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STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DECISION NOTICE

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi Facility: Eastern NY CF

NYSID: [REDACTED] Appeal Control No.: 04-112-19 B

DIN: 93-A-8224

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

Decision appealed: March 2019 decision, denying discretionary release and imposing a hold of 18 months.


Board Member(s) who participated: Shapiro, Agostini, Demosthenes

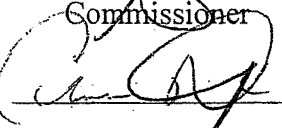
Papers considered: Appellant's Brief received June 4, 2019

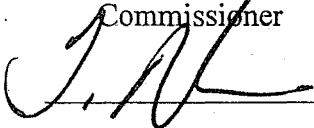
Appeals Unit Review: Statement of the Appeals Unit's Findings and Recommendation

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 _____
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 9/30/19 cc.

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 1 of 6)

Appellant challenges the March 2019 determination of the Board, denying release and imposing a 18-month hold. Appellant's instant offense involved him beating his 16 month old step-son to death. 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. 2) no aggravating factors exist. 3) the decision was predetermined. 4) the decision lacks detail. 5) the Board failed to list any factors in support of the cited statutory standard. 6) official opposition is old and was written prior to appellant's rehabilitation. 7) the Board ignored the minimum set by the Court and illegally resentenced him. 8) there is nothing in the record to indicate the appellant was violent to the [REDACTED] or in the military, and failing to even mention it during the interview but using it in the decision is unfair. 9) the Board failed to comply with the 2011 amendments to the Executive Law in that the COMPAS was ignored, and the statutes are now rehabilitation and forward/future based.

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).

Although the Board placed emphasis on the crime, the record reflects it also considered other appropriate factors and it was not required to place equal weight on each factor considered. Matter of Peralta v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 157 A.D.3d 1151, 69 N.Y.S.3d 885 (3d Dept. 2018). Although the Board placed emphasis on the crime, it was free to do so given all factors need not

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 2 of 6)

be given equal weight. Matter of Arena v. New York State Dep't of Corr. & Cmty. Supervision, 156 A.D.3d 1101, 65 N.Y.S.3d 471 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Gordon v. Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1502, 50 N.Y.S.3d 627 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of Mullins v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 136 A.D.3d 1141, 25 N.Y.S.3d 698 (3d Dept. 2016).

The fact that the Board afforded greater weight to the inmate's criminal history, 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).

The Board may consider an inmate's history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. Matter of Espinal v. New York Bd. of Parole, 2019 NY Slip Op 04080, 2019 N.Y. App. Div. LEXIS 4057 (3d Dept. May 23, 2019) (substance abuse history); 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 Llull 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) (██████████ Matter of Maciag v. Hammock, 88 A.D.2d 1106, 453 N.Y.S.2d 56 (3d Dept. 1982) (problem of alcohol and drug abuse with the concomitant need for programmed counseling).

The Board may consider the sentencing court's recommendation to deny parole. Matter of Rodriguez v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 168 A.D.3d 1342, 92 N.Y.S.3d 482 (3d Dept. 2019) (Board properly considered sentencing minutes which included court's recommendation against parole); Matter of Copeland v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 154 A.D.3d 1157, 63 N.Y.S.3d 548 (3d Dept. 2017) (same); Matter of Porter v. Alexander, 63 A.D.3d 945, 881 N.Y.S.2d 157 (2d Dept. 2009); Matter of Delman v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 93 A.D.2d 888, 461 N.Y.S.2d 406, 407 (2d Dept. 1983).

The Board has discretion, and may recount the crimes against the inmate in the decision and conclude the inmate's propensity for violence outweighs the alleged positive institutional record. Vargas v. New York State Board of Parole, 20 A.D.3d 738, 797 N.Y.S.2d 783 (3d Dept.); Valerio v. Dennison, 35 A.D.3d 938, 825 N.Y.S.2d 574 (3d Dept. 2006).

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 3 of 6)

The information concerning the [REDACTED] and Military incidents are right in the Pre-sentence Investigation Report. Pursuant to Executive Law sections 259-i(2)(c)(A) and 259-k(1), the Board is required to obtain official reports and may rely on the information contained therein. See, e.g., Matter of Silmon v. Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 474, 477, 718 N.Y.S.2d 704, 706, 708 (2000) (discussing former status report); Matter of Carter v. Evans, 81 A.D.3d 1031, 916 N.Y.S.2d 291 (3d Dept.) (presentence investigation report), lv. denied, 16 N.Y.3d 712, 923 N.Y.S.2d 416 (2011); see also Billiteri v. United States Bd. of Parole, 541 F.2d 938, 944-945 (2d Cir. 1976). To the extent Appellant contends the Board relied on erroneous information in the pre-sentence report, this is not the proper forum to raise the issue. Any challenge to the pre-sentence report must be made to the original sentencing court. Matter of Delrosario v. Stanford, 140 A.D.3d 1515, 34 N.Y.S.3d 696 (3d Dept. 2016); Matter of Wisniewski v. Michalski., 114 A.D.3d 1188, 979 N.Y.S.2d 745 (4th Dept. 2014); Matter of Vigliotti v. State of New York, Executive Div. of Parole, 98 A.D.3d 789, 950 N.Y.S.2d 619 (3d Dept. 2012). The Board is mandated to consider the report and is entitled to rely on the information contained in the report. Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A); 9 N.Y.C.R.R. § 8002.2(d)(7); Matter of Carter v. Evans, 81 A.D.3d 1031, 1031, 916 N.Y.S.2d 291, 293 (3d Dept.), lv. denied, 16 N.Y.3d 712, 923 N.Y.S.2d 416 (2011).

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).

There is a presumption of honesty and integrity that attaches to Judges and administrative fact-finders. See People ex rel. Carlo v. Bednosky, 294 A.D.2d 382, 383, 741 N.Y.S.2d 703 (2d Dept. 2002); People ex. rel. Johnson v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 180 A.D.2d 914, 916, 580 N.Y.S.2d 957, 959 (3d Dept. 1992). The Board is presumed to follow its statutory commands and internal policies in fulfilling its obligations. See Garner v. Jones, 529 U.S. 244, 256, 120 S. Ct. 1362, 1371 (2000). 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). Appellant has failed to overcome the presumption that the Board complied with its duty. See Matter of Davis v. New York State Div. of Parole, 114 A.D.2d 412, 494 N.Y.S.2d 136 (2d Dept. 1985).

That the Board “did not recite the precise statutory language of Executive Law § 259-i (2)(c)(A) in support of its conclusion to deny parole does not undermine its conclusion.” 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) (citation omitted); accord Matter of Reed v. Evans, 94 A.D.3d 1323, 942 N.Y.S.2d 387 (3d Dept. 2012). The language used by the Board was “only semantically different” from the statute. Matter

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 4 of 6)

of Miller v. New York State Div. of Parole, 72 A.D.3d 690, 691–92, 897 N.Y.S.2d 726, 727 (2d Dept. 2010); Matter of James v. Chairman of New York State Div. of Parole, 19 A.D.3d 857, 858, 796 N.Y.S.2d 735, 736 (3d Dept. 2005); see also 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) (upholding decision that denied release as “contrary to the best interest of the community”); Matter of Murray v. Evans, 83 A.D.3d 1320, 920 N.Y.S.2d 745 (3d Dept. 2011) (Board provided adequate statutory rationale).

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).

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). 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); Hanna v New York State Board of Parole, 169 A.D.3d 503, 92 N.Y.S.3d 621 (1st Dept. 2019).

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 5 of 6)

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).

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.

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). Courts must defer to the Parole Board's interpretation of its own regulations so long as it is rational and not arbitrary nor capricious. Brown v Stanford, 163 A.D.3d 1337, 82 N.Y.S.3d 622 (3d Dept. 2018); Peckham v. Calogero, 12 N.Y.3d 424, 883 N.Y.S.3d 751 (2009); Henry v. Coughlin, 214 A.D.2d 673, 625 N.Y.S.2d 578 (2d Dept. 1995).

Contrary to Appellant's claim, the 2011 amendments and 9 NYCRR § 8002.2(a) as amended do not represent a forward-looking shift requiring the COMPAS to be the fundamental basis for release decisions. This proposition is not supported by the language of the statute itself, considering the relatively modest change to Section 259-c(4) and the absence of any substantive change to Section 259-i(2), which governs the discretionary release consideration process. In 2011, the Executive Law was amended to require procedures incorporating risk and needs principles to "assist" the Board in making parole release decisions. Executive Law § 259-c(4). The Board satisfies this requirement in part by using the COMPAS instrument. Matter of Montane v. Evans, 116 A.D.3d 197, 202, 981 N.Y.S.2d 866, 870 (3d Dept. 2014); see also Matter of Hawthorne v. Stanford, 135 A.D.3d 1036, 1042, 22 N.Y.S.3d 640, 645 (3d Dept. 2016); Matter of LeGeros, 139 A.D.3d 1068, 30 N.Y.S.3d 834; Matter of Robles v. Fischer, 117 A.D.3d 1558, 1559, 985 N.Y.S.2d 386, 387 (4th Dept. 2014). However, the COMPAS is not predictive and was never intended to be the sole indicator of risk and needs as the Board gets risk and needs information from a variety of sources, including the statutory factors and the interview. Notably, the 2011 amendments did not eliminate the requirement that the Board conduct a case-by-case review of each inmate by considering the statutory factors, including the instant offense. Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A); Matter of Montane, 116 A.D.3d at 202, 981 N.Y.S.2d at 870. The amendments also did not change the three substantive standards that the Board is required to apply when deciding whether to grant parole. Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A). Thus, the COMPAS

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Richardson, Abdul-Qawi

DIN: 93-A-8224

Facility: Eastern NY CF

AC No.: 04-112-19 B

Findings: (Page 6 of 6)

instrument cannot mandate a particular result. Matter of King, 137 A.D.3d 1396, 26 N.Y.S.3d 815. Rather, the COMPAS is an additional consideration that the Board must weigh along with the statutory factors for the purposes of deciding whether all three statutory standards are satisfied. See Matter of Rivera v. N.Y. State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1107, 1108, 990 N.Y.S.2d 295 (3d Dept. 2014); accord Matter of Dawes v. Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1059, 994 N.Y.S.2d 747 (3d Dept. 2014); see also Matter of Gonzalvo v. Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1021, 56 N.Y.S.3d 896 (3d Dept. 2017). The Board is not required to give the COMPAS and case plan greater weight than the other statutory factors. Matter of Lewis v. Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1478, 59 N.Y.S.3d 726 (3d Dept. 2017).

Recommendation: Affirm.