



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

PETER HOLBROOK

W38068

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 7, 2013

DATE OF DECISION: July 24, 2013

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Ina Howard-Hogan, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, institutional record, criminal record, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the board, we conclude by a unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is denied with a review in five years.

I.STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On June 25, 1980, Peter Holbrook called the Georgetown Police to report that he had struck his mother, Alberta Holbrook (age 65), several times on the head with a hatchet. When officers responded to the home, they found Mrs. Holbrook in a chair, where she apparently was watching television. She was unconscious and bleeding from severe lacerations to the top of her head. Mr. Holbrook reportedly stated to the police that he had struck his mother because he was bored and life was not going anywhere, so he decided to do something about it. He later stated to police that he did it, but he did not do it right because he did not kill her. Mrs. Holbrook died three days later as a result of the injuries.

During the course of his legal proceedings, Mr. Holbrook was sent to Bridgewater State Hospital for a Competency to Stand Trial Evaluation and a Criminal Responsibility Evaluation. During the evaluation it was noted that he stated that he killed his mother "probably from preventing myself from thinking the same things again about my job and where I was living. I

thought it would stop everything. Her and I couldn't agree on anything. She would lecture me. I reached the bottom of the pit. I was hopeless. I couldn't think of a way out of it. I was thinking of doing it from behind her. I shouldn't have done it as I did it. It was just a game, really." Mr. Holbrook also stated that he had been thinking about killing his mother for over one year. Upon completion of both evaluations, the evaluator opined that Mr. Holbrook was competent to stand trial and criminally responsible.

On February 24, 1981, in Essex Superior Court, Mr. Holbrook pleaded guilty to second degree murder, and was sentenced to serve life in prison, with the possibility of parole.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 7, 2013

This was Mr. Holbrook's fifth appearance before the Parole Board. Mr. Holbrook has a documented history of mental illness. His first known hospitalizations were in the 1970s following multiple suicide attempts, one by overdose and one by jumping off of a roof. He was hospitalized again in 1973 at Danvers State Hospital after violating probation on a breaking and entering charge. His first admission to Bridgewater State Hospital was in 1977. There is no clear diagnosis noted at that time.

Since being incarcerated, mental health records indicate that Mr. Holbrook has been most consistently diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and has been marginally compliant with medications and treatment. Mr. Holbrook has been re-admitted to Bridgewater State Hospital seven times during his sentence. He is currently committed to Bridgewater State Hospital.

Mr. Holbrook has incurred approximately 58 disciplinary reports, including two additional assaultive disciplinary reports since his last parole hearing. His most recent incident report was on December 20, 2012, for punching another patient in the face. Mr. Holbrook's programming is limited and inconsistent due to behavioral management issues. He is currently engaged in a mental health day treatment program at Bridgewater State Hospital and he reportedly is accepting medications.

Most of the hearing focused on the Parole Board's concerns with Mr. Holbrook's history of non-compliance with mental health treatment, which appears to lead to rapid decompensation, management issues, and his need for involuntary commitment at Bridgewater State Hospital. Mr. Holbrook vacillated on accepting that he has a major mental illness and that he needs medications to manage his symptoms and his behavior. Mr. Holbrook stated that he has been forced to take his medications in the past (pursuant to a Rogers order), and stated "I suppose I should take them; I don't know." When asked throughout the hearing if he intended on taking his medications, he responded with different answers. At one point he stated that he was not sure that he needed them. When asked what would happen if he stopped his medications again, he stated "not much, I don't know why I have to take them." The Board described a pattern of non-compliance with treatment that coincided with his decompensation and need for re-hospitalization; however, Mr. Holbrook appeared to have little insight into such a pattern.

When asked why he murdered his mother, Mr. Holbrook responded "I was psyched." When asked to explain what he meant, he stated "I was having strange thoughts at the time." He did not elaborate. Mr. Holbrook displayed no emotion when describing hitting his mother with the hatchet. Mr. Holbrook was asked about his continued violent acts within the institutional setting; and replied that his assaultive behavior was most likely due to his non-compliance with medication. Although able to make such a correlation, he again verbalized ambivalence about whether he would consistently comply with treatment in the future.

Mr. Holbrook stated that he would like to be paroled to a Department of Mental Health facility, but he also stated he would like to be paroled to his "own apartment." He had no supporters present and he provided an unrealistic view of how he would support himself and function in the community.

Essex Assistant District Attorney Phillip Mallard opposed parole based on Mr. Holbrook's volatile and unpredictable behavior, his non-compliance with mental health treatment, and his lack of a realistic parole plan.

III. DECISION

Peter Holbrook's institutional behavior has required the continued rehospitalization and recommitment to Bridgewater State Hospital. He has been non-compliant with his necessary and recommended mental health treatment, and has demonstrated rapid decompensation, which includes violent behavior. He has provided an inconsistent and unconvincing response as to whether he believes he is seriously mentally ill and in need of medications. Mr. Holbrook has demonstrated that he is unable to function without intensive treatment and the security of Bridgewater State Hospital. Mr. Holbrook has made little progress in his rehabilitation and remains a public safety risk.

The standard for parole is set out in 120 C.M.R. 300.04, which provides that "Parole board members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such an 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." Applying that appropriately high standard, due to his insufficient rehabilitation and his lack of understanding of his ongoing treatment needs, the Parole Board concludes that Mr. Holbrook is not currently suitable for parole. The review will be in five years. He is encouraged to invest in his continued mental health treatment and follow all recommendations of his treatment team.

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.


Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff

7/24/13
Date