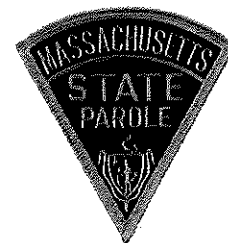


The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760



Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Terrence M. Reidy
Secretary

Telephone: (508)-650-4500

Facsimile: (508)-650-4599

Tina M. Hurley
Chair

Lian Hogan
Executive Director

RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

VICTOR BRUCE
W69218

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **August 27, 2024**

DATE OF DECISION: **December 4, 2024**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, Tina M. Hurley, James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz¹

VOTE: Parole is granted to a Long-Term Residential Program (LTRP) after six month stepdown to lower security.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On March 12, 2001, in Middlesex Superior Court, Victor Bruce was found guilty of second-degree murder in the death of Earlyn Class. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. On that same date, Mr. Bruce was convicted of unlawful possession of a firearm. He received a sentence of 3-5 years to be served from and after his life sentence. In 2003, after an appeal, this sentence was amended to be served concurrently with his life sentence.

Parole was denied following an initial hearing in 2019, and after a review hearing in 2022. On August 27, 2024, 43-year-old Victor Bruce appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was represented by Attorneys Seth Orkand, Taz Islam, and Julia Charpentier. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Victor Bruce's August 27, 2024, hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: In June, 1999, 35-year-old Earlyn Class met 18-year-old Victor Bruce through her next door neighbor. They began an intimate relationship that lasted the next few weeks. The spring prior, Ms. Class had ended a relationship with another man. At the time

¹ Board Member Edith Alexander was recused.

of her relationship with Mr. Bruce, Ms. Class remained friendly with her former partner, who still frequently visited her house. At the end of the summer of 1999, Ms. Class sought to end her relationship with Mr. Bruce. Mr. Bruce wanted the relationship to continue and began to harass Ms. Class with unwanted telephone calls and appearances outside her house, including a visit on September 9, 1999, the day before the shooting, where he remained outside her house until late that evening and then made a series of phone calls to Ms. Class until the early morning hours.

Early the next evening, Mr. Bruce began calling Ms. Class again. Ms. Class's former partner was present at her home. Mr. Bruce arrived outside and appeared agitated as he walked up the front steps to Ms. Class's house, rang the bell, pounded on the door, and waited outside. When no one answered, he went to a neighbor's house and pounded on her door. He later picked up a planter from the front steps, and hurled it against Ms. Class's door, smashing it. Ms. Class's former partner went to the window of the second-floor bathroom and asked what he wanted. Mr. Bruce responded that he needed to speak with Ms. Class and demanded that she go downstairs. Ms. Class did so and reached up to unbolt the door. According to trial testimony, she pulled back the curtain that covered the door window. Mr. Bruce, who was over six feet tall, fired four shots from his .38 caliber revolver. They angled downwards through the bottom glass pane of the door. Ms. Class's daughter ran to her mother, who was lying on the kitchen floor, and asked her if she was alright. Ms. Class replied that she was okay and told her daughter to go back upstairs. Her daughter ran upstairs and looked out the window to see Mr. Bruce running away from the back door. She provided a description of Mr. Bruce to the police, who apprehended him a short time later. Mr. Bruce admitted to the shooting. Ms. Class died of multiple gunshot wounds.

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 (if applicable).

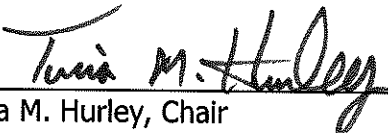
DECISION OF THE BOARD: Victor Bruce was 18 years old at the time he committed the underlying offense and has been in custody for the past 25 years. While incarcerated, Mr. Bruce has completed numerous programs, including a significant investment in occupational education. The Board received and considered the forensic evaluation of Dr. DiCataldo and supplemental report from 2022, which assisted the Board in contextualizing Mr. Bruce's presentation before the Board. At the hearing, the Board considered Mr. Bruce's age at the time of the offense and adverse childhood experience, for which Mr. Bruce has been engaged in mental health counseling and programs. Mr. Bruce has been sober and medication-compliant while incarcerated. Mr. Bruce has a strong support system and a well thought out parole plan to address his ongoing needs. Mr. Bruce was forthcoming about the circumstances of the governing offense, and his presentation at the hearing reflected significant insight into the factors underlying the crime.

The victim's daughter, brother, and family friend, spoke in opposition to parole. Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Alicia Walsh also spoke in opposition. Mr. Bruce's family members and several members of the public spoke in support.

The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Victor Bruce has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Waive work for program; Curfew – Must be home between 10PM & 6AM for the first six months; Electronic Monitoring – for the first six months; Must take prescribed medication; 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 the victim(s)' family; Must have mental health evaluation and must follow recommendations; Must have substance abuse evaluation and must follow recommendations; Long Term Residential Program; Mandatory – Must sign medical/treatment releases for all treatment providers.

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.


Tina M. Hurley, Chair

12/4/24
Date