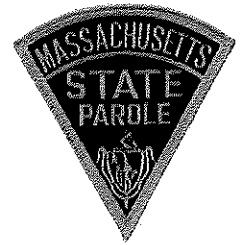


The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROBERT GRADY
W49504

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **February 27, 2025**

DATE OF DECISION: **July 10, 2025**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

VOTE: Parole is denied with a review in 3 years from the date of the hearing.¹

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On December 3, 1990, in Worcester Superior Court, Robert Grady pleaded guilty to murder in the second-degree for the death of Donna Cavanaugh. Mr. Grady also pleaded guilty to assault and battery on a public servant, use of a motor vehicle without authority, and escape. A sentence of life in prison with the possibility of parole was imposed on Mr. Grady for the murder of Ms. Cavanaugh. Mr. Grady was sentenced to serve concurrent terms of 2 years and 2 and one-half years in the House of Correction for his convictions of assault and battery on a public servant and use of a motor vehicle without authority, respectively. Mr. Grady was also sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 10 years and not less than 9 years for his escape conviction. All terms of imprisonment imposed on Mr. Grady were ordered to run concurrently with his life sentence. Parole was denied following an initial hearing in 2004 and after review hearings in 2010, 2016, and 2021.²

On February 27, 2025, Robert Grady appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was represented by law students Margaret Heffernan, Gabrielle Brown, and Francesca Darcy of Boston College Law School under the supervision of Attorney Frank Herrmann. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Robert Grady's February 27, 2025, hearing.

¹ Two Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in 4 years.

² Mr. Grady was eligible for parole in 2003, but he postponed his initial hearing in 2003. He then postponed review hearings in 2009, 2014, and 2015.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: Prior to the murder, Robert Grady and Donna Cavanaugh were involved in a relationship that had recently ended. However, the night before her death, they spent the night together at a friend's house and left together in the early morning hours of December 4, 1988. Later that day, Mr. Grady called his father and told him that Ms. Cavanaugh was dead. Mr. Grady's father contacted the authorities. After searching for Mr. Grady, investigators discovered his abandoned, blood-stained car. Officers then traveled to a summer home in New Hampshire that belonged to Mr. Grady's father. Inside, they found Mr. Grady in a bedroom with the body of Ms. Cavanaugh.

Upon being discovered by the authorities, Mr. Grady ignited a propane tank that caused an explosion. He was taken to the hospital by police, where he was treated for burns. Subsequent investigation revealed that Ms. Cavanaugh had been beaten and stabbed 17 times. An autopsy conducted on Ms. Cavanaugh's body indicated that some of the wounds were inflicted postmortem. Mr. Grady was 25-years-old at the time of the murder.

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 (if applicable).

DECISION OF THE BOARD: The Board continues to have concerns about Mr. Grady given his history of sexual violence and his manipulative behavior. He continues to provide testimony which is contrary to objective facts. He displays the same patterns of behavior and does not reflect rehabilitative progress since his last hearing. The Board considered the strong opposition to parole. The Board considered the submissions received after the hearing both in opposition and in support. Mr. Grady's son, and 4 friends, testified in support of parole. Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Danielle Borges testified in opposition to parole. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Grady 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.


Tonomey A. Coleman, Acting Chair

Date

