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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**  
**WAYNE WALKER**  
**W-69226**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing  
**DATE OF HEARING:** December 9, 2014  
**DATE OF DECISION:** January 21, 2015

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Sheila Dupre, Ina Howard-Hogan, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe.

**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 written submissions to the Board, we conclude by a 3-1 vote that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is granted to a long term residential program upon successful completion of one year in lower security.

**I.STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On March 13, 2001, after a jury trial in Hampden Superior Court, Wayne Walker was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole in fifteen years. On the same date, he was also convicted of possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, and discharging a firearm. He received a three to five year sentence, a one year sentence, and a six month sentence, respectively. All sentences were to run concurrently with his life sentence.

On December 5, 1999, outside a bar in Springfield, Wayne Walker, age 26, shot and killed 31 year-old Thomas Meeks.<sup>1</sup> At 1:37 am on December 5, 1999, Springfield police responded to a shooting at the Fifth Alarm Bar. Upon arrival, officers found Thomas Meeks in the parking lot with an apparent gunshot wound to his chest. Mr. Meeks died from the injuries

<sup>1</sup> Rafford Keith Guidry was Walker's co-defendant in this case. Guidry pleaded guilty to manslaughter and related firearms charges and received an eight to ten year sentence which expired on May 8, 2009.

sustained in the shooting and the autopsy revealed a .38 caliber bullet was the projectile that killed him.

The statements made at the police station provided that Rafford Keith Guidry (the co-fendant) and Wayne Walker were at the Fifth Alarm Bar when they got into an argument with other patrons who, during the fight, knocked out one of Walker's gold teeth. Once outside and clearly outnumbered, Guidry and Walker retreated to Guidry's apartment (located close to the bar) and retrieved guns; Walker had a .38 caliber revolver and Guidry had a .22 caliber revolver. The two returned to the bar parking lot, got out of the car, and pursued those they believed to have participated in the earlier altercation. Walker and Guidry started firing their weapons in the general direction of the crowd. Guidry was then run over by a vehicle (which caused significant injuries) and transported to the hospital by Walker. When Walker first spoke to the police, he made a statement incriminating Guidry. He then changed his story and took responsibility for the shooting, after learning that Mr. Meeks had, in fact, died from a bullet from a .38 caliber weapon and not from a .22 caliber weapon.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON DECEMBER 9, 2014**

Wayne Walker, age 41, appeared for his initial parole hearing after serving 15 years of a life sentence. He is currently serving his sentence at Bridgewater State Hospital for his 2001 conviction of second degree murder.

Since entering the institution, he has completed several programs that addressed his criminal behavior including anger, violence, and substance abuse/dependency. Through his participation in the Alternatives to Violence Program (ATV), he now recognizes his triggers and has developed coping skills that have aided him from engaging in any acts of violence during his incarceration. He also acknowledges that working with the patients at Bridgewater State Hospital has been an important component in his rehabilitation. According to his personalized program plan, he is not recommended for any additional programming. Walker has always sought and maintained employment while incarcerated and he currently works as a cook at Bridgewater State Hospital, a position he has held since 2010. Walker has accrued nine disciplinary reports throughout his incarceration. His last infraction occurred in March 2012 for possessing an altered appliance. His overall adjustment has been viewed as positive.

Walker was born and raised in Louisiana and resorted to selling drugs to support his family at the age of 17. He acknowledged early on that he obtained legitimate employment in the community as a cover for his illegal activities. Looking back, he now understands that dealing drugs was the root of his many problems. His family urged Walker to re-locate to Springfield, Massachusetts to reside with his brother, after Walker was shot in the leg by a rival drug dealer. Although Walker secured employment soon after arriving in the area and initially refrained from engaging in criminal activity, he eventually reverted back to the lifestyle he had left behind in Louisiana. Walker stated that "he got greedy" and resorted to selling drugs when he fell upon hard times and was in between jobs.

Walker provided a detailed and comprehensive version of the crime. He contends that the initial fight ensued over a drug transaction involving turf issues with the victim and his friends. He admitted to the Board that he killed Meeks in a fit of anger and said, "I felt that they were attacking me and I fought back in the wrong way." He acknowledged firing at least



three shots, not realizing that he had hit anyone until later. When pressed by the Board, Walker agreed that something like that was bound to happen due to the lifestyle he was leading.

Walker has no juvenile record and his adult criminal history is limited to a continuation without a finding of guilt on charges of assault and battery, malicious destruction of property, and larceny from a February 1999 incident. He also had an abuse prevention order taken out against him in 1999 that was in effect for 11 days. Walker said the Fathers' Group and being trusted as a facilitator for the ATV really allowed him to look at himself and helped him to "want try to be the best I could be."

Walker seeks parole to a long term residential program, after a gradual transition to lower security within the Department of Correction. Walker has made strides in identifying programs in the Springfield, Worcester, and Boston areas. His long term goals include gainful employment as a cook at a restaurant and he wishes to reside with his wife or mother. Several family members attended the hearing in support of his petition for parole. His mother, sister, and wife spoke in support of parole and stated that they will provide him with the necessary supports to successfully re-enter the community.

The victim's family (who was unable to attend) is opposed to parole at this time. Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Howard Safford did not oppose Walker's petition for parole citing that it, "appears Mr. Walker has taken advantage of his incarceration" and in part "his participation in the Alternatives to Violence program has changed him, his life, his path." ADA Safford also acknowledged Walker's strong work ethic and network of support.

### **III. DECISION**

Wayne Walker has invested in rehabilitation and has benefitted from such investment. During his 15 years of incarceration, Walker chose a path of rehabilitation and has made sincere strides in reforming his criminal thinking by learning about his anger issues and adopting non-violent conflict resolution strategies. Walker also has a strong support system that will assist him with a positive re-entry. Given his progress in his rehabilitation, his strong work ethic, and family members who are willing and able to provide him with emotional and financial support as he re-enters the community, the Board is of the opinion that Walker has demonstrated rehabilitative progress and presents no current risk for violence and that supervised release is compatible with the welfare of society.

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, it is the opinion of the Board that Wayne Walker merits parole at this time because he is rehabilitated.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Parole to an approved home plan after one year in lower security; Report to MA parole office on day of release; Waive work for two weeks; No drug use with testing required; No alcohol use with testing required; AA/NA at least three times per week; Take prescribed medications; One-on-one counseling for adjustment and transition issues; AISS -full intake; No contact with victim or victim's family.

*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.*

  
Janis DiLoreto Smith, Executive Director

1/21/15  
Date