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### Administrative Appeal Decision - Velez, Jose (2019-01-31)

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STATE OF NEW YORK- BOARD OF PAROLE

Administrative Appeal Decision Notice

Inmate Name: Velez, Jose

Facility: Gowanda Correctional Facility

NYSID No.: [REDACTED]

Appeal Control #: 05-176-18-B

Dept. DIN#: 93A5403

Appearances:

For the Board, the Appeals Unit

For Appellant:

Marshall Nadan Esq.

P.O. Box 4091

Kingston, New York 12402

Board Member(s) who participated in appealed from decision: Davis, Shapiro, Smith

Decision appealed from: 5/2018-Denial of discretionary release, with imposition of 24 month hold.

Pleadings considered: Brief on behalf of the appellant received on October 23, 2018.

Statement of the Appeals Unit's Findings and Recommendation

Documents relied upon: Presentence Investigation Report, Parole Board Report, Interview Transcript, Parole Board Release Decision (Form 9026), COMPAS, TAP/Case Plan.

Final Determination: The undersigned have determined that the decision from which this appeal was taken be and the same is hereby

Affirmed \_\_\_ Reversed for De Novo Interview \_\_\_ Modified to \_\_\_

Commissioner

Affirmed \_\_\_ Reversed for De Novo Interview \_\_\_ Modified to \_\_\_

Commissioner

Affirmed \_\_\_ Reversed 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 11/31/19 66.

Distribution: Appeals Unit - Inmate - Inmate's Counsel - Inst. Parole File - Central File  
P-2002(B) (5/2011)

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

**STATEMENT OF APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION**

**Inmate Name:** Velez, Jose

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**Findings:**

Counsel for the appellant has submitted a brief to serve as the perfected appeal. The brief raises the following issues: 1) the Board decision is arbitrary and capricious, and irrational bordering on impropriety. Appellant claims he has an excellent institutional record and release plan, but all the Board did was to look only at the instant offense/criminal history, and lack of sex offender program completion, which was not his fault. 2) the Board failed to make required findings of fact, or to provide details. 3) the decision was predetermined. 4) the decision resentenced him. 5) the Board failed to comply with the 2011 amendments to the Executive Law in that the COMPAS was ignored, and the statutes are now future/forward and rehabilitation based.

In response, pursuant to Executive Law §259-i(2)(c), the Parole Board must consider criteria which is relevant to the specific inmate, including, but not limited to, the inmate's institutional record or criminal behavior, giving whatever emphasis they so choose to each factor. In re Garcia v. New York State Division of Parole, 239 A.D.2d 235, 657 N.Y.S.2d 415 (1<sup>st</sup> Dept. 1997); People ex rel. Herbert v. New York State Board of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881 (1<sup>st</sup> Dept. 1983). The Board is not required to give equal weight to each statutory factor. Arena v New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 156 A.D.3d 1101, 65 N.Y.S.3d 471 (3d Dept. 2017); Mays v Stanford, 150 A.D.3d 1521, 55 N.Y.S.3d 502 (3d Dept. 2017); Marszalek v Stanford, 152 A.D.3d 773, 59 N.Y.S.3d 432 (2d Dept. 2017); Paniagua v Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1018, 56 N.Y.S.3d 894 (3d Dept. 2017); Esquilin v New York State Board of Parole, 144 A.D.3d 846, 40 N.Y.S.3d 279 (2<sup>nd</sup> Dept. 2016); Kenefick v Sticht, 139 A.D.3d 1380, 31 N.Y.S.3d 367 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 2016); LeGeros v New York State Board of Parole, 139 A.D.3d 1068, 30 N.Y.S.3d 834 (2d Dept. 2016); De la Cruz v Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1413, 997 N.Y.S.2d 872 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 2014); Phillips v Dennison, 41 A.D.3d 17, 834 N.Y.S.2d 121 (1<sup>st</sup> Dept. 2007); That an inmate has numerous achievements within a prison's institutional setting does not automatically entitle him to parole release. Matter of Faison v. Travis, 260 A.D.2d 866, 688 N.Y.S.2d 782 (3d Dept. 1999); Pulliam v Dennison, 38 A.D.3d 963, 832 N.Y.S.2d 304 (3d Dept. 2007). Moreover, per Executive Law §259-i(2)(c), an application for parole release shall not be granted merely as a reward for appellant's good conduct or achievements while incarcerated. Larrier v New York State Board of Parole Appeals Unit, 283 A.D.2d 700, 723 N.Y.S.2d 902, 903 (3d Dept 2001); Vasquez v State of New York Executive Department, Division of Parole, 20 A.D.3d 668, 797 N.Y.S.2d 655 (3d Dept. 2005); Wellman v Dennison, 23 A.D.3d 974, 805 N.Y.S.2d 159 (3d Dept. 2005).

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

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**Findings:** (continued from page 1)

The Board may place particular emphasis upon the nature of the offenses. Mullins v New York State Board of Parole, 136 A.D.3d 1141, 25 N.Y.S.3d 698 (3d Dept. 2016). The Board in its discretion properly placed greater emphasis on the present offenses, as it is not required to give equal weight to all requisite factors. Wiley v State of New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 139 A.D.3d 1289, 32 N.Y.S.3d 370 (3d Dept. 2016); Peralta v New York State Board of Parole, 157 A.D.3d 1151, 69 N.Y.S.3d 885 (3d Dept. 2018).

The Board may consider the deviant and hideous nature of the crime. Wellman v Dennison, 23 A.D.3d 974, 805 N.Y.S.2d 159 (3d Dept. 2005). The Board may cite the devious, manipulative and cunning acts committed by the inmate against people whom had placed their trust in the inmate. Romer v Dennison, 24 A.D.3d 866, 804 N.Y.S.2d 872 (3d Dept. 2005).

Denial of parole due to a need to take more rehabilitative programming is appropriate. Warburton v Department of Correctional Services, 254 A.D.2d 659, 680 N.Y.S.2d 26 (3d Dept 1998), appeal dismissed, leave to appeal denied 92 N.Y.2d 1041, 685 N.Y.S.2d 416 (1999); People ex rel. Justice v Russi, 226 A.D.2d 821, 641 N.Y.S.2d 143, 144 (3d Dept 1996); Odom v Henderson, 57 A.D.2d 710, 395 N.Y.S.2d 533 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept 1977); Connelly v New York State Division of Parole, 286 A.D.2d 792, 729 N.Y.S.2d 808, 809 (3d Dept 2001), appeal dismissed 97 N.Y.2d 677, 738 N.Y.S.2d 291 (2001). That DOCS delayed permitting the inmate to take sex offender programming does not create any cause of action, as determinations regarding when an inmate will be eligible and available for treatment programming is within the discretionary authority of DOCS. Wakefield v Fisscher, 108 A.D.3d 805, 968 N.Y.S.2d 255 (3d Dept. 2013).

The Board did consider the COMPAS, which was mixed, in that he was a medium risk on history of violence, which is relevant to his risk of re-offense. Bush v Annucci, 148 A.D.3d 1392, 50 N.Y.S.3d 180 (3d Dept. 2017). The COMPAS can contain negative factors that support the Board's conclusion. Wade v Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1487, 52 N.Y.S.3d 508 (3d Dept. 2017).

The Board may consider the inmate's past history of violent behavior. People ex rel. Herbert v New York State Board of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881, 884 (1<sup>st</sup> Dept 1983); People ex rel. Henson v Miller, 244 A.D.2d 729, 664 N.Y.S.2d 655 (3d Dept 1997), leave to appeal denied 91 N.Y.2d 809, 670 N.Y.S.2d 403 (1998); Vasquez v New York State Division of Parole, 215 A.D.2d 856, 626 N.Y.S.2d 332 (3d Dept 1995); Ward v New York State Division of Parole, 144 A.D.3d 1375, 40 N.Y.S.3d 803 (3d Dept. 2016); Mays v Stanford, 150 A.D.3d 1521, 55 N.Y.S.3d 502 (3d Dept. 2017); Allen v Stanford, 161 A.D.3d 1503, 78 N.Y.S.3d 445 (3d Dept. 2018).

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

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**Findings:** (continued from page 2)

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).

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 bizarre and deviant instant offenses, mixed COMPAS scores, past history of violent behavior, and need for further programming, 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 it's 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).

There is a presumption of honesty and integrity that attaches to Judges and administrative factfinders. People ex.rel. Johnson v New York State Board of Parole, 180 A.D.2d 914, 580 N.Y.S.2d 957, 959 (3d Dept 1992); Withrow v Larkin, 421 U.S. 35, 47, 95 S.Ct. 1456, 43 L.Ed2d 712 (1975). And, Courts presume the Parole Board follows its statutory commands and internal policies in fulfilling its obligations. Garner v Jones, 529 U.S. 244, 120 S.Ct. 1362, 1371, 146 L.Ed2d 236 (2000). The decision was not predetermined. Dean v New York State Division of Parole, 21 A.D.3d 1207, 801 N.Y.S.2d 92 (3d Dept. 2005) lv. den. 6 N.Y.3d 705 (2006); Hakim-Zaki v New York State Division of Parole, 29 A.D.3d 1190, 814 N.Y.S.2d 414 (3d Dept. 2006).

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

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**Appeal Control #:** 05-176-18-B

**Findings:** (continued from page 3)

There is no merit to the inmate's contention that the parole interview was improperly conducted or that he was denied a fair interview. Black v New York State Board of Parole, 54 A.D.3d 1076, 863 N.Y.S.2d 521 (3d Dept. 2008); Rivers v Evans, 119 A.D.3d 1188, 989 N.Y.S.2d 400 (3d Dept. 2014); Mays v Stanford, 150 A.D.3d 1521, 55 N.Y.S.3d 502 (3d Dept. 2017).

The Board set forth in adequate detail the reasons for its denial of the inmate's request for release. Burress v Evans, 107 A.D.3d 1216, 967 N.Y.S.2d 486 (3d Dept. 2013). The written Board decision in this case contains sufficient detail. McLain v New York State Division of Parole, 204 A.D.2d 456, 611 N.Y.S.2d 629 (2d Dept 1994); Walker v Russi, 176 A.D.2d 1185, 576 N.Y.S.2d 51 (3d Dept 1991), appeal dismissed 79 N.Y.2d 897, 581 N.Y.S.2d 660 (1992); Thomas v Superintendent of Arthur Kill Correctional Facility, 124 A.D.2d 848, 508 N.Y.S.2d 564 (2d Dept 1986), appeal dismissed 69 N.Y.2d 611, 517 N.Y.S.2d 1025 (1987); De la Cruz v Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1413, 997 N.Y.S.2d 872 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 2014); Betancourt v Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1497, 49 N.Y.S.3d 315 (3d Dept. 2017); Robinson v New York State Board of Parole, 162 A.D.3d 1450, 81 N.Y.S.3d 235 (3d Dept. 2018); Applegate v New York State Board of Parole, 164 A.D.3d 996, 82 N.Y.S.3d 240 (3d Dept. 2018).

A claim that the denial of parole release amounted to a resentencing is without merit. Kalwasinski v Patterson, 80 A.D.3d 1065, 915 N.Y.S.2d 715 (3d Dept. 2011) lv.app.den. 16 N.Y.3d 710, 922 N.Y.S.2d 273 (2011); Marnell v Dennison, 35 A.D.3d 995, 824 N.Y.S.2d 812 (3d Dept. 2006) lv.den. 8 N.Y.3d 807, 833 N.Y.S.2d 426; Murray v Evans, 83 A.D.3d 1320, 920 N.Y.S.2d 745 (3d Dept. 2011); Gonzalez v Chair, New York State Board of Parole, 72 A.D.3d 1368, 898 N.Y.S.2d 737 (3d Dept. 2010); Borcsok v New York State Division of Parole, 34 A.D.3d 961, 823 N.Y.S.2d 310 (3d Dept. 2006) lv.den. 8 N.Y.3d 803, 830 N.Y.S.2d 699. The Board was vested with discretion to determine whether release was appropriate, notwithstanding what the minimum period of incarceration which was set by the Court. Cody v Dennison, 33 A.D.3d 1141, 1142 (3d Dept. 2006), lv.den. 8 N.Y.3d 2007; Burress v Dennison, 37 A.D.3d 930, 829 N.Y.S.2d 283 (3d Dept. 2007).

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

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**Appeal Control #:** 05-176-18-B

**Findings:** (continued from page 4)

Since the Board's decision was sufficiently detailed to inform the inmate of the reasons for the denial of parole, it satisfied the criteria set out in section 259-i of the Executive Law. Siao-Pao v Dennison, 11 N.Y.3d 777, 866 N.Y.S.2d 602 (Ct. App. 2008); Matter of Whitehead v. Russi, 201 A.D.2d 825, 607 N.Y.S.2d 751 (3d Dept. 1993); Matter of Green v. New York State Division of Parole, 199 A.D.2d 677, 605 N.Y.S.2d 148 (3d Dept. 1993). Moreover, the reasons stated by the Parole Board members for holding appellant are sufficient grounds to support their decision. People ex rel. Yates v. Walters, 111 A.D.2d 839, 490 N.Y.S.2d 573 (2d Dept. 1985); Matter of Ganci v Hammock, 99 A.D.2d 546, 471 N.Y.S.2d 630 (2d Dept. 1984); Matter of Vuksanaj v. Hammock, 93 A.D.2d 958, 463 N.Y.S.2d 61 (3d Dept. 1983); Matter of Pina v. Hammock, 89 A.D.2d 799, 453 N.Y.S.2d 479 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 1982). Since the Board's challenged decision was made in accordance with the pertinent statutory requirements, it exercised proper discretion in denying appellant early release on parole. In the Matter of Hawkins v. Travis, 259 A.D.2d 813, 686 N.Y.S.2d 198 (3d Dept. 1999), app. disp. 93 N.Y.2d 1033, 697 N.Y.S.2d 556 (1999); Matter of Barrett v. New York State Division of Parole, 242 A.D.2d 763, 661 N.Y.S.2d 857 (3d Dept. 1997).

As for the COMPAS, it was previously discussed. Appellant's claim that the Board failed to comply with the 2011 amendments to the Executive Law is rejected. Dolan v New York State Board of Parole, 122 A.D.3d 1058, 995 N.Y.S.2d 850 (3d Dept. 2014); Tran v Evans, 126 A.D.3d 1196, 3 N.Y.S.3d 633 (3d Dept. 2015); Boccadisi v Stanford, 133 A.D.3d 1169, 20 N.Y.S.3d 477 (3d Dept. 2015). Furthermore, the 2011 Executive Law amendments have been incorporated into the regulations adopted by the Board in 2017.

The 2011 amendments still permit the Board to place greater emphasis on the gravity of the crime. Matter of Montane v Evans, 116 A.D.3d 197, 981 N.Y.S.2d 866 (3d Dept.) appeal dismissed 24 N.Y.3d 1052, 999 N.Y.S.2d 360 (2014); Hamilton v New York State Division of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268, 990 N.Y.S.2d 714 (3d Dept. 2014); Moore v New York State Board of Parole, 137 A.D.3d 1375, 26 N.Y.S.3d 412 (3d Dept. 2016). The Board can still consider the nature of the inmate's crimes, the criminal history, the prison disciplinary record, the program accomplishments and post release plans. Rivera v New York State Division of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1107, 990 N.Y.S.2d 295 (3d Dept. 2014). The Board is obligated to consider the serious nature of the crime. Khatib v New York State Board of Parole, 118 A.D.3d 1207, 988 N.Y.S.2d 286 (3d Dept. 2014).

STATE OF NEW YORK - BOARD OF PAROLE

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**Findings:** (continued from page 5)

Notably, the 2011 amendments to the Executive Law did not change the three substantive standards that the Board is required to apply when deciding whether to grant parole, namely (1) whether “there is a reasonable probability that, if such inmate is released, he will live and remain at liberty without violating the law”; (2) whether release “is not incompatible with the welfare of society”; and (3) whether release “will not so deprecate the seriousness of his crime as to undermine respect for law.” *See* Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A). Even uniformly low COMPAS scores and other evidence of rehabilitation would not resolve the broader questions of society’s welfare, public perceptions of the seriousness of a crime, or whether release would undermine respect for the law. Thus the COMPAS cannot mandate a particular result, and declining to afford the COMPAS controlling weight does not violate the 2011 amendments. King v Stanford, 137 A.D.3d 1396, 26 N.Y.S.3d 815 (3d Dept 2016); Furman v Annucci, 138 A.D.3d 1269, 28 N.Y.S.3d 352 (3d Dept. 2016). The COMPAS is an additional consideration that the Board must weigh along with the statutory factors for purposes of deciding whether the three standards are satisfied. Rivera v New York State Division of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1107, 1108, 990 N.Y.S.2d 295 (3d Dept. 2014); Dawes v Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1059, 1061, 994 N.Y.S.2d 747 (3d Dept. 2014).

**Recommendation:**

Accordingly, it is recommended the decision of the Board be affirmed.