



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

Gloriann Moroney
Chair

Kevin Keefe
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROBERT WOOD

W37605

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 19, 2020

DATE OF DECISION: July 13, 2020

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Karen McCarthy, Colette Santa

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.¹ Parole is granted to an approved home plan, but not before completion of 12 months in lower security and with special conditions.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 14, 1980, in Norfolk Superior Court, Robert Wood was found guilty of second-degree murder in the death of 23-year-old Billy Lightner. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. In March 1979, Robert Wood (age 25) and Mr. Lightner's brother shared an apartment in Medfield. Around that time, Mr. Lightner and Mr. Wood were not getting along. On March 7, Mr. Wood and Mr. Lightner's brother visited an acquaintance at her home. Mr. Wood showed the acquaintance his gun, stating that if she "ever wanted anybody wasted, he could do it and get away with it." When asked why 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

¹ Two Board Members voted to deny parole with a two-year review and one Board Member voted to parole Mr. Wood to an approved home plan with wrap around services via Veterans Affairs.

found." On March 16, 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 4, 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. 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 27, which was also the night that 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 was found in the trunk of Mr. Wood's car. Mr. Wood, however, testified that he saw someone else shoot Mr. Lightner on March 27.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 19, 2020

Robert Wood, now 66-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on May 19, 2020. He was denied parole in 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2016. He was not represented by an attorney. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Wood apologized to Mr. Lightner's family for taking his life and for not accepting responsibility earlier in his incarceration. Mr. Wood acknowledged committing a terrible act that greatly impacted the victim's family. When Board Members questioned him as to the events that night surrounding the governing offense, Mr. Wood said that he and Mr. Lightner were in an isolated area and had split a six pack of beer. When Mr. Lightner asked if he could buy his gun, Mr. Wood said, "No." A fight ensued when Mr. Lightner told him that he was going to take it anyway. Mr. Wood indicated that when he got possession of the gun, he fired it six times; two shots hit Mr. Lightner. Mr. Wood dragged Mr. Lightner into the woods and put him in a trash bag. He then drove to the pond and disposed of the body. Upon questioning, Mr. Wood acknowledged that a minor disagreement had turned into a homicide. When the Board asked why he shot Mr. Lightner, Mr. Wood responded that he was scared, and feared for his life, so he let his anger "get the best of [him]." Mr. Wood denied being under the influence of drugs at the time of the murder.

Since his last hearing, Mr. Wood told the Board that he completed Jericho Circle in 2018, and completed the Correctional Recovery Academy in the past. He is currently enrolled in the Graduate Maintenance Program and has kept up with his refrigeration certification. He attends the Veteran's Group and has taken law classes. Mr. Wood told the Board that he does not have an alcohol or drug abuse problem. Mr. Wood attended the Big Book program in the past, and the Board noted that he has not had any disciplinary reports since 2013. If paroled, Mr. Wood has requested to live with his brother in Randolph and plans to obtain employment in the refrigeration field. He would like to go to the Veteran's Hospital due to suffering from two (previous) heart attacks. If paroled, Mr. Wood is amenable to attending Alcoholics Anonymous in the community. Having been incarcerated for 41 years, Mr. Wood admitted that there are many unknowns for him in the community, such as using a cell phone. He is confidant, however, that he can function outside of the institutional setting.

The Board considered testimony in support of parole from a member of the community and from Mr. Wood's brother. The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from Mr. Lightner's sister. Norfolk County Assistant District Attorney Marguerite Grant testified in opposition to parole.

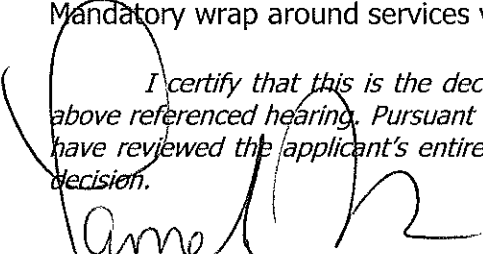
III. DECISION

Mr. Wood has served 41 years for the death of William Lightner. It is the opinion of the Board that he has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Wood is considered low, according to his LS/CMI risk/needs assessment. In rendering their decision, the Board considered his overall adjustment and that he has completed all program requirements of the Department of Correction. He has a strong reentry plan to include wrap around services via Veteran Services. Prior to changes to Department of Correction policy, Mr. Wood maintained a positive adjustment at lower security and went on numerous furloughs without incident. In rendering their decision, the Board did consider his medical issues in light of COVID and his risk to contract the virus. He has remained sober during this commitment.

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 and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Wood's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of his case, the Board is of the opinion that Robert Wood merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to an approved home plan, but not before completion of 12 months in lower security and with special conditions.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Approve home plan before release; Waive work for 2 weeks; Curfew - must be home between 10pm & 6am; ELMO-electronic monitoring; 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; Must have substance abuse evaluation - adhere to plan; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment/transition; Mandatory wrap around services via VA – recovery and DBT.

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



Date