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STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DECISION NOTICE

Name: Lopez, Adrian Facility: Eastern NY CF
NYSID: [REDACTED] Appeal Control No.: 08-156-18 B
DIN: 89-T-3500

Appearances: Marshall Nadan Esq.
P.O. Box 4091
Kingston, New York 12402

Decision appealed: August 2018 decision, denying discretionary release and imposing a hold of 24-months.

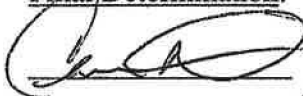
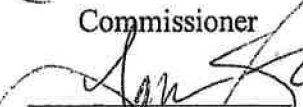
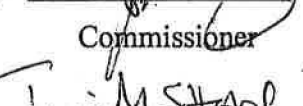
Board Member(s) who participated: Berliner, Cruse, Shapiro

Papers considered: Appellant’s Brief received December 5, 2018

Appeals Unit Review: Statement of the Appeals Unit’s Findings and Recommendation

Records relied upon: Pre-Sentence Investigation Report, Parole Board Report, Interview Transcript, Parole Board Release Decision Notice (Form 9026), COMPAS instrument, Offender Case Plan.

Final Determination: The undersigned determine that the decision appealed is hereby:

 Affirmed Vacated, remanded for de novo interview Modified to _____
Commissioner
 Affirmed Vacated, remanded for de novo interview Modified to _____
Commissioner
 Affirmed Vacated, remanded for de novo interview Modified to _____
Commissioner

If the Final Determination is at variance with Findings and Recommendation of Appeals Unit, written reasons for the Parole Board’s determination must be annexed hereto.

This Final Determination, the related Statement of the Appeals Unit’s Findings and the separate findings of the Parole Board, if any, were mailed to the Inmate and the Inmate’s Counsel, if any, on 2/14/19 CG.

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Appellant challenges the August 2018 determination of the Board, denying release and imposing a 24-month hold. Appellant raises the following issues: 1) the decision is arbitrary and capricious, and irrational bordering on impropriety, in that the Board failed to consider and/or properly weigh the required statutory factors. Appellant contends he has an excellent institutional record and release plan, and no aggravating factors exist. 2) as in prior interviews all the Board did was to look only at the instant offense. 3) the decision was predetermined. 4) the Board decision failed to make required findings of fact or to provide details. 5) the co-defendant is out. 6) the Board illegally resentenced him.

Discretionary release to parole is not to be granted “merely as a reward for good conduct or efficient performance of duties while confined but after considering if there is a reasonable probability that, if such inmate is released, he will live and remain at liberty without violating the law, **and** that his release is not incompatible with the welfare of society **and** will not so deprecate the seriousness of his crime as to undermine respect for the law.” Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) (emphasis added); accord Matter of Hamilton v. New York State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268, 990 N.Y.S.2d 714 (3d Dept. 2014). Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) requires the Board to consider criteria which is relevant to the specific inmate, including, but not limited to, the inmate’s institutional record and criminal behavior. People ex rel. Herbert v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881 (1st Dept. 1983). While consideration of these factors is mandatory, “the ultimate decision to parole a prisoner is discretionary.” Matter of Silmon v. Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 477, 718 N.Y.S.2d 704, 708 (2000). Thus, it is well settled that the weight to be accorded the requisite factors is solely within the Board’s discretion. See, e.g., Matter of Delacruz v. Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1413, 997 N.Y.S.2d 872 (4th Dept. 2014); Matter of Hamilton, 119 A.D.3d at 1271, 990 N.Y.S.2d at 717; Matter of Garcia v. New York State Div. of Parole, 239 A.D.2d 235, 239, 657 N.Y.S.2d 415, 418 (1st Dept. 1997). The Board need not explicitly refer to each factor in its decision, nor give them equal weight. Matter of Betancourt v. Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1497, 49 N.Y.S.3d 315 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of LeGeros v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 139 A.D.3d 1068, 30 N.Y.S.3d 834 (2d Dept. 2016); Matter of Phillips v. Dennison, 41 A.D.3d 17, 21, 834 N.Y.S.2d 121, 124 (1st Dept. 2007).

That inmate’s prior criminal record and brutal nature of offense for which incarcerated resulted in parole denial does not reflect irrationality bordering on impropriety. Matter of Partee v. Evans, 117 A.D.3d 1258, 1259, 984 N.Y.S.2d 894 (3d Dept.), lv. denied, 24 N.Y.3d 901, 995 N.Y.S.2d 710 (2014). Dudley v Travis, 227 A.D.2d 863, 642 N.Y.S.2d 386, 387 (3d Dept 1996), leave to appeal denied 88 N.Y.2d 812, 649 N.Y.S.2d 379; Borcsock v New York State Division of Parole, 34 A.D.3d 961, 823 N.Y.S.2d 310 lv. den. 8 N.Y.3d 803, 830 N.Y.S.2d 699 (3d Dept. 2006); Bush v Annucci, 148 A.D.3d 1392, 50 N.Y.S.3d 180 (3d Dept. 2017).

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The Board may acknowledge the senseless nature of the crime. Sanchez v Dennison, 21 A.D.3d 1249, 801 N.Y.S.2d 423 (3d Dept. 2005); Dorman v New York State Board of Parole, 30 A.D.3d 880, 816 N.Y.S.2d 765 (3d Dept. 2006).

That inmate's prior criminal record and nature of offenses for which incarcerated resulted in parole denial does not reflect irrationality bordering on impropriety. Matter of Singh v. Evans, 118 A.D.3d 1209, 987 N.Y.S.2d 271 (3d Dept.), lv. denied, 24 N.Y.3d 906, 995 N.Y.S.2d 715 (2014).

Although the Board placed particular emphasis on the escalation of petitioner's criminal history and nature of the instant offense, it is not required to give equal weight to or specifically discuss all factors it considered in making its determination." Matter of Symmonds v. Dennison, 21 A.D.3d 1171, 1172, 801 N.Y.S.2d 90, 90 (3d Dept.), lv. denied, 6 N.Y.3d 701, 810 N.Y.S.2d 415 (2005).

The Board may consider a district attorney's recommendation to deny parole. Matter of Applegate v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 2164 A.D.3d 996, 997, 82 N.Y.S.3d 240 (3d Dept. 2018); Matter of Porter v. Alexander, 63 A.D.3d 945, 881 N.Y.S.2d 157 (2d Dept. 2009); Matter of Walker v. Travis, 252 A.D.2d 360, 676 N.Y.S.2d 52 (1st Dept. 1998); Matter of Walker v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 218 A.D.2d 891, 630 N.Y.S.2d 417 (3d Dept. 1995); Matter of Williams v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 220 A.D.2d 753, 633 N.Y.S.2d 182 (2d Dept. 1995); Matter of Confoy v. New York State Div. of Parole, 173 A.D.2d 1014, 569 N.Y.S.2d 846, 847 (3d Dept. 1991); Matter of Lynch v. New York State Div. of Parole, 82 A.D.2d 1012, 442 N.Y.S.2d 179 (3d Dept. 1981).

The Board may consider the inmates minimizing of their role in the crime. Serrano v New York State Executive Department-Division of Parole, 261 A.D.2d 163, 689 N.Y.S.2d 504, 505 (1st Dept 1999).

Appellant's COMPAS scores were not positive in categories of risk of arrest, risk of absconding, and risk of substance abuse. The Board may consider negative aspects of the COMPAS instrument. Matter of Bush v. Annucci, 148 A.D.3d 1392, 50 N.Y.S.3d 180 (3d Dept. 2017) (COMPAS instrument with mixed results including substance abuse relevant given use before crime); Matter of Wade v. Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1487, 52 N.Y.S.3d 508 (3d Dept. 2017) (low risk felony violence but probable risk for substance abuse alcohol related crimes); Matter of Crawford v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 144 A.D.3d 1308, 46 N.Y.S.3d 228 (3d Dept. 2016) (scores not uniformly low including family support), lv. denied, 29 N.Y.3d 901, 57 N.Y.S.3d 704 (2017).

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The Board may place greater weight on the nature of the crime without the existence of any aggravating factors. Matter of Hamilton v. New York State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268, 990 N.Y.S.2d 714 (3d Dept. 2014).

As for an alleged similarity to prior Board decisions, since the Board is required to consider the same statutory factors each time an inmate appears before it, then it follows that the same aspects of the individual's record may again constitute the primary grounds for the denial of parole. Hakim v Travis, 302 A.D.2d 821, 754 N.Y.S.2d 600 (3d Dept 2003); Nelson v New York State Parole Board, 274 A.D.2d 719, 711 N.Y.S.2d 792 (3d Dept 2000); Bridget v Travis, 300 A.D.2d 776, 750 N.Y.S.2d 795 (3d Dept 2002). Per Executive Law §259-i(2)(c)(A), the Board is required to consider the same factors each time he appears in front of them. Williams v New York State Division of Parole, 70 A.D.3d 1106, 894 N.Y.S.2d 224 (3d Dept. 2010) lv.den. 14 N.Y.3d 709, 901 N.Y.S.2d 143.

As for the required three part statutory standard, contrary to appellant's claim, the Board is not required to repeat the language of the statute verbatim. Rather, it need merely insure that sufficient facts are in the decision which comply with the standard-which it has clearly done in this case. The factors cited, which were appellant's brutal and senseless instant offense, minimizing his role in the crime, escalation of his criminal history, DA opposition, and mixed COMPAS scores, show the required statutory findings were in fact made in this case. Language used in the decision which is only semantically different from the statutory language (e.g. continued incarceration serves the community standards) is permissible. James v Chairman of the New York State Division of Parole, 19 A.D.3d 857, 796 N.Y.S.2d 735 (3d Dept. 2005); Miller v New York State Division of Parole, 72 A.D.3d 690, 897 N.Y.S.2d 726 (2d Dept. 2010). Although the Board's determination could have been stated more artfully, this is insufficient to annul the decision. Ek v Travis, 20 A.D.3d 667, 798 N.Y.S.2d 199 (3d Dept 2005). The Board's failure to recite the precise statutory language of the first sentence in support of its conclusion to deny parole release does not undermine its determination. Silvero v Dennison, 28 A.D.3d 859, 811 N.Y.S.2d 822 (3d Dept. 2006); Reed v Evans, 94 A.D.3d 1323, 942 N.Y.S.2d 387 (3d Dept. 2012); Mullins v New York State Board of Parole, 136 A.D.3d 1141, 25 N.Y.S.3d 698 (3d Dept. 2016).

The Board's decision satisfied the criteria set out in Executive Law § 259-i(2)(a), as it was sufficiently detailed to inform the inmate of the reasons for the denial of parole. Matter of Applegate v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 164 A.D.3d 996, 997, 82 N.Y.S.3d 240 (3d Dept. 2018); Matter of Kozlowski v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 108 A.D.3d 435, 968 N.Y.S.2d 87 (1st Dept. 2013); Matter of Little v. Travis, 15 A.D.3d 698, 788 N.Y.S.2d 628 (3d Dept. 2005); Matter of Davis v. Travis, 292 A.D.2d 742, 739 N.Y.S.2d 300 (3d Dept. 2002); People ex rel. Herbert v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881 (1st Dept. 1983).

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There is no evidence the Board's decision was predetermined based upon the instant offense. Matter of Gonzalvo v. Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1021, 56 N.Y.S.3d 896 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Hakim-Zaki v. New York State Div. of Parole, 29 A.D.3d 1190, 814 N.Y.S.2d 414 (3d Dept. 2006); Matter of Guerin v. New York State Div. of Parole, 276 A.D.2d 899, 695 N.Y.S.2d 622 (3d Dept. 2000).

The sentence of the co-defendant expired years ago. In any event, the parole status of a co-defendant from the underlying criminal transaction is irrelevant. Due process does not require that it be considered. Each application for parole release is to be considered on its own individual merits, and the differing treatment of co-defendants is not a reliable indicator as to alleged inequitable treatment of this particular inmate. Lynch v U.S. Parole Commission, 768 F.2d 491, 497 (2d Cir. 1985); Baker v McCall, 543 F.Supp. 498, 501 (S.D.N.Y. 1981), affirmed 697 F.2d 287 (2d Cir. 1982).

Appellant's assertion that the denial of parole release amounted to an improper resentencing is without merit inasmuch as the Board fulfilled its obligation to determine the propriety of release per Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) and after considering the factors set forth therein. Executive Law § 259 et seq.; Penal Law § 70.40; Matter of Murray v. Evans, 83 A.D.3d 1320, 920 N.Y.S.2d 745 (3d Dept. 2011); Matter of Crews v. New York State Exec. Dept. Bd. of Parole Appeals Unit, 281 A.D.2d 672, 720 N.Y.S.2d 855 (3d Dept. 2001). The Board was vested with discretion to determine whether release was appropriate notwithstanding the minimum period of incarceration set by the Court. Matter of Burress v. Dennison, 37 A.D.3d 930, 829 N.Y.S.2d 283 (3d Dept. 2007); Matter of Cody v. Dennison, 33 A.D.3d 1141, 1142, 822 N.Y.S.2d 677 (3d Dept. 2006), lv. denied, 8 N.Y.3d 802, 830 N.Y.S.2d 698 (2007). The appellant has not in any manner been resentenced. Matter of Mullins v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 136 A.D.3d 1141, 1142, 25 N.Y.S.3d 698 (3d Dept. 2016).

Denial of parole is neither arbitrary nor capricious when the Parole Board relied on the factors defined by the New York statute. Hodge v Griffin, 2014 WL 2453333(S.D.N.Y. 2014) citing Romer v Travis, 2003 WL 21744079. An arbitrary action is one without sound basis in reason and without regard to the facts. Rationality is what is reviewed under an arbitrary and capricious standard. Hamilton v New York State Division of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268, 990 N.Y.S.2d 714 (3d Dept. 2014). An action is arbitrary and capricious when it is taken without sound basis in reason or regard to the facts. Ward v City of Long Beach, 20 N.Y.3d 1042 (2013).

The appellant has failed to demonstrate that the Parole Board's determination was affected by a showing of irrationality bordering on impropriety. Matter of Silmon v Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 718 N.Y.S.2d 704 (2001); Matter of Russo v New York State Board of Parole, 50 N.Y.2d 69, 77, 427 N.Y.S.2d 982 (1980).

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In the absence of a convincing demonstration that the Board did not consider the statutory factors, it must be presumed that the Board fulfilled its duty. Matter of Fuchino v. Herbert, 255 A.D.2d 914, 914, 680 N.Y.S.2d 389, 390 (4th Dept. 1998); Matter of McLain v. New York State Div. of Parole, 204 A.D.2d 456, 611 N.Y.S.2d 629 (2d Dept. 1994); Matter of McKee v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 157 A.D.2d 944, 945, 550 N.Y.S.2d 204, 205 (3d Dept. 1990); People ex rel. Herbert, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881.

Recommendation: Affirm.