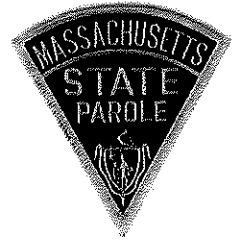




The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**STEVEN ARCHER**

**W50732**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** October 11, 2018

**DATE OF DECISION:** September 5, 2019

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Colette Santa, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Paul Treseler

**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 not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in two years from the date of the hearing.<sup>1</sup>

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On June 11, 1991, on the fourth day of trial in Middlesex Superior Court (after the Commonwealth had rested its case in chief), Steven Archer pled guilty to the second degree murder of his infant son, Alexander Archer. Mr. Archer was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

At some point between the evening of August 17 and the early morning hours of August 18, 1990, Steven Archer murdered his two-and-a-half-month-old son, Alexander. On the night of the murder, Mr. Archer used cocaine at home. Shortly thereafter, Alexander started crying, but Mr. Archer could not quiet him. Instead, Mr. Archer struck Alexander in the head with his fist multiple times. Alexander's mother was passed out on the couch, after taking Tylenol with

<sup>1</sup> One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in three years from the date of the hearing. One Board Member voted to parole Mr. Archer to a long term residential program upon successful completion of six months in lower security.

codeine and drinking vodka. At 3:40 a.m., Mr. Archer calmly carried Alexander into a Lowell hospital, where he told the admitting nurse that the baby had fallen out of the crib. Despite numerous efforts, medical staff was unable to resuscitate Alexander. At the time he was taken to the hospital, Alexander had bruises on the left front of his head and behind his left ear. He also had two scrapes on his nose, an abrasion on his right eye, three small bruises on his right front temple, and clear fluid coming from his left ear. There were also bruises fitting the pattern of adult fingertips on the back of his head, along with a longitudinal skull fracture. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head.

In the weeks prior to the murder, Department of Social Service workers and visiting nurses had noticed injuries to Alexander, including a possible cigarette burn on the bottom of the baby's foot, a bruise on his ear, and an abrasion on his nose.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON OCTOBER 11, 2018**

Mr. Archer's initial appearance before the Parole Board took place on April 4, 2006, and resulted in the denial of parole with a review in three years. On April 28, 2009, Mr. Archer appeared before the Board for a review hearing and was granted parole. Mr. Archer was released on July 1, 2009, to a residential treatment program. However, he was returned to custody on October 7, 2010, when he received parole violations for irresponsible conduct and association with a person with a criminal record. The Board affirmed his parole revocation in December 2010. He was denied parole at subsequent review hearings in 2011 and 2016.

Steven Archer, now 58-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for his review hearing on October 11, 2018, and was represented by Attorney Eric Tennen. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Archer expressed his remorse for the senseless death of Alexander and for betraying the trust and kindness of Alexander's family. He acknowledged the grief and heartache that he has caused. In discussing the events surrounding the murder, Mr. Archer took full responsibility for the injuries he inflicted upon his son that resulted in his death. Mr. Archer explained that regular use of cocaine and alcohol diminished his ability to cope with stress, but he used alcohol and drugs to mask his emotional pain. Mr. Archer also apologized for his deceptive behavior when he previously lied to the Parole Board about his addiction to alcohol.

Mr. Archer was in the community for 15 months prior to his return to custody. Initially, he appeared to be adjusting well on parole supervision. Mr. Archer recognized, however, that his inability to be honest with the Board (and others) was a major factor in his re-incarceration, admitting that he had been a dishonest person most of his adult life. At his recent parole hearing, Mr. Archer acknowledged that he minimized his drinking and transgressions while on parole supervision. Additionally, he concealed (for months) his romantic relationship from his parole officer because his girlfriend was drinking regularly and had a felony conviction. Mr. Archer informed the Board that he now understands that being around people who are actively using drugs and/or alcohol is a trigger for relapse. Board Members indicated concern about Mr. Archer's history of domestic violence, not only in prior relationships, but during his most recent relationship. Although Mr. Archer denies being physically abusive, he does not dispute that he engaged in verbally and emotionally abusive behavior.

The Board discussed Mr. Archer's institutional adjustment since his last hearing. Since then, Mr. Archer completed Criminal Thinking and two correspondence courses via the American Correction Community Institute. He regularly attends Narcotics/Alcoholics Anonymous, and co-chairs the weekly 12-step meetings. He believes that his continued involvement in treatment and programming has provided him with insight on his road to recovery.

Mr. Archer had two supporters in attendance at his hearing. Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Nils Lundblad spoke in opposition to parole and submitted a letter of opposition, as well.

### **III. DECISION**

Although progress has been made, it is the opinion of the Board that Steven Archer lacks candor. He has yet to demonstrate a level of rehabilitative progress that would be 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. Archer'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. Archer's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Archer's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Steven Archer is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

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

9/5/2019  
Date