

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

THOMAS ESTEP
W49076

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: January 26, 2021

DATE OF DECISION: June 23, 2021

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On September 10, 1990, following a jury trial in Bristol Superior Court, Thomas Estep was convicted of second degree murder in the death of Leisha A. Sanford and sentenced to serve life in prison with a possibility of parole. Mr. Estep unsuccessfully appealed his verdict.¹

Mr. Estep appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on January 26, 2021 and was represented by Northeastern University School of Law students Lauren Watford and Stephanie Gonzalez. This was Mr. Estep's sixth appearance before the Board having been denied in 2004, 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2017. The entire video recording of Mr. Estep's January 26, 2021 hearing is fully incorporated by reference to the Board's decision.

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 an unanimous decision that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole. Reserve to the Gavin Foundation or comparable to Long Term Residential Program (LTRP) after six months in lower security. Since his last hearing he has continued to participate in Big Book, AA/NA, the Lifer's Group and continues to work in the Administration Building. Mr. Estep has served 31 years for the murder of Leisha Sanford. Mr. Estep has a strong support network that will aid him as he reintegrates. A period of transition in a lesser security environment will increase his likelihood of success upon reentry into the community.

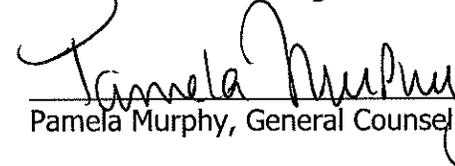
¹ Commonwealth v. Estep, 38 Mass. App. Ct. 502 (1995) rev. denied, 420 Mass. 1105 (1995)

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."

In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Estep'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. Estep's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Estep's case, the Board is of the opinion that Mr. Estep is rehabilitated and merits parole at this time.

Special Conditions: Reserve to the Gavin Foundation or comparable LTRP after six months in lower security; Waive work for LTRP; Curfew must be at home between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.; ELMO-electronic monitoring; 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 [named individual]; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment/transition; AA/NA at least 3 times/week; Mandatory – must complete Common Purpose; Mandatory – may have contact with [named individual] and [named individual].

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

6/23/2021
Date