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Executive Office of Public Safety

PAROLE BOARD

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Josh Wall
Chairman

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

STEVEN WILLIAMS

W36780

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: August 13, 2013

DATE OF DECISION: July 28, 2014

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Ina Howard-Hogan, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying 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 writing, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is denied with a review in three years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On October 5, 1978, in Hampden Superior Court, Steven Williams pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole at fifteen years. The victim, Mabel Anderson, was 92 years old. On the same date, Williams received two three to five year concurrent sentences for two counts of armed robbery, the first of which was due to his theft of money from Mabel Anderson at the time of the murder. The second count of armed robbery was due to Williams' involvement in the robbery that took place at the Oak Street Variety Store four months before the murder.

On April 3, 1978, Williams, then age 18, robbed and murdered Ms. Anderson in her first floor apartment in Springfield. Williams went to the apartment building for the express purpose of robbing some of the elderly who lived in the apartment. Williams chose his victim based on his knowledge that she lived alone. Posing as a telephone repairman, Williams entered Ms. Anderson's apartment planning to hit Ms. Anderson and rob her. Yet, at that time, Williams

decided not to follow through with his plan. Williams left the apartment building but returned in two hours.

During this two hour period, Williams ingested "a few drinks," Valium, and "two hits of speed." Williams returned to the apartment building, knocked on Ms. Anderson's door and forced his way into the apartment. Williams knocked Ms. Anderson to the floor, dragged her into her bedroom, and stabbed her multiple times when she screamed. Ms. Anderson's body was found by a neighbor who lived on the second floor. Williams stole approximately \$23.00 from Ms. Anderson, and after killing and robbing her, he walked to a nearby bus stop and went home.

II. CRIMINAL & INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

William's criminal history began in 1977 when, at age 17, he was convicted of two counts of breaking and entering and received a one year suspended sentence. He also received an assault with the intent to rob and possession to distribute Class C in December 1977. He also received a one year suspended sentence on a drug offense in 1977. Williams committed the murder while on this suspended sentence.

Williams has served 35 years of a life sentence. He has accrued nine disciplinary reports, the last of which was issued in 2007. As a result of his disciplinary infractions, he was returned to higher security on two separate occasions. After an evaluation, he was deemed not to meet the criteria of a Sexually Dangerous Person.

Williams committed several contraband related infractions, including being in possession of razors, toothbrushes, and an altered hot pot. His most egregious disciplinary offenses, however, are those that exhibit serious behavioral issues toward women. In 1985, while serving as an "aid in training" at Medfield State Hospital, Williams placed his hands on the breasts of a female patient and stated to her, "If you know what's good for you, you'll keep this between us." As a result, Williams was returned to higher custody and served 15 days in isolation. In April 1993, while on work release status, Williams attempted to solicit personal information from a patient at Clinton Hospital, and in May 1993, Williams made phone calls to the same woman, which were harassing in nature. She subsequently filed a formal complaint with the police. Williams was once again returned to higher custody and sanctioned to ten days of isolation. In 2000, Williams was issued a disciplinary report for writing a note to a female employee that was threatening in nature.

Williams has successfully completed Anger Management in February 2003 and the Correctional Recovery Academy in December 1996. He received his GED in 2000. In addition, he also received a certificate of completion for Alternatives to Violence in January and March of 1998. Since his last parole hearing in 2007, Williams has completed Taking a Chance on Change and Computer Skills. He attends Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous once a week. He is employed by the institution as a janitor and has previously worked in the optical shop, greenhouse, canteen, and in the music bunker.

III. PAROLE HEARING ON AUGUST 13, 2013

On August 13, 2013, Williams appeared before the Massachusetts Parole Board for a Review Hearing, after having been denied parole in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2002, and 2007.¹ He is currently serving his life sentence at NCCI-Gardner. He was represented by Attorney Lahny Silva.

Williams appeared before the Parole Board in May 1993 for his initial hearing. The Board voted to deny parole and set his review in three years, noting the brutal nature of the crime, his lack of responsibility, and two returns to higher custody. His subsequent petitions for parole were denied as the Board cited Williams' unwillingness to address the causative factors of his inappropriate behavior towards women. The Board suggested that mental health counseling may assist Williams in identifying the underlying issues that cause him to act out against women.

When asked about the three disciplinary reports involving inappropriate conduct with women, Williams said, "I don't have a problem with women." He recounted each incident from his perspective. He denied that he touched the breasts of a female patient at the hospital: "I was innocent but there was no one around who could say that." Concerning the 1993 disciplinary report, Williams said, "With the phone calls I made and the threatening letter, my motivation was for me, to manipulate things for myself. I didn't think about how it would affect the woman." Williams reported that he started some mental health counseling in 2008 because it was advised by the Parole Board. He said, "We talk for five to fifteen minutes; the counseling is inadequate; he told me he can't help me; I want to go further in counseling and address my attitude, boundaries, and behavior. I want to improve on these things. I know to ask for help if it gets overwhelming. I hope to be in counseling in the community." The counseling reports submitted by the counselor were odd: they documented only discussions about parole and gave the impression that real issues were not part of the sessions.

Williams did admit that "my relationships with women were not good back then; I was manipulative, deceitful, and underhanded; I just wanted to get what I wanted. I targeted Mabel Anderson because it was easy because she was old, not because of her gender." He provided this information on the crime. "I was getting low on drugs. I did alcohol, marijuana, and valium. In my mind, I needed someone to rob. I knew the elderly woman lived across the hall from brother's apartment. I was high. I pretended I was from the phone company; she let me in; I looked around and left. I went to my apartment and drank more, smoked more, and took more valium. I needed money for more drugs so I went back to her apartment. I said again I was from the phone company. She let me in and I pushed her and walked through the apartment. She was screaming, 'Get out.' I grabbed a knife from the kitchen and walked down the hall to her and stabbed her. I got money from the bedroom bureau. I stabbed her to keep her quiet. She was a very religious woman. I went back to my apartment and smoked and drank. I was arrested ten days later."

¹ Williams was given a five year set back following his parole denial in 2007 with an anticipated review hearing date in June 2012. However, in March 2012, Williams requested that the Board postpone this hearing, which had yet to be scheduled. In January 2013, Williams requested scheduling of a hearing and he was placed in the next available list, resulting in his August 13, 2013 hearing.

Williams reported that he attends AA/NA weekly and is involved in the music program. He said, "I started the music program in about 1980; I am involved in all aspects of music." He described his substance abuse problem. "I was an alcoholic and drug addict. I need a more in-depth parole plan because I am an alcoholic and drug addict. My addiction is right there. Marijuana and alcohol are the gateway drugs for me; I can't do any of it." Williams also said he has worked in programs and counseling to address issues of "anger, lying, stealing, and looking down on authority. In Take a Chance on Change, I worked on self-awareness and relapse prevention; the program deals with the reasons I am here in prison; the program included group therapy sessions with a counselor."

A Board Member asked Williams about a post-conviction motion filed in July of 1997. He sought to withdraw his guilty plea because, according to his affidavit, he was highly intoxicated during the plea. Williams admitted that "I lied to the court about hard drugs; I was smoking marijuana at the House of Correction, but I was not using hard drugs."

Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Marsha Julian spoke in opposition to parole citing the horrific nature of this murder and his history of exploiting vulnerable people. Springfield Police Commissioner William Fitchet spoke with strong opposition to parole. Williams had several supporters in attendance who spoke on behalf of his petition for parole.

IV. DECISION

Steven Williams murdered a 92-year-old woman by stabbing her in connection with a robbery in her residence. His incarceration has been marked by three incidents with women that complicate his rehabilitative path. The last incident was in 2000, and his conduct and program participation are much improved in recent years. Williams displayed at the hearing that he has benefited from program participation as he thoughtfully discussed his addiction issues and the reasons for his violent conduct in the past.

The standard we apply in assessing candidates for parole is set out in 120 C.M.R. 300.04, which provides that, "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." Applying that appropriately high standard here, the Board finds that Mr. Williams is not a suitable candidate for parole because he needs a more sustained period of rehabilitation. The period of review will be in three years, which will give him time to further pursue and demonstrate 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.


Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff

7/28/14
Date