back at his crime in horror." He said that he had a heavy flashlight with him on the day of the murder because there was no light in the hallway of his apartment building. In addition, he always carried a knife for protection and used it when picking through trash. At the time of the murder, he explained his stress due to health problems and the fact that his mother had recently died. The crime was not thought out, and the confrontation quickly escalated after he took offense to a harmless remark. Mr. Kachadorian described how he slit Mr. Cooper's neck and, seconds later, stabbed him in the heart. He confessed that he had lied about his assertion that he was acting in self-defense and admitted that Mr. Cooper never threatened him with a bottle. He apologized for submitting newspaper clippings at his last parole hearing, which he had hoped would somehow mitigate the viciousness of his attack.

Board Members questioned Mr. Kachadorian as to how he has addressed his anger and substance abuse issues since his incarceration. Mr. Kachadorian stated that he joined the African American Coalition Committee in 2017 to learn how to recognize and overcome his racial biases. He attributed his lack of disciplinary reports to Anger Management, Restorative

Justice, Emotional Awareness, and Violence Reduction programs. Mr. Kachadorian said that he has been sober since 1996 and attends weekly Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. He currently works in a warehouse and, previously, worked in the prison library. If paroled, Mr. Kachadorian asked the Board for a step down to lower security for a year and then a release to a long-term residential program. Mr. Kachadorian could collect Supplemental Security Income and is almost finished with his bachelor's degree. Eventually, he could live with his sister in the Boston area. He also plans to attend Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous meetings and to seek anger management counseling.

Mr. Kachadorian's nephew, sister, and three friends testified in support of parole. The Board received seven letters of support from Mr. Kachadorian's brother, sister, nephew, niece, and three friends. Middlesex Assistant District Attorney Maren Shrader testified in opposition to parole.

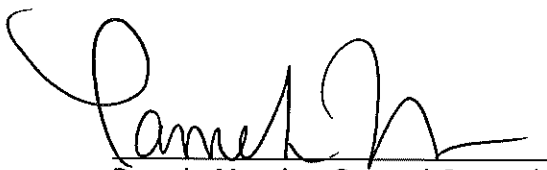
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Richard Kachadorian has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. He is 73-years-old, serving his first incarceration of any kind. It is the only charge on his record, with the exception of a charge that was dismissed. He scored low on the LS/CMI and has served 21 years. He has strong family and community support. Mr. Kachadorian had a serious addiction problem at the time of the crime and anger issues. He has addressed those issues. He has a strong re-entry plan and has had no relapses while incarcerated. He presented well, and his institutional adjustment has been positive.

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. 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 a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Kachadorian's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Kachadorian's case, the Board is of the opinion that Richard Kachadorian is rehabilitated and, therefore, merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to an approved home with special conditions, but not before 18 months in lower security.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Approve Home Plan before release; waive work for SSI or retirement; electronic monitoring at the parole officer's discretion; supervise for drugs; testing in accordance with agency policy; supervise for liquor abstinence; testing in accordance with agency policy; report to assigned MA parole office on day of release; no contact with victim's family; must have mental health evaluation and adhere to plan; must have substance abuse evaluation and adhere to 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.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

7/31/2019
Date