

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

WILLIAM LAPAGE

W62025

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: July 24, 2018

DATE OF DECISION: July 10, 2019

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe

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 scheduled in five years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On January 29, 1997, in Suffolk Superior Court, a jury convicted William LaPage of murder in the first degree in the death of 33-year-old Sharilee Banks. Represented by a new attorney, Mr. LaPage filed a motion for new trial. On October 21, 1999, the judge assigned (the trial judge having retired) took no action, and instead, left the motion to be addressed in the subject's direct appeal. The Court concluded that portions of the jury instructions concerning voluntary manslaughter were erroneous and posed a substantial likelihood of a miscarriage of justice. Consequently, they reversed the conviction of murder in the first degree, set aside the jury verdict, and remanded the case for a new trial.¹ *Commonwealth vs. William LaPage*, 435 Mass. 480 (2001). On March 23, 2005, in Suffolk Superior Court, a jury found Mr. LaPage guilty of murder in the second degree, and he was sentenced to serve life in prison with the possibility of parole.

¹ Justice Cordy dissented.

On February 24, 1995 and into the early morning of February 25, 1995, after a night of drinking and smoking crack cocaine at Ms. Banks' apartment, Mr. LaPage noticed that 45 cents was missing from his coat pocket. He confronted Ms. Banks about the missing money, and she said that she did not know where it was. He again asked her for the money, and Ms. Banks said that she needed it for a taxicab to her credit union. This angered Mr. LaPage, and he told her that he "had no intention of letting her use my last 45 cents to pedal her fat ass around in a taxicab." In response, Ms. Banks hit Mr. LaPage on the side of the head. He hit her back, and a fist fight ensued. Mr. LaPage pinned her down on the bed by the shoulders and was "yelling at her." Ms. Banks bit him on the thumb, jumped up, and ran away.

Ms. Banks ran a few steps to the kitchen. Mr. LaPage "ran after her as best [he] could," taking his paring knife from his back pocket as he went. Mr. LaPage approached Ms. Banks, but she fought back, as evidenced by the defensive wounds to her hands. Witnesses heard the struggle in the apartment and heard screams of "Get away from me!" and "Leave me alone!" Mr. LaPage stabbed Ms. Banks in the chest and, as he pulled his knife from inside her in an arcing motion, he cut her cheek. She continued to struggle with Mr. LaPage. At this point, Mr. LaPage was enraged and saw a long blade on the counter. He grabbed the knife and "exploded." He stabbed Ms. Banks until the knife became lodged in her neck, and she slumped to the floor. He knew she was dead. Mr. LaPage pulled the knife from her body, cleaned it, and placed all the kitchen knives in his travel bag. Mr. LaPage, with a bite mark on his thumb and a few minor scratches, was found staring at Ms. Banks when the police arrived and arrested him.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON JULY 24, 2018

William LaPage, now 65-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on July 24, 2018, and was not represented by counsel. He had been denied parole after his initial hearing in 2013. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. LaPage provided an apology to the family of Sharilee Banks for taking her life. He also provided a detailed and comprehensive version of events surrounding her murder. Mr. LaPage stated that he was initially angry with her over the 45 cents that she had taken from him. The situation escalated when he made a demeaning comment, causing the two to exchange blows. When Ms. Banks went to retrieve a knife from the kitchen, he pulled a paring knife from his back pant pocket, and a struggle ensued. At some point, he dropped the paring knife. Mr. LaPage claims that he became enraged when her knife almost penetrated his eye; he grabbed another knife from the kitchen counter and began to stab her multiple times. The autopsy revealed that Ms. Banks had, at least, seven significant stabs wounds and 16 defensive wounds on her palm, hands, and fingers, which is inconsistent with Mr. LaPage's version that she possessed a knife during the commission of the murder. Mr. LaPage maintained that his actions were in self-defense through 2014.

Mr. LaPage has a concerning documented history of domestic violence and violence toward women. Throughout the hearing, he continued to minimize his propensity for domestic violence, not only in his relationship with the victim, but in prior relationships, as well, often disparaging the victims. Mr. LaPage informed the Board that his internal anger and drug/alcohol abuse were the underlying factors of his criminal conduct. Mr. LaPage's distorted thought process guided his relationships; exploiting vulnerable women to satisfy his own needs and often providing drugs in exchange for sex. Mr. LaPage informed the Board that, even today, he still does not understand why victims of domestic violence don't leave.

Mr. LaPage is currently incarcerated at MCI-Norfolk, where he is employed as a runner. Since his last hearing, he has completed programming to include, but not limited to, Restorative Justice Retreat, Leadership and Transformative Thinking, Domestic Violence, and Path to Freedom. Additionally, he attends Alcoholics Anonymous weekly. Mr. LaPage has not incurred any disciplinary infractions since his last hearing.

A longtime friend spoke in support of parole. Ms. Banks' niece spoke in opposition to parole. The Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni submitted a written statement and spoke in opposition to parole.

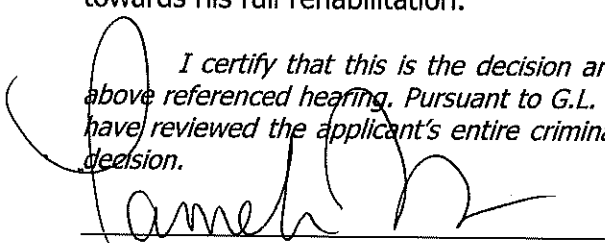
III. DECISION

Mr. LaPage stabbed and killed Sharilee Banks during an argument over 45 cents. It is the opinion of the Board that Mr. LaPage has not 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 this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. LaPage'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. LaPage's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. LaPage's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that William LaPage is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. LaPage's next appearance before the Board will take place in five years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. LaPage to continue working towards 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

7/10/2019
Date