



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

WILLIAM GRIFFITH
W48269

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: March 5, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: July 3, 2025

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, Tina M. Hurley,¹ James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz.²

VOTE: Parole is granted to CRJ for at least 90 days or LTRP.³

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: William Griffith was convicted of first-degree murder on November 17, 1981, in Franklin Superior Court, and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The jury also convicted Mr. Griffith of burglary while armed (20-30 years); armed assault in a dwelling house (20-30 years); armed robbery (20-30 years); and escape (9-10 years). Mr. Griffith was ordered to serve these sentences from and after a sentence previously imposed in another matter. Mr. Griffith became parole eligible following the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024), where the court held that sentencing individuals who were ages 18 through 20 at the time of the offense (emerging adults) to life without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional. As a result of the SJC's decision in regard to Mr. Griffith's first-degree murder conviction, his mittimus was corrected to reflect that his life sentence permitted the possibility of parole after 15 years.⁴

¹ Chair Hurley participated in the vote on this matter prior to her departure from the Board.

² Chair Hurley and Board Member Coleman were not present for the hearing, but both reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

³ Three Board Members voted to grant parole but not before serving 90 days in minimum security.

⁴ Mr. Griffith completed his from and after sentences on April 12, 1990, at which time he began serving the governing offense.

On March 5, 2025, Mr. Griffith appeared before the Board for an initial hearing and was represented by Attorney Miriam Conrad. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Griffith's March 5, 2025, hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:⁵ William Griffith murdered 65-year-old William Kulisanski during an armed robbery at Bill's Market in Athol on March 29, 1980. Mr. Kulisanski owned the market. Before the murder, 19-year-old William Griffith spent part of the day with his friends and cousin in Worcester and Athol. While in Worcester, he obtained a revolver. Throughout the evening, Mr. Griffith drank alcohol, used cocaine, and smoked marijuana with them. When Mr. Griffith was at his cousin's apartment in Athol, he changed his jacket and announced that he was going to rob Bill's Market, which was about one block away from the apartment. After customers left the store, Mr. Griffith entered the market, showed Mr. Kulisanski his gun, and demanded money. The victim yelled and his wife approached them. The victim entered a side room and returned with a baseball bat which he used to strike Mr. Griffith. Mr. Griffith shot the victim in the head. Mr. Griffith was unable to open the cash register after the murder, so he returned to his cousin's apartment and informed them about what happened at the market.

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.

Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). Individuals who were emerging adults at the time of the offense must be afforded a "meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation" and the Board evaluates "the circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, including the age of the offender, together with all relevant information pertaining to the offender's character and actions during the intervening years since conviction." Id. (citing Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk Dist., 466 Mass. 655, 674 (2013) (Diatchenko I); Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 471 (2012); Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48, 75 (2010)). Since brain development in emerging adulthood is ongoing, the Board also considers the following factors when evaluating parole candidates who committed the underlying offenses as an emerging adult: 1) a lack of impulse control in emotionally arousing situations; 2) an increased likelihood to engage in risk taking behaviors in pursuit of reward; 3) increased susceptibility to peer influence which makes emerging adults more likely to engage in

⁵ The facts are derived from Commonwealth v. Griffith, 404 Mass. 256 (1989).

risky behavior; and 4) an emerging adult's greater capacity for change. See Mattis, 493 Mass. at 225-229.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: This was Mr. Griffith's first appearance before the Board. He was 19 years-old at the time of the offense. He is currently 64 years old. He has been incarcerated for 44 years. Mr. Griffith has invested in self-development, completing many rehabilitative programs to address his needs. Mr. Griffith completed his GED and is engaged in further education via Mt. Wachusett Community College. Mr. Griffith has been sober for over 30 years. Mr. Griffith has a history of employment as a clerk and working with mentally ill inmates in the RTU. Mr. Griffith recently completed Victim Awareness, furthering his insight into the effects of his offense and criminal history on others. Mr. Griffith has a strong support system and re-entry plan. The Board considered testimony in support of his parole, including Dr. DiCataldo, Forensic Psychologist; Kristin Dame, LMHC; and family members. The Board notes that the Northwestern District Attorney's Office took no position.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Dismas House or CRJ; Waive work for disability; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Supervise for drugs with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim(s)' family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment.

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.



Tonomoy A. Coleman, Acting Chair

7/3/25

Date