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Administrative Appeal Decision - Bai, Stephen (2019-05-10)

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STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DECISION NOTICE

Name: Bai, Stephen

Facility: Greene CF

NYSID: [REDACTED]

Appeal Control No.: 10-119-18 B

DIN: 17-A-2924

Appearances: Christina F. Myers, Esq.
Greene County Public Defender
411 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Catskill, New York 12414

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

Board Member(s) who participated: Cruse, Demosthenes.

Papers considered: Appellant’s Brief received February 11, 2019


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 _____
Commjssioner

 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 5/10/19 66.

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APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

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Appellant challenges the October 2018 determination of the Board, denying release and imposing a 24-month hold.

Appellant raises the following issues in his brief: (1) the Board's decision was arbitrary, capricious, made in violation of applicable legal authority, and relied too heavily upon the serious nature of Appellant's current conviction; (2) Appellant's "institutional adjustment", programming, vocational training, receipt of an Earned Eligibility Certificate (EEC), and remorse were not given sufficient consideration by the Board; (3) the Board's decision lacked sufficient detail; (4) certain issues were not discussed during the interview such as Appellant's "suspect" COMPAS instrument; (5) the Board's decision was tantamount to a resentencing of Appellant; and (6) the 24-month hold was excessive.

As to the first two issues, 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. 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; 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. 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.

Appellant's receipt of an EEC does not automatically guarantee his release, and it does not eliminate consideration of the statutory factors including the instant offense. Matter of Milling v. Berbary, 31 A.D.3d 1202, 1203, 819 N.Y.S.2d 373, 374 (4th Dept.), lv. denied, 7 N.Y.3d 808, 809, 822 N.Y.S.2d 481 (2006); Matter of White v. Dennison, 29 A.D.3d 1144, 814 N.Y.S.2d 393 (3d Dept. 2006); Matter of Barad v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 275 A.D.2d 856, 713 N.Y.S.2d 775, 776 (3d Dept. 2000), lv. denied, 96 N.Y.2d 702, 722 N.Y.S.2d 793 (2001). Where an inmate has been awarded an EEC, the Board may deny release to parole on a finding that there is a

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reasonable probability that, if such inmate is released, the inmate will not live and remain at liberty without violating the law, and that his release is not compatible with the welfare of society. Correction Law §805; Matter of Heitman v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 214 A.D.2d 673, 625 N.Y.S.2d 264 (2d Dept. 1995); Matter of Salcedo v. Ross, 183 A.D.2d 771, 771, 583 N.Y.S.2d 502, 503 (1st Dept. 1992); Matter of Walker v. Russi, 176 A.D.2d 1185, 576 N.Y.S.2d 51 (3d Dept. 1991), appeal dismissed, 79 N.Y.2d 89 7, 581 N.Y.S.2d 660 (1992). The standard set forth in Executive Law §259-i(2)(c)(A) requiring consideration of whether the inmate's release will so deprecate the seriousness of his crime as to undermine respect for the law does not apply in cases where an EEC has been awarded.

Inasmuch as Appellant disputes the Board's finding with respect to insight and remorse, it was well within the Board's authority to make an assessment of Appellant's credibility (Matter of Siao-Pao v. Dennison, 51 A.D.3d 105, 108, 854 N.Y.S.2d 348, 351 (1st Dept.), aff'd, 11 N.Y.3d 777, 866 N.Y.S.2d 602 (2008)). Also, the Board is permitted to conclude that the serious nature of the inmate's offense, as well as limited insight and/or remorse, outweigh other factors. See, e.g., Matter of Silmon v. Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 478, 718 N.Y.S.2d 704 (2000), aff'g 266 A.D.2d 296, 297, 698 N.Y.S.2d 685, 686 (2d Dept. 1999); Matter of Beodeker v. Stanford, 164 A.D.3d 1555, 82 N.Y.S.3d 669 (3d Dept. 2018); Matter of Crawford v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 144 A.D.3d 1308, 46 N.Y.S.3d 228 (3d Dept. 2016), lv. denied, 29 N.Y.3d 901, 57 N.Y.S.3d 704 (2017); Matter of Almeyda v. New York State Div. of Parole, 290 A.D.2d 505, 736 N.Y.S.2d 275 (2d Dept. 2002); Matter of Serrano v. N.Y. State Exec. Dep't-Div. of Parole, 261 A.D.2d 163, 164, 689 N.Y.S.2d 504, 505 (1st Dept. 1999).

As to the third issue, the Board's decision satisfied the criteria set out in Executive Law § 259-i(2)(a) and 9 N.Y.C.R.R. § 8002.3(d), 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).

As to the fourth issue, Appellant was provided the opportunity to discuss with the Board during the interview any issues of interest, and cannot now be heard to complain that certain issues were not discussed, or the extent to which certain issues were discussed. See Matter of Serna v. New York State Division of Parole, 279 A.D.2d 684, 719 N.Y.S. 2d 166 (3d Dept. 2001); Matter of Garcia v. New York State Div. of Parole, 239 A.D.2d 235, 657 N.Y.S.2d 415 (1st Dept. 1997).

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As to the fifth issue, 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. See 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). 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).

As to the sixth issue, the Board has discretion to hold an inmate for a period of up to 24 months. Executive Law § 259-i(2)(a) and 9 N.Y.C.R.R. § 8002.3(b); Matter of Tatta v. State of N.Y., Div. of Parole, 290 A.D.2d 907, 737 N.Y.S.2d 163 (3d Dept. 2002), lv. denied, 98 N.Y.2d 604, 746 N.Y.S.2d 278 (2002); Matter of Campbell v. Evans, 106 A.D.3d 1363, 965 N.Y.S.2d 672 (3d Dept. 2013). Therefore, the hold of 24 months was not excessive or improper.

Recommendation: Affirm.