



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 M. Treseler
Chairman

Michael J. Callahan
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROBERT WOOD

W37605

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 3, 2016

DATE OF DECISION: September 22, 2016

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, 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, 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 by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in four years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 14, 1980, in Norfolk Superior Court, Robert Wood was found guilty of the second degree murder of Billy Lightner and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In March of 1979, Mr. Wood and the victim's brother shared an apartment in Medfield. On March 7th, Mr. Wood and the victim's brother visited an acquaintance at her home. At one point during the visit, Mr. Wood showed the acquaintance his gun and said that if she "ever wanted anybody wasted, he could do it and get away with it." When asked why he thought he could get away with it, Mr. Wood replied that "he would put somebody in cement and drop them in a lake or an ocean and the body wouldn't be found." Around that time, Mr. Lightner and Mr. Wood were not getting along. During a conversation between Mr. Wood and Mr.

¹ One Board Member recommended review in three years.

Lightner's brother on March 16th, Mr. Wood told Mr. Lightner's brother that if Mr. Lightner bothered him anymore, he was going to "waste him."

Mr. Lightner was last seen alive on March 27, 1979. On May 4th, his body was found floating in Turner's Pond in Walpole. A cement block was attached to the body by a rope. There was evidence that the body had been in the pond for at least one month.

Mr. Lightner had been shot twice. Both the Commonwealth's and Mr. Wood's ballistics experts testified that a bullet recovered from the body had been fired from Mr. Wood's gun. The evidence indicated that the victim had been shot after dark on March 27th. That night, a police officer had stopped a motor vehicle operated by Mr. Wood. Mr. Wood had a jacket with him, apparently with blood on it, that he said belonged to Mr. Lightner. After the victim's body was discovered, a blood-spotted length of rope (which had the same circumference and other physical properties as the rope tied to the cement block) was found in the trunk of Mr. Wood's car. Mr. Wood, however, testified that he saw someone else shoot Mr. Lightner on March 27th.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 3, 2016

Mr. Wood, now 62-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on May 3, 2016. This is Mr. Wood's seventh appearance before the Board. He was denied parole in 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2007, and, most recently, in 2011 with a five year review.

In Mr. Wood's opening statement, he apologized to the family of Mr. Lightner and asked for their forgiveness. Mr. Wood also apologized for not being honest about his crime and for denying his guilt. He took full responsibility for his actions. In describing his version of the offense, Mr. Wood stated that he and Mr. Lightner (who were friends that first met in elementary school) bought a six-pack of beer and drove to an area to drink. Mr. Lightner asked for Mr. Wood's gun. Mr. Wood gave it to him. Mr. Lightner asked Mr. Wood if the gun was for sale. When Mr. Wood responded that it was not, Mr. Lightner stated that he would take the gun. The two then struggled for the gun and fell out of the car. After wresting away the gun, Mr. Wood fired six shots, two of which struck Mr. Lightner and killed him. When asked why he shot Mr. Lightner, Mr. Wood stated, "There was a struggle for the gun, and I won." Mr. Wood then drove around and procured some trash bags. He put Mr. Lightner's body in the bags and then in the trunk of his car. He drove to Turner's Pond, attached the body to cement blocks, and submerged the body in the pond.

During the hearing, the Board noted the multiple versions of the offense told by Mr. Wood throughout the years, including the one in which he cast himself as a hero for thwarting the sexual assault of a woman. Mr. Wood specifically acknowledged the falsity of this claim, but stated that he had been telling essentially the same true story since 1997. The Board raised its concern (at multiple points throughout the hearing) that Mr. Wood had not engaged in programming at MCI-Norfolk since 2011, despite the Board's suggestion at his 2011 hearing that he do so. When asked to explain himself, Mr. Woods claimed that the programming was not geared for him, but, instead, was for younger inmates with whom he had no need or desire to interact. He also stated that his last programming in 1996-1997 had not made a difference in being granted parole, and he did not believe that it would make a difference now. Mr. Wood professed not to know why he had been denied parole previously, particularly in 2011. Although he claimed to have read the Board's 2011 decision when he received it, he could not

recall a passage from that decision in which the Board indicated that his poor program participation was indicative of low motivation and a lack of progress toward rehabilitation.

Mr. Wood addressed his lack of employment with the Board and stated that his age caused him to quit his last job, in 2010, as an institution electrician. He gave no explanation for not pursuing alternative employment. When asked to describe his typical day, Mr. Wood stated that it was a "day of boredom" that consisted of walking for several hours a day, reading, and watching TV at night. Based on his apparent lack of interest in the Board's 2011 decision, the Board questioned Mr. Wood as to whether he was genuinely interested in obtaining parole and asked him to clarify his parole plan. Mr. Wood stated that he considered himself unemployable because he lacked the appropriate skill set to obtain employment. Further, Mr. Wood stated that he would be forced to go on SSDI for income. He intended to live with his brother.

The Board considered testimony from Norfolk County Assistant District Attorney Marguerite Grant and Town of Walpole Police Chief John Carmichael, both of whom spoke in opposition to Mr. Wood's parole. The Board also considered testimony from Mr. Wood's brother, who expressed support for his parole. In addition, Mr. Wood's brother offered to provide financial support and confirmed that Mr. Wood could live with him. His brother also stated that he believed he could find work for Mr. Wood, whom he characterized as "a very good auto mechanic."

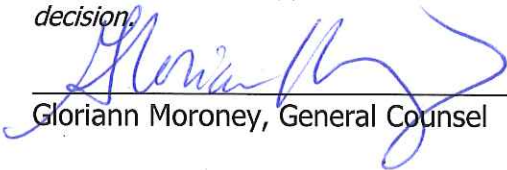
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Wood has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. The Board believes that a longer period of positive institutional adjustment and programming would be beneficial to Mr. Wood'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. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Wood'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 needs assessment, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Wood's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Wood's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Mr. Wood is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Wood's next appearance before the Board will take place in four years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board recommends that Mr. Wood engage in additional programming and meaningful treatment, and encourages Mr. Wood 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.



Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

Date

9/22/16