



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

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

AARON WATTS

W49607

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: September 12, 2017

DATE OF DECISION: July 10, 2018

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 two years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On December 17, 1990, in Suffolk Superior Court, Aaron Watts pleaded guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison. On that same date, he received a concurrent sentence of 3 to 5 years for unlawfully carrying a shotgun. Mr. Watts filed a motion to withdraw his guilty plea, which was denied. In 1999, the Massachusetts Appeals Court affirmed the denial of the motion to withdraw the guilty plea.²

¹ Four Board Members voted to deny parole with a 2 year review. Two Board Members voted to parole Mr. Watts, after 2 years in lower security.

² *Commonwealth v. Aaron Watts*, 48 Mass.App.Ct. 1106 (1999)

On October 24, 1989, at approximately 12:30 a.m., 21-year-old Aaron Watts shot James Moody to death. Mr. Moody was 26-years-old. Prior to the murder, Mr. Watts had gone to Mr. Moody's building to purchase marijuana, but was robbed in the hallway. Mr. Watts believed that Mr. Moody had set up the robbery. Later, when Mr. Watts observed Mr. Moody in the passenger seat of a 1984 Lincoln, he grabbed a shotgun from the car he was in and shot Mr. Moody. Police responded to Gallivan Boulevard and Washington Street in Dorchester. The victim was transported to the hospital where he later died from a gunshot wound to the neck.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

Aaron Watts, now 49-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on September 12, 2017. He was not represented by counsel. Mr. Watts was denied parole after his initial hearing in 2004, as well as after his review hearings in 2007 and 2012. In Mr. Watts' opening statement, he apologized to the Moody family. Mr. Watts stated that he was born in Boston with two older siblings. His older sister has passed away, but he has contact with his brother and described their relationship as "somewhat close." He stated that he is not married and does not have children. He described his childhood as "troubled," blaming this on the things he has done, rather than on his family's actions. He stated that in his "younger years," he went looking for the "wrong form of attention, instead of asking people for help." He said there was something missing inside of him, and he became attracted to people who were smoking and drinking. He was "about 13" when he developed an addiction to marijuana, smoking every day. While incarcerated, he works in the laundry facilities and fixes the machines. He attends AA/NA meetings and is involved with both the Massachusetts Community Outreach Initiative Program and the Alternative to Violence Support Group. Mr. Watts indicated that he receives mental health counseling once a month. He denies the use of any medications and attends religious services weekly.

Mr. Watts spoke in regards to the events that took place on the day of the murder. Mr. Watts stated that he knew Mr. Moody, describing him as a "good person." Prior to the murder, Mr. Watts stated that he was robbed and, at the time, he believed that Mr. Moody was a participant in the robbery. He subsequently shot Mr. Moody in the neck, killing him. However, as time passed, he stated, "I don't think he had anything to do with it at all." Mr. Watts said that he was using marijuana at the time of the incident. Mr. Watts told the Board that he asked his family not to attend this hearing because he was "the one who placed" himself here, and he has to be his own "voice." The Board noted that Mr. Watts has a total of 108 disciplinary reports throughout his incarceration. There were a few since his last hearing, which were described as "minor." A Board Member asked him if he had any concerns, if he returned to the community. He stated, "I just have to be careful" because "I have been in prison since I was 20-years-old." He explained that he will need a life coach to guide him. Mr. Watts admitted that he would give himself a "two year setback." He stated, "I definitely need more time because, where I am at now, I think I need to brush up on a whole lot more other things." Mr. Watts thanked the Board for helping him, as the "setbacks have helped [me] get better."

Boston Police Commissioner William Evans and Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni submitted letters of opposition to the Board.

III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Aaron Watts has not yet demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Watts appears to be making strides in his rehabilitation. The Board would like him to have a longer period of positive adjustment and program involvement. It is important for the Board to have a clear understanding as to his support network.

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. Watts' 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. Watts' risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Watts' case, the Board is of the opinion that Aaron Watts is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Watts' next appearance before the Board will take place in two years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Watts 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.


Giovanni Moroney, General Counsel

7/10/18
Date