



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety

PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROBERT WOOD

W37605

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **May 3, 2011**

DATE OF DECISION: **April 30, 2012**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied. The next hearing will be in five years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Robert Wood murdered his friend, William Lightner, by shooting him on March 27, 1979 in Walpole. Wood was 25 years old and Mr. Lightner was 23 years old. A Norfolk County jury convicted Wood of second-degree murder on April 14, 1980. Wood testified at the trial and claimed that he had seen another man shoot the victim. Wood now admits that he committed perjury by presenting a false story to the jury.

The Supreme Judicial Court affirmed the conviction, and summarized the facts of the case as follows. "On May 4, 1979, the body of Billy Lightner 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. Lightner had been shot twice. Both the Commonwealth's and the defendant's ballistics experts testified that a bullet recovered from the body had been fired from the defendant's gun. The evidence tended to show that the victim had been shot after dark on March 27, 1979. That night a police officer had stopped a motor vehicle operated by the

defendant. The defendant had with him a jacket, apparently with blood on it, that the defendant said belonged to 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 the defendant's car. The defendant testified that he saw someone else shoot Lightner on March 27."

Wood's prior criminal history includes three convictions for OUI. The murder sentence is his first incarceration.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 3, 2011

This is the sixth parole hearing for Robert Wood. He has a history of lying about the key facts of the case that has placed him in a very difficult position before the Parole Board. He has told four completely different versions of the facts. First, he told the jury that he was present at the scene but another man fired the shots. Second, at his first parole hearing in 1995, he told the scurrilous lie that he walked into a room to find the victim sexually assaulting a woman and fired the shots in order to protect the woman. Third, in a 1997 parole staff interview he claimed he did not fire the shots but was "set up" by a person who murdered the victim over a business transaction. Fourth, at the last four parole hearings Wood has presented self-defense as the reason for the murder. Wood's self-defense story, asserted at hearings in 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2007, is as follows: Wood was in his car drinking beer with the victim; there was conversation about Wood's handgun; the victim grabbed the gun and pointed it at Wood; believing he might be shot, Wood struggled with the victim over the gun and was able to gain control of the weapon; Wood then reacted out of fear in shooting six times at Mr. Lightner.

The inmate repeated the self-defense story at this hearing. He maintained that the victim initiated the violence by grabbing the gun and pointing it at him. After killing Mr. Lightner, Wood said he pulled the body into the woods and returned later that night in order to move the body to Turner's Pond. He tied cement blocks to the body and threw the body in the pond.

Parole Board members did not accept the inmate's version of events, which assigns considerable blame to the victim. The inmate's current story relies on the very unlikely claim that he wrestled a gun from another man without being shot himself. Most importantly, if the inmate's self-defense story were true, he certainly would have presented those facts in his trial testimony. It is inconceivable that Wood would keep a valid self-defense claim (a) hidden at trial in order to advance a false claim that another person was the murderer, and (b) hidden at his first parole hearing in order to advance a false and preposterous claim of defending a woman by preventing a sexual assault. Knowing of Wood's prior falsehoods and perjuries, the Parole Board cannot credit his current unlikely story.

The inmate has an above average disciplinary record during his 31 years of incarceration. He has eight disciplinary reports, and none since 1998. One of those reports resulted in a return to higher custody.

The inmate's participation in rehabilitative programs is remarkably poor. He completed the CRA in 1996, and has participated in some vocational skills programs years ago. His record shows very little other activity. Since his last hearing in 2007, he has participated in no rehabilitative programs or groups other than 12 Steps. He is not employed.

The inmate's brother spoke in support of parole. William Lightner's sister and niece spoke in opposition. Chief Richard Stillman of the Walpole Police Department and Norfolk Assistant District Attorney Marguerite Grant also appeared and spoke in opposition to parole.

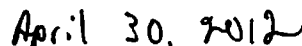
III. DECISION

For over three decades, Robert Wood has refused to describe why and how he murdered William Lightner. Over the years, he has put forth four different stories, none of which is truthful. It is the inmate's responsibility to describe his motive and actions in committing the murder, identify the causes of his criminal thinking and behavior, and work to convert his thinking and behavior from anti-social to pro-social. Because Wood has kept hidden his motive and actions in committing the murder, it is not possible for the Parole Board to conclude that he is rehabilitated. The Parole Board does not know, because the inmate refuses to reveal, anything about motive, criminal thinking, and causes of anti-social behavior. There is no evidence that the inmate has identified, worked on, and corrected the criminal thinking and causes of his violent behavior. Moreover, Robert Wood's program participation is very poor. As a result, he has not demonstrated motivation or progress toward rehabilitation. Seeing insufficient evidence of rehabilitation, the Parole Board concludes that Robert Wood would be likely to re-offend if paroled and his parole, therefore, is incompatible with the welfare of society.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date