

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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AMENDED RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

VIDAL WILLIAMS

W85735

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: December 15, 2020

DATE OF DECISION: October 18, 2021

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Karen McCarthy, 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 June 16, 2006, in Hampden Superior Court, Vidal Williams pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Jamaal Jackson. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On May 13, 2004, at 3:00 a.m., 22-year-old Vidal Williams shot and killed 19-year-old Jamaal Jackson. When Springfield detectives investigated the shooting on Federal Street, they found the victim had been shot seven times in the face and body. Witnesses saw Mr. Williams get out of a car and shoot Mr. Jackson 5 to 6 times. Mr. Williams then got back into the car and sped away. Police subsequently learned that the two men fought earlier about a stolen car that Mr. Jackson allegedly loaned to Mr. Williams.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON DECEMBER 15, 2020

On December 15, 2020, Vidal Williams, now 40-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for his initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Kim Jones. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Williams took responsibility for his actions and apologized to the victim's family and community. In discussing his childhood with the Board, Mr. Williams described how he (at age 10) and his siblings were put in foster care because his mother struggled with drug addiction. Mr. Williams explained that, despite her struggles, his mother insisted he finish high school, which he did. In high school, he worked various jobs and sold cocaine. Mr. Williams said that he was "on the street" since he was 14 years old, but he denied any substance abuse issues or gang involvement.

When the Board questioned him as to the governing offense, Mr. Williams said that he had known Mr. Jackson for a few years, describing the relationship as "cordial." A few days prior to the murder, he borrowed a car from Mr. Jackson, which turned out to have been stolen. After he was arrested for driving the car and taken into custody, Mr. Williams was bailed out by a friend. He confronted Mr. Jackson about loaning him a stolen car, and an altercation ensued. Later in the day, when Mr. Williams encountered him at a gas station, Mr. Jackson pointed a gun at his one-year-old daughter and then struck him in the face with the gun. After Mr. Jackson left, Mr. Williams borrowed a neighbor's gun and proceeded to drive around the neighborhood with an associate, looking for him. Although Mr. Williams claimed that "it wasn't a conscious thought to shoot Mr. Jackson that many times, or at all," when he got out of the car to confront him, "something snapped." He believed that Mr. Jackson threatened his "legacy" and decided that he would not let him do that to anyone else. Mr. Williams shot and killed Mr. Jackson and, the next day, he and his accomplice fled to Minnesota. Mr. Williams reported that, after spending a few weeks there, he was inexplicably hit in the head with a shovel and suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result. He was transported back to a hospital in Springfield and arrested for murder.

The Board discussed Mr. Williams' institutional adjustment, noting his completion of several programs, as well as his employment as a mental health companion and cook. Board Members questioned Mr. Williams, however, as to the multiple disciplinary reports he has incurred, including a 2017 PREA investigation for climbing into his cellmate's bunk. Mr. Williams claimed that his cellmate threatened to beat him up, so he climbed into his bunk, sat on his legs, and said, "Ok, beat me up now." Mr. Williams reported that his actions were "out of character for where I am" now. Mr. Williams also admitted to receiving a 2018 disciplinary report for refusing to lock in when a corrections officer and an inmate were fighting.

The Board considered the testimony and letters of several supporters. Several of the victim's family members testified in opposition to parole. Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Howard Safford testified in opposition to parole and submitted a letter of opposition, as well.

III. DECISION

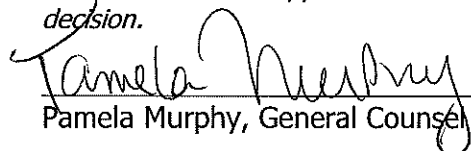
The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Williams has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. On May 13, 2004, 22-year-old Vidal Williams shot and killed Jamaal Jackson in Springfield, Massachusetts. Although Mr. Williams has completed numerous programs to include Jericho Circle, Restorative Justice, and several phases of AVP (Alternatives to Violence Program), his

overall institutional adjustment is a concern to the Board. Additionally, it is unclear if the facts/motive presented during the hearing were the true version. Mr. Williams is encouraged to continue to avail himself of his rehabilitation through involvement in programming. In addition, he should refrain from incurring any disciplinary infractions (last infraction occurred in 2018). The Board did consider the medical evaluation provided by Dr. Nestor. The evaluation provided the Board with a brief history of his TBI (traumatic brain injury), his current mental status, the neuropsychology screening, and summary.

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

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

10/20/2021
Date