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Administrative Appeal Decision - Hanner, Tonya (2019-06-06)

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STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DECISION NOTICE

Name: Hanner, Tonya

Facility: Edgecombe RTF

NYSID: [REDACTED]

Appeal Control No.: 09-180-18 B

DIN: 17-G-1015

Appearances: Joanne Best Esq.
Orleans County Public Defender
1 South Main Street
Suite #5
Albion, New York 14411

Decision appealed: September 2018 decision, denying discretionary release and imposing a hold of 14 months.

Board Member(s) who participated: Berliner, Agostini

Papers considered: Appellant’s Brief received January 29, 2019

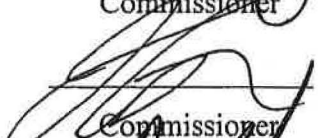
Appeals Unit Review: Statement of the Appeals Unit’s Findings and Recommendation

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:


Commissioner

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 _____

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 6/6/19 cc.

Distribution: Appeals Unit – Appellant - Appellant’s Counsel - Inst. Parole File - Central File P-2002(B) (11/2018)

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

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Appellant challenges the September 2018 determination of the Board, denying release and imposing a 14-month hold. Appellant raises the following claims: 1) the interview was not done in person face to face, but rather, illegally by video-conference. 2) appellant was prejudiced when she was not allowed to review the entire contents of her Board of Parole file. 3) the decision was arbitrary and capricious in that the Board failed to consider and/or properly weigh the required statutory factors, which include an excellent institutional record and release plan. 4) the Board ignored her EEC. 5) the COMPAS had errors on it.

The use of teleconferencing technology to conduct parole release interviews is permissible. It does not prejudice the inmate and is consistent with the requirement that a parole candidate be “personally interviewed.” Matter of Webb v. Travis, 26 A.D.3d 614, 810 N.Y.S.2d 233 (3d Dept. 2006); Matter of Mack v Travis, 283 A.D.2d 700, 723 N.Y.S.2d 905 (3d Dept. 2001); Matter of Vanier v. Travis, 274 A.D.2d 797, 711 N.Y.S.2d 920 (3d Dept. 2000); see also Yourdon v. Johnson, No. 01-CV-0812ESC, 2006 WL 2811710, at *3 (W.D.N.Y. Sept. 28, 2006); Boddie v. New York State Div. of Parole, 288 F.Supp.2d 431, 441 (S.D.N.Y. 2003).

Counsel never made any request to review the contents of appellant’s parole file. In any event, an inmate has no constitutional right to the information in her parole file, Billiteri v U.S. Board of Parole, 541 F.2d 938, 944-945 (2d Cir. 1976), and generally is not entitled to confidential material, Matter of Justice v. Comm’r of New York State Dep’t of Corr. & Cmty. Supervision, 130 A.D.3d 1342, 15 N.Y.S.3d 853 (3d Dept. 2015); Matter of Perez v. New York State Div. of Parole, 294 A.D.2d 726, 741 N.Y.S.2d 753 (3d Dept. 2002); Matter of Macklin v. Travis, 274 A.D.2d 821, 711 N.Y.S.2d 915, 916 (3d Dept. 2000). The Board may consider confidential information. Matter of Molinar v. New York State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1214, 991 N.Y.S.2d 487 (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). Whereas here the inmate has received an EEC, the Board may deny release to parole on a finding that there is a reasonable probability that, if such inmate is released, the inmate will not live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that her 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). 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. Matter of Delacruz v. Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1413, 997 N.Y.S.2d 872 (4th Dept. 2014);

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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 fact that the Board afforded greater weight to the inmate's criminal history (she has 35 convictions), as opposed to other positive factors, does not render the denial of parole for that reason irrational or improper. Matter of Davis v. Evans, 105 A.D.3d 1305, 963 N.Y.S.2d 485 (3d Dept. 2013); Matter of Lashway v. Evans, 110 A.D.3d 1417, 1418, 974 N.Y.S.2d 164, 165 (3d Dept. 2013); Matter of McKee v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 157 A.D.2d 944, 550 N.Y.S.2d 204 (3d Dept. 1990).

Although the Board placed particular emphasis on the nature of the crime, the Board considered other factors and was not required to give equal weight to or discuss each factor considered. Matter of Mullins v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 136 A.D.3d 1141, 25 N.Y.S.3d 698 (3d Dept. 2016); Matter of Feilzer v. New York State Div. of Parole, 131 A.D.3d 1321, 1322, 16 N.Y.S.3d 341, 341 (3d Dept. 2015).

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).

The Board may consider an inmate's history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. Matter of Gonzalvo v. Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1021, 56 N.Y.S.3d 896 (3d Dept. 2017) (substance abuse history and risk of future drug abuse); Matter of Dean v. New York State Div. of Parole, 21 A.D.3d 1207, 1208, 801 N.Y.S.2d 92, 93 (3d Dept. 2005) (involvement with weapons and drugs), lv. denied, 6 N.Y.3d 705, 812 N.Y.S.2d 34 (2006); Matter of Sanchez v. Dennison, 21 A.D.3d 1249, 801 N.Y.S.2d 423 (3d Dept. 2005) (history of drug abuse); Matter of Lull v. Travis, 287 A.D.2d 845, 846, 731 N.Y.S.2d 405, 406 (3d Dept. 2001) (drug abuse); Matter of Brant v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 236 A.D.2d 760, 761, 654 N.Y.S.2d 207, 208 (3d Dept. 1997) (history of alcohol and drug abuse); Matter of McLain v. New York State Div. of Parole, 204 A.D.2d 456, 611 N.Y.S.2d 629 (2d Dept. 1994) (history of alcohol abuse); People ex rel. Herbert v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881, 884 (1st Dept. 1983) (drug addiction); Matter of Maciag v. Hammock, 88 A.D.2d 1106, 453 N.Y.S.2d 56 (3d Dept. 1982) [REDACTED]

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,

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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). Appellant did not challenge the COMPAS report scores during the interview, and in the absence of any evidence the Board's determination was meaningfully affected by an error of fact, the Board's decision will not be disturbed and thereby waived the issue. See Matter of Gordon v. Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1502, 50 N.Y.S.3d 627 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Rivera v. Stanford, 53 N.Y.S.3d 404, 149 A.D.3d 1445 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Morrison v. Evans, 81 A.D.3d 1073, 916 N.Y.S.2d 655 (3d Dept. 2011). In view of the inmate's failure to raise purported errors in the COMPAS instrument when given the opportunity to discuss the matter at the interview, and in the absence of any evidence the Board's determination was meaningfully affected by an error of fact, the Board's decision will not be disturbed. Matter of Paniagua v. Stanford, Index # 0913-16, *Decision & Order* dated Oct. 20, 2016 (Sup. Ct. Sullivan Co.)(Schick J.S.C.), aff'd, 153 A.D.3d 1018, 56 N.Y.S.3d 894 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Mercer v. New York State Dep't of Corr. & Cmty. Supervision, Index # 5872-13, *Decision/Order/Judgment* dated April 7, 2014 (Sup. Ct. Albany Co.)(Ceresia J.S.C.).

Receipt of an EEC does not preclude denial of parole. 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 Romer v. Dennison, 24 A.D.3d 866, 867, 804 N.Y.S.2d 872, 873 (3d Dept. 2005); 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). An EEC does not automatically entitle an inmate to discretionary release or eliminate consideration of the statutory factors including the instant offense. Matter of Corley v. New York State Div. of Parole, 33 A.D.3d 1142, 1143, 822 N.Y.S.2d 817, 818 (3d Dept. 2006); Matter of Pearl v. New York State Div. of Parole, 25 A.D.3d 1058, 808 N.Y.S.2d 816, 817 (3d Dept. 2006); Matter of White v. Dennison, 29 A.D.3d 1144, 814 N.Y.S.2d 393 (3d Dept. 2006). Moreover, the Board is not required to give each factor equal weight. Matter of Corley, 33 A.D.3d 1142, 1143, 822 N.Y.S.2d 817, 818; Matter of Pearl, 25 A.D.3d 1058, 808 N.Y.S.2d 816, 817. The Board may deny release to parole on a finding that there is a 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 (2d 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).

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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). Denial is neither arbitrary nor capricious when the Board relies on factors defined by New York statute. Siao-Paul v. Connolly, 564 F. Supp. 2d 232, 242 (S.D.N.Y. 2008).

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.