

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



PAROLE BOARD

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Executive Director

RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

STEPHEN EMMONS

W60522

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing
DATE OF HEARING: November 3, 2020
DATE OF DECISION: September 21, 2021

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS¹: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, 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 by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review in three years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 29, 1996, in Suffolk Superior Court, Stephen Emmons pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death of his 33-year-old girlfriend, Nancy Wilson. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On April 21, 1995, at approximately 1:00 p.m., Stephen Emmons’ brother called police to report a dead body at the residence he shared with his brother Stephen in Dorchester. He further informed police that he believed the victim to be Nancy Wilson, Mr. Emmons’ girlfriend. When they arrived, police observed Ms. Wilson’s lifeless body inside a 1960 Mercury Comet in the garage. She was lying in a supine position across the front seat with her head adjacent to the steering wheel. Police observed head trauma to her forehead and the presence of blood in,

¹ Chair Gloriann Moroney was present for the hearing, but was recused from the vote. Board Member Karen McCarthy was present for the hearing, but was no longer a Member of the Board at the time of vote. Board Member Colette Santa was not present at the hearing but was a voting Member.

and around, the motor vehicle. A blanket covered her body from the neck down. According to the medical examiner, the cause of death was severe head trauma or bruising of the brain. Ms. Wilson also sustained approximately 25 broken ribs. A preliminary discovery revealed possible human bite marks on her upper arms.

Further investigation revealed that Mr. Emmons, age 37, had been banished from the family home by both his mother and brother and was known to have been staying in the garage with Ms. Wilson. It was also determined during the investigation that the couple's relationship was abusive. Mr. Emmons' brother informed police that Mr. Emmons told both his six-year-old daughter, and Ms. Wilson's sister, that he killed Ms. Wilson. Ms. Wilson's body was not discovered until almost a full week after the murder.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON NOVEMBER 3, 2020

Stephen Emmons, now 62-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on November 3, 2020, for a review hearing. He was represented by student attorneys from Northeastern University School of Law. Mr. Emmons was denied parole after his 2010 initial hearing and after his 2015 review hearing. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Emmons apologized to Ms. Wilson's family for the pain he caused them. He recognizes his role as a batterer, taking full responsibility for his actions. Mr. Emmons explained that he was exposed to abuse as a child and began committing crimes, including an assaultive robbery, as a teenager. He acknowledged being verbally, emotionally, and physically abusive to other women with whom he had been in a relationship prior to Ms. Wilson. Mr. Emmons struggled with substance abuse throughout adulthood despite periods of sobriety.

At the time he was dating Ms. Wilson, Mr. Emmons was homeless and dealing drugs. Shortly before the murder, he was arrested for assaulting Ms. Wilson and spent nearly a month in jail. Mr. Emmons reported that he was angry with her because she had told him that she would bail him out (but did not). On the day of the murder, Mr. Emmons accused Ms. Wilson of being responsible for his missing leather jacket, leading to an argument. He admitted to striking her until she fell to the ground, at which time he yelled at her to get up. When she did not, Mr. Emmons stomped on Ms. Wilson's chest, multiple times, because he was "filled with rage." He also acknowledged the numerous injuries he inflicted upon her, resulting in multiple broken ribs, head trauma, and bite marks. Although he made some rehabilitative progress by the time of his previous hearings, Mr. Emmons admitted that he was still in denial about what he had done and, likely, not ready for parole release. Since that time, however, the Board noted that Mr. Emmons has participated in such programs as Alternatives to Violence, AA/NA, Criminal Thinking, and the Correctional Recovery Academy. He was most recently employed through the culinary arts program.

The Board spoke of their concern regarding Mr. Emmons' violent assault on another inmate, shortly after his 2015 review hearing, that resulted in an 18-month DDU placement. Mr. Emmons characterized the attack, wherein he stabbed the victim in the neck with a chicken bone, as "selfish" because he chose not to utilize the therapeutic coping mechanisms that he had developed. Mr. Emmons admitted that when he chose to stab the victim, he did not care about endangering his life or the impact that the attack would have on the victim's family. He stated that the lengthy DDU placement was "justified." Mr. Emmons has accrued additional disciplinary infractions for less serious offenses, such as the refusal of housing assignments. Although the Board noted that, while such infractions were non-violent, Mr. Emmons limits his program accessibility and rehabilitative progress by repeatedly incurring disciplinary reports. The Board suggested that he would benefit, specifically, from domestic violence programs to

fully address his causative factors. Mr. Emmons agreed, acknowledging that he still struggles with his identity as a batterer, his lack of respect for women, and his abusive tendencies.

The Board considered testimony and letters in support of parole from Mr. Emmons' family members. The Board considered a letter in opposition to parole from Boston Police Commissioner William Gross.

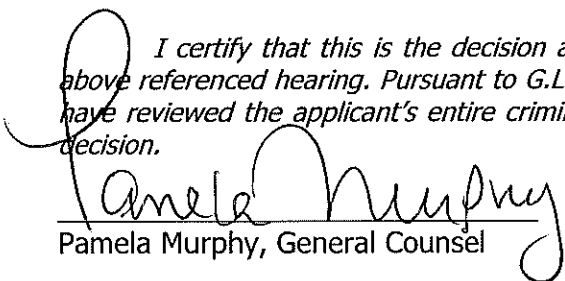
III. DECISION

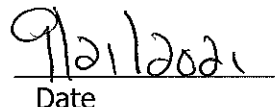
The Board is of the opinion that Stephen Emmons has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Emmons has served 25 years for the murder of 33-year-old Nancy Wilson. Mr. Emmons recognized that he needs to fully invest in his rehabilitation. Since his last hearing, he has completed the Correctional Recovery Academy and Culinary Arts. He has also been active in GMP ("Graduate Maintenance Program") and AA/NA ("Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous"). Mr. Emmons is encouraged to remain compliant with his personalized program plan and refrain from incurring any additional disciplinary infractions. Subject should pursue treatment [and] programming in the areas of victim impact [and] empathy.

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

Mr. Emmons' next appearance before the Board will take place in three years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Emmons to continue working toward 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