

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**WILLIAM GOFORTH**

**W41640**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** June 13, 2019

**DATE OF DECISION:** March 10, 2020

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Gloriann Moroney, 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 the 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 a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is granted to the Community Resources for Justice Transitional House for a minimum of 6 months with special conditions.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On July 25, 1985, in Suffolk Superior Court, William Goforth pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Thomas Tyler. He received a life sentence with the possibility of parole and a 3 to 5 year concurrent sentence for unlawfully carrying a firearm.

On July 12, 1984, 20-year-old William Goforth shot and killed 25-year-old Thomas Taylor on Geneva Avenue in Dorchester. After an ongoing argument between the two men over drug money, Mr. Goforth, carrying two hand guns, confronted Mr. Taylor in front of a residence. Mr. Goforth chased Mr. Taylor into an area in the rear of Geneva Avenue. Mr. Goforth reportedly fired one shot. After Mr. Taylor dove under a car, Mr. Goforth fired multiple shots, killing him. Mr. Goforth then fled the area, but was identified by several witnesses as the shooter. He was arrested weeks later on an unrelated charge.

## **II. REVIEW HEARING ON JUNE 13, 2019**

On June 13, 2019, William Goforth appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing. He was represented by Kaitlyn Gerber of Harvard Law School's Prison Legal Assistance Project. Mr. Goforth was denied parole after his initial parole hearing in 2000. He received a positive vote after a review hearing in 2003 and, after a provisional rescission, was eventually paroled in 2006. In 2009, Mr. Goforth was returned to custody after being charged with assault and battery. The charges were dismissed, however, and Mr. Goforth was released. Thereafter, Mr. Goforth picked up various infractions that resulted in a parole revocation. Mr. Goforth was re-paroled in 2010, but was returned to custody in 2011. In 2012, the Board re-paroled Mr. Goforth and, in February 2013, he was transferred to Boston Pre-Release. In June, 2013, however, Mr. Goforth tested positive for opiates, resulting in his return to higher security. In February 2014, the Board ordered the provisional rescission of Mr. Goforth's parole, based upon his return to higher custody and his inability to meet the Board's prescription. In April 2014, it was determined that Mr. Goforth attempted to introduce Suboxone into the institution through correspondence with his girlfriend, resulting in a disciplinary report on which he was found guilty. In both 2014 and 2015, final rescission hearings were postponed at Mr. Goforth's request. In April 2016, the Board affirmed the final rescission of Mr. Goforth. Mr. Goforth was denied parole after his review hearing in 2016.

In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Goforth apologized to the victim's family and friends, as well as his own. He also apologized to the Parole Board, acknowledging how he let them down with his parole violations. When the Board questioned him as to why his prior parole supervision was unsuccessful, Mr. Goforth responded that he failed to use his support network or his community resources. He also failed to reach out to his parole officer when he was in trouble. In addition, Mr. Goforth admitted to substance abuse issues with marijuana, as well as poor relationship decisions. He explained that he stopped using marijuana in 2012 or 2013, and stated that he no longer drinks or uses drugs. When Board Members questioned him about his attempt to introduce Suboxone into MCI-Concord, Mr. Goforth explained that although the drugs may have been addressed to him, he never requested, nor did he receive, any drugs. He speculated that he may have been the victim of a setup.

The Board also questioned Mr. Goforth about his participation in treatment and programming, as well as his employment, since his last hearing. Mr. Goforth stated that he works in supplies, and that he paid for outside substance abuse programming through the American Community Corrections Institute. He also attends AA and/or NA two times a week. Mr. Goforth requested that he be paroled to a transitional program or sober house for a minimum of 6 months, after which he could move in with his sister. Mr. Goforth plans to obtain employment through a job training/schooling program that places trainees in painting and construction jobs. In addition, he has training with the culinary arts program and could work in a restaurant. He plans to continue to attend AA/NA.

Speaking on behalf of Mr. Goforth were his friends and a former employer. The Board considered numerous letters of support, including a letter from Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni. Boston Police Commissioner William Gross submitted a letter of opposition.

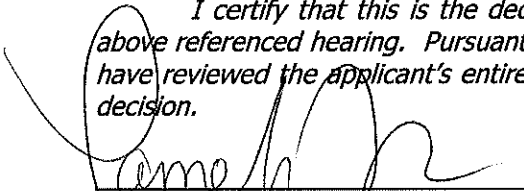
### **III. DECISION**

It is the opinion of the Board that Mr. Goforth has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

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 its opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Goforth'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. Goforth's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Goforth's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that William Goforth is rehabilitated and, therefore, merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to the Community Resources for Justice Transitional House for a minimum of 6 months with special conditions.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for two weeks; Must be home between 10pm and 6am or Parole Officer's discretion; Electronic monitoring; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for alcohol abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact w/victim's family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment/transition; CRJ Transitional House - minimum 6 months; AA/NA at least three times/week. Mandatory obtain sponsor.

*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.*

  
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Ramela Murphy, General Counsel

3/10/2020  
Date