



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Daniel Bennett
Secretary

Telephone # (508) 650-4500

Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Paul M. Treseler
Chairman

Michael J. Callahan
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

SHAKIR ABDULLAH
(f/k/a Dennis Shelton)
W51043

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: October 25, 2016

DATE OF DECISION: March 29, 2017

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 that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in three years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On August 14, 1991, in Worcester County Superior Court, a jury found Shakir Abdullah (formerly known as Dennis Shelton) guilty of second degree murder for the shooting death of Greg White. Accordingly, he was sentenced to life imprisonment with the possibility of parole. On August 21, 1991, Shakir Abdullah was also found guilty of assault to rob and assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon on a female victim. He was sentenced to 6-10 years to run concurrent with his life sentence.²

¹ Five Board Members voted to deny parole for Mr. Abdullah with a review scheduled in three years. One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review scheduled in four years.

² Both the murder conviction and the assault and battery convictions were upheld on appeal. See Commonwealth v. Shelton, 37 Mass.App.Ct. 964 (1994).

On January 8, 1990, at approximately 11:30 p.m., Shakir Abdullah (then 28-years-old) and co-defendant Emmanuel Gee robbed Greg White at gunpoint for a case of beer, and then shot him in the chest. Mr. White died from the gunshot wound. These atrocities occurred in a common bathroom in a boarding house in Worcester. Shortly after the shooting, Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Gee attempted to rob a female at the same address.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON OCTOBER 25, 2016

Mr. Abdullah, now 54-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on October 25, 2016. He was represented by Northeastern University Law School Student Attorney Madison Leonard. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Abdullah said that he accepts the responsibility that comes with a second degree murder conviction. He still maintains, however, that he did not take part in the murder of the victim or the assault and attempted robbery of the female. Since his trial, and at both his prior parole hearings in 2005 and 2010, Mr. Abdullah has maintained that he did not murder Mr. White or assault the female in Worcester, despite evidence to the contrary.

Board Members questioned Mr. Abdullah about his involvement in the murder of Mr. White and the assault on the female. In particular, Mr. Abdullah was asked why (he thinks) he was convicted of both crimes, if he did not participate in either. Mr. Abdullah admitted that he knew his co-defendant, Emmanuel Gee, prior to the murder and associated with him on weekends. He said that he drank alcohol and occasionally used recreational drugs in his youth, including at the time of the murder. He admitted that he was at the boarding house on the day of the murder, but said he left prior to both the shooting of Mr. White and the assault on the female. He said he did not know the female victim, nor does he know why she would have identified him as the person who assaulted her at gunpoint in an attempted robbery. Mr. Abdullah told the Board he thinks he was arrested and convicted of the murder, and subsequent assault, because he was mistakenly identified as the person involved. Board Members expressed their struggle to reconcile his proclaimed innocence with his positive identification by several people at the scene. Mr. Abdullah believes he was convicted of the crime because there was "manipulation" of the trial and of the evidence presented to the jury.

Mr. Abdullah has had a relatively positive institutional adjustment, accruing only three disciplinary reports during his 26 years of incarceration. His last disciplinary report was in 2003, for inappropriately touching a female staff member. He receives positive housing and employment evaluations, and is currently employed as a unit runner in the gymnasium. Mr. Abdullah told the Board he credits his positive institutional adjustment to finding Islam and becoming a devout Muslim. He said, "Islam helped me to understand my past and rehabilitate myself into the person I am today...my past history is disgraceful and is something I have to live with every day." He said that he was "reckless and irresponsible" at the time of the murder because his life had no purpose. He told the Board that he is a "responsible, honest, [and] changed" man because his religious pursuits have given him purpose and helped him become a good citizen.

The Board noted that Mr. Abdullah did not begin active participation in rehabilitative programming until after his last hearing in 2010. Mr. Abdullah told the Board that the programs most beneficial to his rehabilitation over the past several years were: Leadership and Transitional Thinking, Victim Impact, Restorative Justice, Non-Violent Communication, and the

Beacon Program. He told the Board that he attended AA/NA when he was first incarcerated. He has not been to a meeting in many years, as he says he has been sober since his incarceration.

The Board considered the many letters in support of Mr. Abdullah's parole from his family and others in the community. The Board considered oral testimony in opposition to parole from Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King.

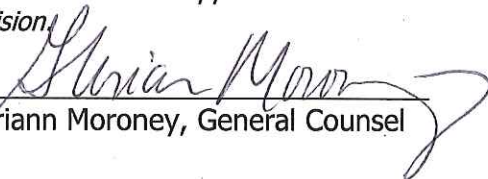
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Abdullah has not yet demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. The Board continues to have concerns with his inability to take responsibility for his actions and his inconsistent statements regarding the governing offenses.

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. The Board has also taken into consideration Mr. Abdullah's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Abdullah's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to Mr. Abdullah's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Mr. Abdullah does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Abdullah's next appearance before the Board will take place in three years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, Mr. Abdullah should continue to engage in programming, as well as refrain from exhibiting negative behavior.

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.


Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

3/29/17
Date