



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

ROMANO FERRARO

W83636

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 9, 2019

DATE OF DECISION: January 29, 2020

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Gloriann Moroney, Colette Santa, Paul Treseler¹

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 five years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On May 20, 2004, in Middlesex Superior Court, Romano Ferraro was convicted by a jury of rape of a child, P.G.² He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. On that same date, he was convicted of three counts of indecent assault and battery on a child under the age of 14. On the first count, he received a 4-5 year sentence to run concurrent with his life sentence. For the second and third counts, he received 25 years of probation on each, to run concurrent with one another and consecutive to his other two sentences.

¹ Board Member Treseler was present at the hearing, but was no longer a Board Member at the time of vote.

² A pseudonym. G.L. c. 265, § 24C.

Mr. Ferraro was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1960 and served at multiple churches in New York. He visited P.G.'s family home in Massachusetts approximately once each year, as he was a childhood friend of P.G.'s father. During these visits, Mr. Ferraro slept in P.G.'s room, sharing a double bed with him. Mr. Ferraro, however, did not allow P.G. to sleep in the bed unless P.G. was nude. Mr. Ferraro performed various sexual acts on P.G., including oral sex and the touching of genitals. He instructed P.G. to do the same to him. The sexual abuse began when P.G. was 7-years-old and ended when he was 13-years-old. P.G. did not disclose the sexual abuse due to fear and to his (religious) family's belief that Mr. Ferraro was close to God.

In 2001, Mr. Ferraro's abuse of P.G. was reported to the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office. During a subsequent interview with police, Mr. Ferraro admitted to not only the repeated molestation of P.G., but also to the sexual assaults of numerous other young boys, all of which occurred during his service as a priest. Later, Mr. Ferraro denied ever assaulting P.G., but stood by his previous admissions regarding the multitude of other children he assaulted.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 9, 2019

Romano Ferraro, now 84-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on April 9, 2019, for an initial hearing. He was not represented by counsel. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Ferraro said that he was "dreadfully sorry" for molesting so many children and characterized his actions as "terrible, mortally sinful... and what caused the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah." He shared that he has not committed a similar act in 29 years and "hope[d]" to not commit one again during his remaining years. Mr. Ferraro explained to the Board that he was raised as one of 10 children by an alcoholic, abusive, and absent father. Shortly after he was ordained, he noticed his sexual attraction to young boys which, to this day, he does not understand.

As to the governing offense, Mr. Ferraro adamantly denied any inappropriate actions toward P.G., telling the Board that he did not find it odd to sleep in the same bed as a young boy. When Board Members asked for clarification, Mr. Ferraro claimed that space was limited, as P.G.'s family was "not rich," and that the family believed he would behave "as a gentleman." Still, Mr. Ferraro acknowledged that he is a pedophile and molested numerous children other than P.G. Although Mr. Ferraro could not provide the Board with a specific number of victims, he first responded to the question by stating, "A good number, I'm afraid." At the Board's urging, Mr. Ferraro placed the number of young boys he sexually assaulted between 10 and 20. The Board questioned Mr. Ferraro as to the impact his actions have had on the lives of his victims. He replied, "I'm sure it's been terrible and lasting" and expressed that he was "terribly sorry...." At times, Mr. Ferraro stated that the last victimization took place in 1980, while at other times, he claimed it was in 1989.

When Board Members questioned Mr. Ferraro as to his daily activities, he shared that he spends much of the day in prayer, but that he also participates in art and book clubs. When it was noted that he has incurred various disciplinary reports, Mr. Ferraro explained that the reports were the product of misunderstandings. Mr. Ferraro has not participated in victim empathy programming, but he stated that his religious group addresses similar material. The Board repeatedly raised significant concerns that Mr. Ferraro has not taken part in the Sex Offender Treatment Program throughout his 15 years in prison. Board Members explained that this specialized program is designed to not only treat its participants, but also to provide expert

opinion in the form of risk assessments and evaluations as to rehabilitative progress. Mr. Ferraro stated that he prefers to address his issues through Sexaholics Anonymous, of which he has been a member for 30 years. Mr. Ferraro stated that he does not know if a "cure" for pedophilia is possible, but claims that he has "reached the point" at which he will no longer act upon the associated urges. The Board confronted Mr. Ferraro with the fact that, as he is not incarcerated with his preferred victim pool, there is no way that they can assess his risk of reoffending. To that, Mr. Ferraro said, "I realize that problem."

The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from P.G.'s wife, mother, and sister. The Board also considered testimony in opposition to parole from a separate victim and his father. Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Radu Brestyan testified in opposition to parole. The Board considered letters in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

Mr. Ferraro is a defrocked priest who sexually abused numerous children as a priest. He has yet to demonstrate a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

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. Ferraro'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. Ferraro's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Ferraro's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Romano Ferraro is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Ferraro's next appearance before the Board will take place in five years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Ferraro 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.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel


Date