



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



**PAROLE BOARD**

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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**ROBERT BONDS**

**W35541**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** August 16, 2016

**DATE OF DECISION:** February 2, 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 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. Parole is granted with special conditions and contingent upon the inmate's submission of an approved home plan.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On June 24, 1977, in Suffolk Superior Court, Robert Bonds pled guilty to armed robbery and the second degree murder of Manuel Amato. A sentence of life in prison was imposed on Mr. Bonds for the murder of Mr. Amato. Mr. Bonds was also sentenced to a concurrent term of not more than 12 years and not less than 8 years in prison for his conviction of armed robbery. Previously, on May 26, 1976, Mr. Bonds appeared in Suffolk Superior Court and pled guilty to unlawfully possessing a firearm. The facts supporting this conviction were related to the murder of Mr. Amato. A concurrent sentence of not more than 5 years and not less than 3 years was imposed on Mr. Bonds for his conviction of unlawful possession of a firearm.

On November 18, 1974, Mr. Bonds and his two co-defendants, Reginald Sheffield and George Dyett, along with a fourth man known only as Paul, arrived at the Forest Hills Factory Outlet in Boston at approximately 9:15 p.m. Mr. Bonds, Mr. Sheffield, and Paul entered the store, while Mr. Dyett stayed in his 1969 Pontiac parked behind the store. Mr. Bonds was

armed with a silver revolver. During the robbery, Mr. Bonds shot and killed Mr. Amato, an unarmed security guard. All three men fled the store, after removing approximately \$300 from the cash register. Mr. Bonds and each of his co-defendants were tried separately.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON AUGUST 16, 2016**

Robert Bonds, now 67-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on August 16, 2016, for a review hearing and was represented by Attorney Lorenzo Perez. Mr. Bonds appeared before the Board for an initial hearing in 1990 and was granted parole. His parole was eventually revoked, but Mr. Bonds was released on parole following a review hearing in 1993. Mr. Bonds' second parole permit was revoked by the Board in 1995. After appearing for a review hearing in 1998, he was granted parole again. Mr. Bonds' parole was then revoked in February 2016, and he has remained in custody since that time.

Neither Attorney Perez, nor Mr. Bonds, gave an opening statement. Mr. Bonds did not discuss the facts of his underlying case, but rather addressed the reason for his return to custody. Mr. Bonds recognized that he had been returned to custody as a result of substance abuse, specifically, his repeated consumption of alcohol over a period of months. According to Mr. Bonds, his decision to drink alcohol (which violated the conditions of his parole) was one that he made consciously. Mr. Bonds explained that he consumed alcohol to relieve the numerous physical ailments that he suffered from, including dizziness from vertigo. At the time that Mr. Bonds began drinking alcohol, his dizzy spells had started to reoccur with greater frequency and severity, making it difficult for him to sleep at night. Mr. Bonds underwent a battery of medical tests to determine the nature of his condition. These tests, however, caused Mr. Bonds to experience anxiety. He then began drinking small amounts of vodka in the evening, in order to relax and help himself fall asleep.

Mr. Bonds continued to consume alcohol sporadically over a period of months, at pace with the accelerating and unpredictable nature of his condition. Upon inquiry by the Board, Mr. Bonds recognized the possibility that he could be caught. Mr. Bonds, nonetheless, continued to knowingly violate the conditions of his parole. He did this without much thought to the consequences of his actions, as he was desperate for relief from his symptoms. While Mr. Bonds had recognized his prior issues with heroin and cocaine, he said that this was the first time he had experienced issues with alcohol. Mr. Bonds said that his participation in Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous meetings has helped him recognize the negative consequences of his actions. He also acknowledged that this was a necessary first step in stopping the escalation of his addiction. Mr. Bonds explained to the Board that he regrets not seeking help from his parole officer.

Mr. Bonds also addressed his activities over the past eight months in custody. Currently, he attends Alcoholics Anonymous once a week and intends to do so with greater frequency, should he be released on parole. He has made inquiries into other programs that might be available to him, but was advised to await the outcome of his parole hearing before starting enrollment. Mr. Bonds told the Board that he wants to go home to his family. He also expressed an interest in continuing employment, if granted parole, but noted that he had retired last year. Mr. Bonds intends to pursue medical treatment for various physical ailments, as well as attend counseling for the anxiety produced by those conditions.

The Board considered oral testimony from Mr. Bonds' wife, brother, and friend, all of whom expressed support for parole. Additionally, the Board considered a letter in opposition to parole from the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office.

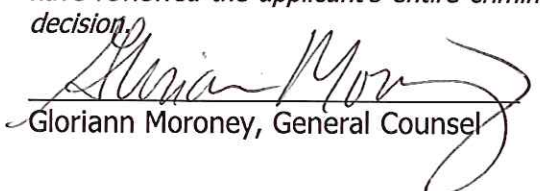
### **III. DECISION**

The Board is of the unanimous opinion that Mr. Bonds has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. The Board believes that in the circumstances of Mr. Bonds' case, incarceration has served its purpose. The Board also notes that Mr. Bonds has recognized his mishaps on parole and has proposed a solid parole plan that will mitigate his risk of substance abuse. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Bonds' institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board also considered a risk and needs assessment, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Bonds' risk of recidivism.

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. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Bonds' case, the Board is of the opinion that Mr. Bonds is a suitable candidate for parole, with special conditions, and contingent upon his submission of an approved home plan.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Approve home plan before release; Waive work for two weeks; Must be at home between 10pm and 6am or at PO discretion; GPS monitoring at PO discretion; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; Must participate in individual substance abuse counseling – 1:1; Attend AA/ NA at least three times/week; Mandatory screen for Matri; Mandatory 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.*

  
Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

2/2/17  
Date