

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



PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

**RUSSELL HORTON
W64840**

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: July 17, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: January 20, 2026

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander,¹ Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

VOTE: Parole is granted to CRJ or LTRP after 30 days of issuance of Decision.²

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On June 23, 1998, following a jury trial in Plymouth County Superior Court, Russell Horton was convicted of two counts of murder in the first-degree for the death of Manuel Araujo and Kepler Desir. He was sentenced to concurrent terms of life in prison without the possibility of parole. On that same date, Mr. Horton was also convicted of assault with intent to murder and was sentenced to a concurrent term of 10 to 15 years.

On December 12, 2013, in Worcester Superior Court, Mr. Horton pleaded guilty to one count of assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon, receiving a sentence of 1 year to 1 year and a day to be served from and after the life sentence, as well as one count of assault and battery on a correctional officer, receiving a sentence of 1 year to 1 year and a day to be served from and after the life sentence, and concurrently with the assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon conviction. This was a crime committed on December 21, 1998, while Mr. Horton was incarcerated at SBCC on the governing offense.

¹ Board Member Alexander was not present at the hearing. The Chair deemed Board Member Alexander unavailable for the vote on this matter because, due to a malfunction in the Board's audio equipment, she was unable to review the full record of the public hearing. Former acting Chair Coleman was present for the hearing but had departed the Board prior to the vote on this matter.

² Two Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in two years from the date of the hearing.

Mr. Horton became parole eligible following the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024), where the court held that sentencing individuals who were ages 18 through 20 at the time of the offense (emerging adults) to life without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional. As a result of the SJC's decision regarding his first-degree murder conviction, Mr. Horton was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On July 17, 2025, Mr. Horton appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Chetan Tiwari.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On the evening of May 25, 1994, three individuals (18-year-old C.A.,³ his brother 19-year-old Manuel Araujo [Manuel], and 25-year-old Kepler Desir) drove together from Boston to Brockton, where they picked up 19-year-old Russell Horton and Frederick Christian.⁴ The men drove to a different area of Brockton. On the way, Mr. Horton said they were going to rob some drug dealers and displayed a firearm. None of the other men were armed. The men parked on a dead-end street, and Mr. Horton and Mr. Christian left the car. They returned five minutes later, reporting that they had been unable to complete the robbery. Mr. Horton then told the men to drive to a nearby school parking lot since they were in a "crime watch" area. At the parking lot, Mr. Horton shot C.A. in the head. C.A., who survived the shooting, played dead. Mr. Horton then shot Mr. Araujo and Mr. Desir, killing them both. C.A. heard Mr. Horton instruct Mr. Christian to go through the victims' pockets. Mr. Horton and Mr. Christian then left the scene, and C.A. made his way to a nearby house. C.A. told the police that "Russell" shot him.

Immediately after the shooting, Mr. Horton told a witness that he had "smoked" three men. The police investigation revealed that Mr. Horton needed money and was aware that one of the victims, Mr. Desir, was expected to have a large amount of cash on him on the night of the murder. Police also recovered Mr. Araujo's blood from one of Mr. Horton's shoes. Additionally, during a police interview, Mr. Horton admitted that he had been with the men on the night of the murders. However, he did not admit to shooting them.

APPLICABLE STANDARD: Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. In making this determination, the Board takes into consideration an inmate's institutional behavior, their participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of incarceration, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize the inmate's risk of recidivism. M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. The Board also considers all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of the offense, the criminal record, the institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing and/or in written submissions to the Board.

Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging

³ The name of a surviving victim has been withheld for privacy purposes.

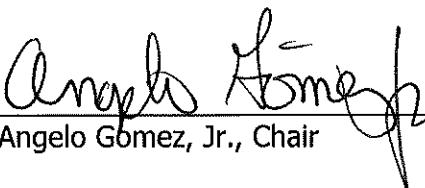
⁴ Mr. Christian was also convicted of two counts of first-degree murder.

adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). Individuals who were emerging adults at the time of the offense must be afforded a “meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation” and the Board evaluates “the circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, including the age of the offender, together with all relevant information pertaining to the offender’s character and actions during the intervening years since conviction.” Id. (citing Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk Dist., 466 Mass. 655, 674 (2013) (Diatchenko I); Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 471 (2012); Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48, 75 (2010)). Since brain development in emerging adulthood is ongoing, the Board also considers the following factors when evaluating parole candidates who committed the underlying offenses as an emerging adult: 1) a lack of impulse control in emotionally arousing situations; 2) an increased likelihood to engage in risk taking behaviors in pursuit of reward; 3) increased susceptibility to peer influence which makes emerging adults more likely to engage in risky behavior; and 4) an emerging adult’s greater capacity for change. See Mattis, 493 Mass. at 225-229.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: This was Mr. Horton’s first appearance before the Board. Mr. Horton was 19 years old at the time of the offense; he is now 50 years old and has served 31 years. Mr. Horton began his investment in self-development prior to the Mattis decision. Mr. Horton has been sober for 32 years and has had no violence in 27 years. Mr. Horton has invested in meaningful rehabilitation and has demonstrated insight and remorse for his actions. Mr. Horton has a strong support system to assist him with re-entry. The Board considered the forensic evaluation of Dr. Brown, who deems him as low risk for violence and low risk for recidivism. The Board considered those who spoke in support of, and in opposition to, his parole in rendering its decision. The Board concludes that Russell Horton has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Waive work for 2 weeks or program; Must be home between 10 PM and 6 AM or curfew at PO discretion; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; 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; No contact with victim(s) family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment; Long Term Residential Program or CRJ.

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.



Angelo Gomez, Jr., Chair

January 20, 2026
Date