



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



PAROLE BOARD

*12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760*

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Thomas A. Turco III
Secretary

Telephone # (508) 650-4500

Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Paul M. Treseler
Chairman

Gloriann Moroney
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROBERT SORENSEN

W46536

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **February 22, 2018**

DATE OF DECISION: **March 19, 2019**

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

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. Parole is granted to an approved home plan after successful completion of 3 months in lower security with special conditions.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On May 23, 1989, in Norfolk County Superior Court, Robert Sorensen pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Patricia Wolffe Bonito. Mr. Sorensen was sentenced to serve life in prison with the possibility of parole.

At around 10:00 p.m., on June 17, 1988, Mr. Sorensen left the apartment he shared with his girlfriend, Ms. Wolffe Bonito, and headed to his job as a doughnut maker in Brockton. While at work, Mr. Sorensen purchased a gram of crack cocaine and smoked it. He left work to purchase more crack cocaine and returned to the doughnut shop to smoke it. At some point, Mr. Sorensen called Ms. Wolffe Bonito to tell her that he was not feeling well and that he was coming home.

¹ Three Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in three years.

At around 2:00 A.M., on June 18, Mr. Sorensen left the doughnut shop. When he arrived home, he and Ms. Wolfe Bonito got into an argument over his cocaine use. After the argument, Mr. Sorensen went downstairs to smoke more crack cocaine. Eventually, Mr. Sorensen got a kitchen knife and stabbed Ms. Wolfe Bonito. She died from a single stab wound to the abdomen. Mr. Sorensen then smoked more crack cocaine and contemplated suicide.

At approximately 3:45 a.m., Canton police received a call from Mr. Sorensen, stating that he had just killed Ms. Wolfe Bonito. When the officer asked who was calling, Mr. Sorensen stated, "Robert Sorensen, and I just murdered her. Please just get there before the kids get up and find her. I don't want them to find her like that." Ms. Wolfe Bonito's two young children, and another child who lived in the neighborhood, were asleep in the home at the time of the murder. The officer asked Mr. Sorensen about his location. Mr. Sorensen replied that he was in the parking lot of a gas station, near a pharmacy. When asked where the victim was, Mr. Sorensen said that she was in a house on Pequit Street, but was unsure of the exact address. When an officer arrived at the gas station, Mr. Sorensen attempted to give him better directions to Ms. Wolfe Bonito's home. Mr. Sorensen was then placed under arrest and brought to the police station.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON FEBRUARY 22, 2018

Mr. Sorensen, now 60-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on February 22, 2018. He was represented by Attorney John Rull. Mr. Sorensen was denied parole after his initial hearing in 2003, as well as after his review hearing in 2006. Mr. Sorensen received a positive parole vote in 2009, and was released from prison in 2010. In 2011, however, the Board revoked Mr. Sorensen's parole based on violations regarding irresponsible conduct and association with a person who had a criminal record. He received a positive parole vote after his review hearing in 2012. He was re-paroled in 2013, after serving one year in a lower security facility. Mr. Sorensen, however, was returned to custody in 2015 for multiple parole violations, including irresponsible conduct, failure to pay a supervision fee, and failure to abstain from liquor. Mr. Sorensen was denied parole after his review hearing in 2016.

In Mr. Sorensen's opening statement to the Board, he apologized to the family and friends of Patricia Wolfe Bonito for taking her life. Mr. Sorensen also apologized to the Board for violating the terms of his parole. The Board noted that Mr. Sorensen's parole was revoked in 2011, when he started dating a woman who had a felony conviction and then denied that he spent time with her to his parole officer. The Board also discussed how Mr. Sorensen's parole was revoked in 2015, when a police officer questioned Mr. Sorensen about reports of a fight and noted a slight smell of alcohol on Mr. Sorensen's breath. The Board questioned Mr. Sorensen as to what he thought went wrong during his 31 months of parole supervision and what he would do differently, if released. Mr. Sorensen told the Board that he realizes he needs to make better choices while on parole and understands that he should not have even considered dating someone with prior substance abuse problems.

The Board commended Mr. Sorensen for having a good relationship with his parole officers and noted that he had never been arrested under parole supervision. Further, the Board noted that Mr. Sorensen has completed over 65 programs. When asked which programs stood out as beneficial, Mr. Sorensen cited Correctional Recovery Academy and Right Turn as those programs that pertain to his sobriety. In addition to completing Emotional Awareness, Alternatives to Violence, and other violence reduction programs, Mr. Sorensen paid for and completed two

classes dealing with domestic violence. Mr. Sorensen explained that the domestic violence classes were helpful in identifying and changing patterns of dysfunctional behavior in relationships that lead to violence. Mr. Sorensen stated that he is very involved in the Department of Corrections Alcoholics Anonymous Prison Mentorship/Counseling program and would like to continue to participate in the substance abuse program, if released.

When asked about his parole plan, Mr. Sorensen told the Board that on his prior release, he had started a successful business of custom painting cars and motorcycles. He still has the equipment and would like to return to that. Mr. Sorensen has been offered housing by a close friend and co-worker in Templeton. He would continue to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and would like to join a church. Mr. Sorensen said that he has strong support from his ex-wife and his many friends in the community.

Mr. Sorensen's ex-wife and two of his friends testified in support of parole. Many friends attended and sent letters in support of parole. Ms. Wolffe Bonito's niece testified in opposition to parole. Both Canton Chief of Police Kenneth Berkowitz and Norfolk Assistant District Attorney Michael McGee testified in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Robert Sorensen has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Sorensen has been re-incarcerated for three years. His violations were technical in nature. Since his return, he has invested in his rehabilitation and has remained disciplinary report free. His offense occurred in 1988. He was on parole for 31 months and was never arrested. He has a strong parole plan and is low risk.

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. Sorensen'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. Sorensen's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Sorensen's case, the Board is of the opinion that Robert Sorensen merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to an approved home plan after successful completion of 3 months in lower security with special conditions.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Approve home plan before release; Waive work for 2 weeks; Must be home between 10pm and 6am; Electronic Monitoring; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for alcohol abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment/ transition; AA/NA at least three times/week.

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.



Shara Benedetti, Acting General Counsel

3/19/19

Date