



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR  
**PRISONER REVIEW BOARD**

***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION- April 24, 2025**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on April 24, 2025, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for the following individuals in custody:

<b>K83547</b>	<b>Hixson, Falanzo (Youthful Parole)</b>
<b>R51606</b>	<b>Woodson, Antonio* (Youthful Parole)</b>
<b>L01404</b>	<b>Pitts, Eddie (Indeterminate)</b>
<b>C61253</b>	<b>Norals, Ricardo (Indeterminate)</b>

The meeting was called to order by Kenneth Tupy, Board Member.

Roll call was taken by Recording Secretary Ellen Wayne

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>PRESENT</u></b>	<b><u>ABSENT</u></b>
Mr. Jared Bohland	X	
Mr. Matthew Coates	X	
Mr. William Delgado		X
Ms. Julie Globokar	X	
Mr. Jeffrey Grubbs	X	
Mr. Rodger Heaton	X	
Ms. Robin Shoffner		X
Ms. Carmen Terrones	X	
Ms. Krystal Tison	X	
Mr. Kenneth Tupy	X	

8 Members Present

2 Members Absent

The Board heard the case of Falanzo Hixson K83547, Antonio Woodson R51606, Eddie Pitts L01404 and Ricardo Norals C61253.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL for 01-29-2025 AND 02-25-2025: CONTINUED

Open Session: KTISON - MCOATES

Meeting was adjourned by: RHEATON - MCOATES

\*denotes Cook County Case



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***EN BANC MINUTE SHEET***  
***OPEN SESSION- April 24, 2025***

Individual in Custody's Name: Falanzo Hixson      IDOC Number: K83547

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on April 24, 2025, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Falanzo Hixson K83547.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Mr. Grubbs, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Terrones, Ms. Tison and Mr. Tupy.

Recording Secretary: Ellen Wayne

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

The basis for the Board's decision, at this time, is as follows:

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Board Member, Mr. Matthew Coates, interviewed Mr. Falanzo Hixson via WebEx video at Danville Correctional Center. Mr. Hixson was present with his attorney Ms. Marissa Jackson, along with Ms. Jennifer Lackey, Ms. Gerpha Gerlin, Mr. John Zeigler, and Mr. Brian Johnson. A day prior to Mr. Hixson's interview, Mr. Coates spoke with Dr. Brooke Kraushaar, a forensic psychologist who conducted a forensic psychological evaluation on Mr. Hixson. Mr. Hixson's interview began at 9:04 am and ended at 11:35 am.

Mr. Hixson appeared put together with a blue buttoned up shirt and prepared for the interview. Mr. Hixson presented a positive attitude and demeanor for the duration of the interview. He answered every question presented and was a very articulate and productive communicator.

Mr. Hixson is currently 43 years old and has been incarcerated for 25 years and five months. Mr. Hixson is currently at Sheridan Correctional Center and is classified as a medium-security offender with a low escape risk. He has been on A grade since May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

In the year 2000, following a jury trial Mr. Hixson was convicted of first-degree murder of Mr. Jerry Brinegar and sentenced to 55 years in Illinois Department of Corrections.

Mr. Hixson filed a direct appeal, and the trial court's decision was affirmed. In 2004, Mr. Hixson filed a petition for post-conviction relief and the trial court dismissed the petition.

On appeal, the appellate court affirmed the denial. In 2016, Mr. Hixson filed a motion for leave to file a successive postconviction petition arguing that due to his age of 17, his 55-year sentence was a



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de facto life sentence. That same year, the court grant leave to file the successive postconviction petition, and ultimately dismissed it. On appeal, the appellate court reversed the trial court's decision, granting Mr. Hixson a new sentencing hearing.

Mr. Hixson's new sentencing hearing was held on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, and he was sentenced to 35 years. Mr. Hixson appealed, and his appeal was denied on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Mr. Hixson has a Mandatory Supervised Release date of July 26, 2034.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

There was no official statement of facts provided to the Prisoner Review Board after several attempts to request it.

**CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Any juvenile history of Mr. Hixson's was reserved for confidential consideration by the Board.

**INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Mr. Hixson has received 30 tickets total during his incarceration from 1999 to present. His first ticket occurred in 2001 for Insolence and his sole fighting ticket came in 2002. Many of his tickets ranged from disobeying a direct order, unauthorized movement, theft, trading or trafficking, and contraband. Mr. Coates stated that some of the tickets that stood out to him as being particularly concerning were his 2013 gang and unauthorized organization tickets with the comments of Security Threat Group literature and his 2019 ticket for Gang or Unauthorized Organizational activity.

Mr. Coates questioned Mr. Hixson about both of those tickets. Mr. Hixson shared the 2013 ticket was regarding magazine and books, explaining there is a publication system where they approve or deny magazines. He had the book 48 Laws of Power and The Art of War magazine. When he first purchased those books, they were not on the ban list at that time and over the years, they were added on the ban list. When an officer would complete shakedowns and search cells, if those books are found, they are ticketed, and those tickets fall under the range of Security Threat Group literature. Mr. Hixson assured that none of those books had anything to do with gang involvement or anything of that nature.

Regarding his 2019 ticket for gang or unauthorized, Mr. Hixson shared he worked in the school, and he earned his GED in 2017. In the process, he had the opportunity to be a teacher's aide, and he took the job. While working in the school, someone had asked him to make copies of paperwork for him. Mr. Hixson stated a correctional officer shared with him that as long as he had the other person's ID and money voucher on him, he would be able to make copies. Another officer searched him and found the other person's property and ID. Also on his person was his sister's obituary, which he always had on him. They made a custom obituary of her life with several pictures and the officer believed the images on the obituary to be gang-related and issued him this ticket.



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Mr. Hixson's most recent ticket came in February 2024 for Insolence.

Mr. Hixson has a very positive programming and rehabilitative history. Mr. Hixson began his engagement with programming in 2014 when he for the first time gained access to programming. In years prior, he was denied due to his release date. Mr. Hixson earned his GED in 2017 and in 2018, he was accepted and enrolled in the highly competitive Northwestern University Prison Education Program. His time in the program was halted due to his resentencing process. However, he has been reenrolled in that program as of 2024. He has a 3.4 grade point average in that program. Mr. Hixson has over 13 programming certificates and eight earned program sentence credits. Mr. Hixson has completed anger management course twice and completed a drug awareness program in 2021. The more he learned and participated in his education and programming, the more he has enjoyed it and developed a love for learning and helping others during the process.

Mr. Hixson takes great pride in his education, and he was able to articulate his evolution in his understanding of masculinity and vulnerability. He shared the value in learning about his traumatic past, his behavior, and understanding his thinking as a youth. Mr. Hixson shared he takes great pride in being the first person in his family to graduate from college and plans to continue this educational journey at Northwestern if paroled.

Mr. Hixson has worked several jobs while incarcerated, some of those roles include working in the dietary department, being a painter and a laundry porter for his unit. He was also a staff cook at Pinckneyville Correctional Center for two years, which is a very trusted position. His top two jobs were being a teacher's aid and being staff's cook. He is currently not allowed to work due to being a full-time student in Northwestern's program.

Ms. Lackey, a Professor of Philosophy and Law at Northwestern University, also the Founding Director of the Northwestern Prison Education Program, testified that the Northwestern Prison Education Program launched in 2018, and Mr. Hixson was a member of their first cohort of students. It was a very competitive and rigorous process to be accepted into the program. Last year they had over 400 applicants throughout the State, and only accept 20. One of the things that really stood out to her about Mr. Hixson is how teachable he is. Specifically, how receptive he is to feedback, how receptive he is to growing and how he incorporates that into his work and into his life. Many students have struggles growing and overcoming intellectual or academic blocks or letting go of habits and Mr. Hixson did not have those challenges.

She explained he is a community builder; he builds strong relationships within the community and lifts people up. Their program is a cohort model, which means that all 20 students spend each class together, and they all live in the same cell house together. If Mr. Hixson is released, he will be able to use this program as a resource in multiple ways as he will be able to remain a student, cost free. He would have access to all the university's resources on campus such as the library, the gym, and the writing lab. He would have free mental healthcare at the family institute and mentorship with alumni. She said he is about a one-third of the way through. When he started in 2018, shortly after he was forced to drop the program due to being remanded for resentencing, once that process concluded, she worked for several years to get him back into the program and started again in 2024. In her time with him, she feels he is an outstanding candidate for parole, and they are prepared to support him in any way he needs upon release.



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Ms. Gerlin, who is a graduate student at Northwestern and a volunteer with the Northwestern Prison Education Program, has known Mr. Hixson for about a semester, and he is easily top five when it comes to thinking about an impact that a student has made on her. Normally speaking she would not feel comfortable providing a support in this way due to knowing it takes time to build rapport and trust, given the short amount of time she has known Mr. Hixson. In her engagement with him just a few hours a week, she stated that one thing that stood out to her about him is in his ability to be vulnerable, such as talking about his emotions, talking about complex feelings, and discussing his past, which is tough. They are able to talk to the fullest extent about growing as a person and nurturing that vulnerability; that is a skill he wants to continue growing within. Mr. Hixson's dedication in promoting vulnerability for men that are around him and helping create a space for introspection has deeply moved her. It speaks to his skill as being a community builder and his ability to uplift other students to help them along has been impactful and she feels he can apply those same strategies upon release.

Mr. Zeigler, Director of the Egan Office of Urban Education and Community Partnerships at DePaul University, is also an instructor in the Inside Out Program, among other courses. He was a part of the initial cohort of the Inside Out Program at Stateville Correctional Center. He helped students have intentional conversations about their own life, decisions, challenges and connecting to a change in thinking. He teaches masculinity, justice, and the law course. The main piece, his course provides opportunity for his students to look at society in a more robust way. Specifically, his goal is for his students to be a part of the solution and solving community problems. He had Mr. Hixson in his 2016 class, and his class was project based. Mr. Hixson was a phenomenal student, and he found him to be a curious student who asked a lot of questions. He loved the process of learning new information, and he took every opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ziegler was moved deeply by his selfless attitude and reflections. When looking over some of his writing examples, what stands out most is he is always thinking of others, instead of himself. Mr. Ziegler felt Mr. Hixson will be very successful moving forward in what he chooses to do.

Dr. Brooke Kraushaar, a forensic psychologist conducted a forensic psychological evaluation on Mr. Hixson in March of this year. She spent five and a half hours with him during this assessment, diving into the trauma he sustained in his youth, his work towards rehabilitation, his current outlook and mindset, and his risk levels upon release. The summary of her assessment noted that Mr. Hixson's behavior and adjustment in prison suggest that he will not require much in the way of professional service plans designed to manage violence risk. He scored low in her assessment that pertained to risk factors. Her report stated his compliance in prison further indicates that he should have minimal difficulty with adhering to the conditions of release. She found it to be noteworthy to share that Mr. Hixson plans to live at St. Leonard's rather than live near his family, which may still present negative influences on him, his decision to parole where he will receive the most support is positive. Lastly, Mr. Hixson's ability to ignore negative influences in prison, as well as his commitment to education and personal development should mitigate any risks he may encounter during parole. This statement referred to research that suggests risk factors are higher for a person upon reentry if they are living in a shelter or halfway house, as opposed to living with family. She stated after touring St. Leonard's, she can affirm that it is a positive reentry environment.

Mr. Hixson also had three letters of support from his peers, including one from his son.



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**STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSE**

In November 1999, at the age of 17, Mr. Hixson shared he was still selling a small number of drugs at the time to support himself. He was starting to experience people turning his drugs down due to him having such small amounts. He started to become desperate and was losing opportunities for a place to stay.

On November 12, 1999, Mr. Hixson was desperate to make a sale of crack cocaine due to needing a place to stay for the night and he was afraid he would be spending the cold night on the streets. Mr. Hixson saw Mr. Jerry Brinegar, who was interested in buying the drugs. Mr. Hixson showed him the drugs and Mr. Brinegar took his wallet out, but Mr. Brinegar said he wanted more than what Mr. Hixson had and refused to purchase them. This interaction was taking place inside of Mr. Brinegar's car as Mr. Hixson leaned in from the passenger side window.

At the time, Mr. Hixson's heart dropped as he was so close to making the sell.

They argued and in desperation Mr. Hixson tried to grab Mr. Brinegar's wallet. They began to struggle over the wallet when Mr. Hixson placed his drugs in his pocket and remembered he had a gun. Mr. Hixson thought he could show the gun to scare Mr. Brinegar and get his wallet.

At this point during the interview, Mr. Hixson was recalling his version of the offense, he became visibly emotional and took a minute to collect himself, then he proceeded. He goes on to state that Mr. Brinegar, however, pushed the gun away. In the heat of the moment, Mr. Hixson shot him, thinking he would be injured, and he could grab the wallet. He thought he missed due to Mr. Brinegar continuing to fight over the wallet and thinking if he shot him in the arm, he might drop the wallet. Mr. Hixson then shot Mr. Brinegar again, striking him in the leg. He then slumped over and released the wallet. Mr. Hixson was instantly terrified, and ran, without taking Mr. Brinegar's wallet. Mr. Hixson shared that there are many days when he is reflecting on his past and when he recalls the offense, he plays that picture over in his head and thinks of telling Mr. Brinegar "sorry" and that he did not deserve that, and that day cannot leave his head. He has a constant reminder that he took someone's life, and he never thought he would have that title. While he was running away, he observed Mr. Brinegar trying to put the stick shift car into gear, attempting to drive away and then crashing his car. Afterwards, he ran over to give the gun to one of his older peers but what he did not know was that individual was a police informant. The individual turned him into police which led to his arrest.

**PAROLE PLANS**

Upon release, Mr. Hixson plans to enter St. Leonard's Ministries in Chicago. This is corroborated in his petition as his file contains a letter from St. Leonard's stating he had been screened and approved for placement once he is paroled. He wants to be closer to the Northwestern campus in Evanston, so he utilizes the resources on campus.

Mr. Hixson will also receive support from Mr. Eric Anderson at Precious Blood Ministry, along with his strong support from Northwestern University program.





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Mr. Hixson's son who is 26 years old, is a security guard in Chicago and his having his first child therefore, he wants to be a positive grandfather. He wants to be close to his son and be a part of his everyday life.

**OPPOSITION TO PAROLE RELEASE**

There was no opposition to parole release.

**ENBANC HISTORY**

This is Mr. Hixson's first time appearing before this board for parole consideration.

Closed Executive Session: KTISON - JGRUBBS

Open Executive Session: MCOATES - RHEATON

**DISCUSSION**

Ms. Jackson, Mr. Falanzo Hixson's attorney, stated there was more information today than the sentencing judge had previously. She stated the judge did not have the knowledge that they do today. She began to explain how a cockroach damaged Mr. Hixson's hearing due to the condition of Stateville Correctional Center, therefore that is why he has hearing issues and must wear a hearing aid.

Ms. Taylor Marcusson stated she started working with Ms. Jackson and she explained how she works with individuals in custody who have behavioral issues. She considered Mr. Hixson to be a troubled teen and how the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services had removed all Mr. Hixson's siblings except for him due to him being in a juvenile facility. She stated how Mr. Hixson fell between the cracks and went back to that home. She stated children who are incarcerated are three times more likely to be in an adult facility and how his childhood represents failure.

Ms. Brooke Kraushaar has been working in the field of mental health for 30 years. She stated she went to Denver and Yale Universities, and she works with juvenile and adolescent individuals. She has testified on behalf in several counties in the State of Illinois. She stated she did a clinical interview and provided her findings for Mr. Hixson. In the clinic interview, she asked Mr. Hixson about his life history and risk assessment. She stated some individuals lack empathy, remorse, have callus behavior, superficial charm. She explained that Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) scores of 30 and higher are considered to be psychopathic traits and less than 20 are not. Mr. Hixson's PCL-R was 13.7 out of 40. That falls in the 18%, which is very below. Mr. Hixson's score on Factor 4 was four out of 16. Factor 2 score can be higher at risk for future violence while he was only 8.2 out of 30. She stated his history is why his second score was higher. She stated he scored low on impulse and stimulus seeking and how he has been sober for 25 years and those played a role in lowering the score. It measures whether they are



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paying attention and answering in a consistent way, such as being honest and whether they are lying or exaggerating issues or “faking good.” She stated Mr. Hixson appropriately attended, he took an honest approach, and his scores showed that to be normal since he was being honest. She stated he receives treatment for minor depression and general worry; he responds well to his treatment and he is compliant. She explained how youthful problems with drugs cause issues for adulthood. She stated his profile was within normal limits and the clinical risk management shows how exposure to violence did not follow him into adulthood. She stated he has good insight and self-awareness; he can manage his mental health. She stated he has encouraged others to make positive change in their home lives and how he would have no difficulties with adapting behavior. She stated he does not experience sudden emotional disturbances and his future risk factors were low, therefore he can function well with a service plan and should be able to follow the rules in the community as well. She stated he renounced his gang affiliation and has been sober for 25 years. She stated how he has had long periods without infractions and between the ages of 26-30 he only had one ticket, which is very consistent with science. She stated Mr. Hixson completed his GED and enrolled in college and stated the risk assessment says he will not be a risk to society.

Mr. Hixson started with thanking Mr. Coates for interviewing him and stated how it brought back things in his life that gave him tears. Mr. Hixson stated at the age of 17, he was far from the man that stands here today and how he had no purpose in life back then. In 1999, he made the worst decision of his life which caused another person to lose their life. He takes full responsibility and accountability for his actions. He stated he wishes he could talk to his younger self, and he would never touch a gun again. He explained how he did not have the chance to make a statement to the victim’s family until resentencing and stated how deeply sorry he was for his actions and the pain he has caused. He stated he asked the family for forgiveness, and he will always be remorseful. Mr. Hixson stated he has a message for younger kids to not lead themselves down the path he did. In 2016, Mr. Hixson’s sister was shot and killed by a 15-year-old boy. He found out the 15-year-old boy did not have a father, and his mother was in and out of prison. He explained how his sister was hit in the head with a bullet while she was attempting to shield his nephew from the gun fire. After the boy found out what he did and who had died, he cried because he said she had always been like a sister to him. Mr. Hixson thanked the Prisoner Review Board for possibility of giving him a second chance at life. He stated he is grateful to his family and friends and his Northwestern family as well. He stated he is grateful for all the support, and they have all contributed to the man that he is today.

Ms. Globokar questioned Mr. Hixson about how he is going to support himself and navigate stressors that are in society, along with what his plans are for employment.

Mr. Hixson stated he spoke with the intake center for onsite training at St. Leonard’s Ministries. He then stated he can replace floors, and he is also a cook. Mr. Hixson stated he has no problem asking for help when he needs it. He said Northwestern and Precious Blood will be there to help and he will succeed.

Mr. Bohland questioned the basis of the appeal.

Ms. Jackson stated during that period there was a decision that came out about Truth In Sentencing, and it did not apply to those under 18, therefore it was all denied.





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Mr. Bohland questioned Mr. Hixson's disciplinary record while in Champaign County Jail during resentencing.

Mr. Hixson stated he had one ticket for trading. He stated another individual in custody walked past and bumped into him and a tray was dropped. He stated he was ticketed, and the punishment was to get the mop and clean it up.

Mr. Bohland questioned his most recent tickets and why an employee felt harassed by his actions.

Mr. Hixson stated he was a teacher's aide and while working, he asked an employee if everything was okay, she stated her child was sick but would be okay. Mr. Hixson offered to make something for the child, he went down to the art room and gave it to the teacher for the child. A Correctional Officer stated that it was not allowed, and he was issued a ticket for it. He stated the Warden understood why he would do that but said the employee stated she felt harassed by Mr. Hixson for the gift.

Mr. Bohland questioned why in the petition it was stated he was selling drugs to make money for a place to stay and he had shot someone in the leg for their wallet. In the resentencing hearing, Mr. Hixson stated he was selling drugs but not for a place to stay, but to buy more drugs and stated how he did not know he had shot him. He stated when Mr. Hixson did shoot him in the leg on purpose, he did not give up the wallet, so Mr. Hixson then shot him in the arm. Mr. Bohland questioned why there are a different version of events being explained.

Mr. Hixson stated he does not have a recollection of that. He said he would give alcohol and drugs to people for somewhere to stay.

Mr. Bohland shares where he found this in the transcripts from court.

Ms. Globokar stated records from resentencing hearing about the events that happened and questioned Mr. Hixson if this was motivated by rivalry.

Mr. Hixson stated he never told them what happened and said that was the statement he gave in 1999.

Mr. Tupy stated Mr. Hixson got his GED in 2017 and took drug awareness and domestic violence. He questioned Mr. Hixson about what he is doing in Northwestern and how many credits he has completed.

Mr. Hixson stated he was getting his Bachelor's in social science and he has completed seven classes.

End of Discussion.



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**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to grant parole (MCOATES-CTERRONES). Motion prevailed with a 5-3 vote. Members voting in favor of the motion were Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Terrones, and Ms. Tison. Mr. Bohland, Mr. Grubbs, and Mr. Tupy dissented.

After a complete review of Mr. Falanzo Hixson's case, and after giving thoughtful discussion and consideration to all factors, the Board decided and voted to grant parole to Mr. Falanzo Hixson subject to conditions of parole release as set by the Board and by law. The Board hereby finds that Mr. Falanzo Hixson is an appropriate candidate for parole release.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*



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***EN BANC MINUTE SHEET***  
***OPEN SESSION- April 24, 2025***

Individual in Custody's Name: Antonio Woodson IDOC Number: R51606

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on April 24, 2025, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Antonio Woodson R51606.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Mr. Grubbs, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Terrones, Ms. Tison, and Mr. Tupy.

Recording Secretary: Ellen Wayne

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

The basis for the Board's decision, at this time, is as follows:

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

On January 16, 2025, Mr. Antonio Woodson was interviewed by Board Member, Ms. Julie Globokar via WebEx at Pinckneyville Correctional Center. The interview began at 9:20 am and ended at 10:40 am. Also present were Mr. Woodson's two attorneys, Ms. Abigail Elmer and Ms. Rachel Sansonetti; his mother Ms. Frances Woodson; and his maternal grandmother, Ms. Everlene Hampton. The attorneys indicated that Ms. Amanda Myers, mitigation specialist, had desired to attend but had been unable.

Mr. Woodson is 40 years old and has been incarcerated approximately 22 years. He was 17 years old at the time he committed the offense of first-degree murder and vehicular hijacking.

Mr. Woodson presented with a calm and relaxed demeanor and gave an impression of candor throughout the interview.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On the night of the offense, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Mr. Woodson, then 17 years old, was staying at his grandmother's house near Garfield Park in Chicago. He attended a party with his three co-defendants, who ranged in age from 14 to 17, and they decided to walk to the park to steal a car. Mr. Woodson had a loaded handgun with him, which he showed to others before they got to the park. Mr. Jimmy Patton, age 46, was in the park smoking cigarettes and drinking beer with two of his friends. They were seated in one of the friend's cars, parked next to Mr. Patton's vehicle, which had been left running.

The co-defendants approached the car that was occupied by Mr. Patton and his friends. One of the co-defendants initiated contact under the guise of asking for a cigarette, and then said something to



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the effect of “where’s my uncle with this car?” Mr. Patton said something to the effect of, “you don’t want no f\*cking cigarette. You’re on some bullsh\*t.” He reached into the passenger side of his car, turned it off, and placed his keys in his pocket. A co-defendant asked Woodson something to the effect of, “you got him?” or “do you got me?” meaning essentially “do you have my back?” Mr. Woodson drew the firearm and pulled the trigger, but the gun only clicked; he cocked the gun and fired again. The victim sustained two gunshot wounds, one to his hand and another to his chest, and fell to the ground. A co-defendant retrieved the keys from the victim’s pockets and took off at a high rate of speed and they ditched the car a few blocks away.

Mr. Woodson was arrested several months later, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003, on an unrelated battery case. The next day, he found out that he was wanted for questioning in Mr. Patton’s murder, and his mom and grandparents escorted him to the police department, where he ultimately confessed.

There are some disputed facts to the case. The initial statement of facts indicated that the victim was “shot twice;” however, it appears the same bullet may have traveled through the victim’s hand into his chest, causing both wounds. In past proceedings, Mr. Woodson has referred to the shooting as an “accident.” He holds that he intended to shoot past the victim rather than to shoot him. In his recollection, a co-defendant was wrestling with the victim to obtain the keys, which is when he tried to fire a shot to get them to stop, and then “it was like he jumped my way, that’s when I cocked it and tried to shoot past him.” Other versions of the offense that appear in documents vary only slightly, such as indicating that two of his co-defendants, rather than one, were wrestling with the victim over the keys when Mr. Woodson drew his weapon.

According to the appellate court record, Mr. Woodson initially admitted to being with the co-defendants on the evening of the murder but claimed he ran away before one of his co-defendants committed the murder. Once he was presented with the video-recorded statements of his co-defendants, he admitted to the shooting, and he has taken accountability for the murder since that time.

Mr. Woodson was convicted by a jury and originally sentenced to 50 years for the murder and 10 years for the vehicular hijacking. In 2017, he filed a pro se post-conviction petition challenging the constitutionality of his de facto life sentence. On a subsequent appeal, Mr. Woodson was granted a resentencing, and on July 1, 2022, was sentenced to 30 years for the murder and 11 years for the hijacking, for a total sentence of 41 years. The court then further reduced the sentence by a year, finding that the increase in his hijacking sentence was contrary to law.

More recently, the appellate court found that the resentencing court had abused its discretion in failing to adequately consider mitigating factors as set forth by law. They noted the judge had failed to mention significant cognitive deficits. The appellate court also pointed to the contrast between what they saw as overwhelming evidence of Mr. Woodson’s rehabilitation, including his notable record within Illinois Department of Corrections, with the resentencing judge’s statements that “I’m not sure how doing well in prison goes to rehabilitation or not,” that Mr. Woodson’s prison record counted for “half a mark,” and that none of that “mitigates a murder.”



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The appellate court exercised their authority to adjust his sentence to where it presently stands, at 25 years for the murder and an additional five years for the vehicular hijacking, with a projected release date of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2029, if not granted release by this Board.

It appears that one co-defendant in this case was sentenced to 17 years for the aggravated vehicular hijacking and the status of the two other co-defendants is unknown.

**INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Mr. Woodson's mother came from a strict upbringing in the suburbs, whereas his biological father was considered a leader of a street organization and had been in and out of prison. When Mr. Woodson was 12, his mother was diagnosed with brain tumors that caused a host of health issues including numerous strokes and resulted in nearly a year of hospitalization. During this time, Mr. Woodson and his siblings were split up among households within their family. Mr. Woodson moved frequently among relatives or stayed with a friend, resulting in a lack of stability and consistent supervision. Letters of support from those familiar with his childhood recall this as the time in which his behavior changed and he started to fall into the wrong crowd. He was involved in the Black Disciples, which further placed him around negative peer influences.

There is no indication that Mr. Woodson was involved in gang conflicts or gang-related violence during adolescence. He describes primarily smoking and drinking during that time, nor does it appear he has been gang-affiliated since his incarceration.

Mr. Woodson was in special education from first grade until he left school in 10th grade and struggled academically. He briefly studied welding in the Job Corps. After the arrest, he took high school classes in the county jail but dropped out due to recurring lockdowns. He began pursuing classes again in 2017 and he earned his high school diploma in September 2023 from King's Word Academy. He has also taken a class on the impact of crimes on victims and earned several certificates from Set Free Ministries. He is a certified barber, a credential that involved more than 1,500 hours of training.

Mr. Woodson has been working within Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) since at least 2012, with positions including employee dining, barbershop, painter, tunnel crew, and inmate kitchen. While he was at Cook County Jail for resentencing, he worked as a barber and a sanitation specialist. Since transferring back into IDOC custody, he has been listed as a specialist at the inmate commissary and a barber in Pinckneyville Correctional Center. Early in April of 2025, Mr. Woodson was transferred to Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, where he resides at the time of this hearing.

Mr. Woodson has received only five tickets while in IDOC custody, two of which resulted in a period of segregation. His first ticket in 2009, was for yelling and resulted in two months of segregation, and in 2016 he received one month of segregation for having a tattoo gun. His master file contained an extensive letter he sent to the Adjustment Committee subsequent to the 2016 ticket in which he pled guilty, took full accountability, expressed remorse for his actions, and apologized for the transgression. Most recently, he received a ticket in September 2022 at Pinckneyville Correctional Center for unauthorized movement, for failure to return to his cell at the end of dayroom, for which he pled guilty and received a verbal reprimand. Records indicate him to be A-grade, medium security, with no escape



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risk. He has no history of disciplinary or administrative transfers, protective custody placements, or “keep away from.” He has never received a ticket for violence, intimidation, or security threat group activity. A correctional expert and former Warden who had the opportunity to view his record for his resentencing noted that it was remarkable he was able to navigate Menard Correctional Center as a young man so cleanly, and without gang involvement.

Mr. Woodson’s SPIN assessment could not be located in his file; however, an evaluation by Dr. Robert Hanlon assessed him to be at a low risk for reoffending.

Mr. Woodson’s file contains several letters of support from employees of both the Cook County Department of Corrections and Illinois Department of Corrections praising his demeanor, work ethic, and positive attitude. Two employees of Cook County Department of Corrections testified favorably to Mr. Woodson’s character at his resentencing. One such employee with 18 years’ experience as a correctional officer indicated it was only his second time testifying on behalf of an individual in custody. When asked whether he had seen any other “inmate as trustworthy and hardworking and well-behaved” as Mr. Woodson, he responded “absolutely not.”

In a recent supplement to Mr. Woodson’s petition, two supervisors from Pinckneyville’s commissary submitted letters of support. They described him as a leader who had taken the initiative to mentor new employees, and as a “self-motivated team player, organized, respectful, and detail oriented,” who brings positivity to the workplace.

When Mr. Woodson was asked what accounted for his positive institutional history, he stated that prior to his incarceration, he was maintaining a persona for those around him; once he was in custody, he decided to change for himself. He changed his social circle and leaned into meditation and prayer, which provided greater clarity of thought. He credits finding his love for cutting hair as further grounding him.

**STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSE**

Mr. Woodson took full responsibility for participating in the carjacking and firing the gun, resulting in the loss of Mr. Patton’s life. He stated that at the time he was presenting himself out of concern for how others would view him. Even after the shooting, he was concerned that those around him would judge him if he changed how he acted, but he stated that “in his heart and soul, that night, that never should have happened, that man never should have lost his life, especially for his prized possessions that he worked hard for.”

He states that when he returned to his grandmother’s house after the offense, he was shaken, and “immediately fired up a blunt and started drinking again.” He said that he just shot someone, not out of bravado but rather because his mind was racing from what happened; he “just wanted to get up out of there,” so he went to his aunt’s house.

When asked about what he would share with the victim’s family if given the chance, he stated “Sorry is not enough, because I caused their family heartache and pain. I continue to pray for healing for them and I also ask for forgiveness, but if those pleas...are not heard, I understand that, because one of





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their family members was taken from them.” He stated that he remains deeply sorry, because, in his words, “that night, that man should never have lost his life.”

**PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Woodson has received confirmation of acceptance to St. Leonard’s Ministries and his attorney indicates they now have a waitlist but have stated they anticipate he could receive placement within weeks of release. He also has standing offers to reside with his mother, grandmother, and others in the interim, if St. Leonard’s is unable to accommodate him.

Mr. Woodson’s long-term goal is to open his own barbershop. He understands there are steps to attaining that goal and he is open to any opportunity that would allow him to financially establish himself. He would likely work at his uncle’s barbershop, but he also has friends and family who are willing to help him pursue a variety of career paths, including in landscaping, trucking, or working at a steel mill or in retail or fast food.

Mr. Woodson has expressed a desire to do one-on-one mentorship with kids who are situated similarly to his past self. He expresses the importance of removing youth from their negative environment to see their true capacity, and the importance of individualized attention and encouragement.

The Board was presented with more than 20 letters of support and character references from friends, family, correctional professionals, and a mitigation specialist, some of which had been submitted for consideration at his resentencing. Many authors credit Mr. Woodson as a positive influence in their lives and there were also accounts of him mentoring young men to stay away from street life and pursue positive goals. His support system has offered to provide housing, occupational opportunities, encouragement, and accountability should Mr. Woodson be released.

There are no known factors that would prevent Mr. Woodson’s release. The Board is unaware of any relevant health care or treatment needs that would affect his placement.

**OPPOSITION TO PAROLE RELEASE**

The Cook County States Attorney has submitted opposition to Mr. Woodson’s release.

**ENBANC HISTORY**

As Mr. Woodson is newly eligible for parole pursuant to his resentencing after the adoption of the Youthful Parole Act, there is no en banc history to consider.

Closed Executive Session: JGLOBOKAR - MCOATES

Open Executive Session: JGLOBOKAR - MCOATES



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**DISCUSSION**

Ms. Rachel Sansonetti, Mr. Woodson's attorney, stated if Mr. Woodson could go back and make a different choice, he would but he cannot change the past, so he needs to move forward. She stated he would be compliant with rules and orders, and he has almost a spotless disciplinary report. Out of the five tickets, none were violent. He has completed everything IDOC can offer for rehabilitation. He has a large support system of friends and family, and his mother and grandmother were both asked to stand. She stated Kewanee accepted him then transported him within two months, which is rare. Former IDOC Director stated he has remorse, role models, goals and a parole plan. In 14 years, Ms. Connely has never spoken for an individual in custody, but she did for Mr. Woodson. Officer Peeks has only testified on behalf of one other individual in custody besides Mr. Woodson and states, "you don't have to worry about him, he does what is asked and you don't have to ask several times."

Mr. Woodson stated he stands here for a crime that he committed and no way shape or form should that man have lost his life that night. He stated this will live with him for the rest of his life. He stated, in 2009, things started changing and he made a terrible mistake. His views on life and other people since being incarcerated have changed and he stopped caring what people think and what they think of him, and he just continued to work harder each time on becoming a better person. Mr. Woodson stated he knew he was turning into the best version of himself.

Mr. Heaton questioned Ms. Sansonetti if she was his lawyer during the most recent resentencing hearing.

Ms. Sansonetti stated she was not and that the appellate court reduced his sentence to 25 years for murder and five years for vehicular hijacking.

Mr. Bohland congratulated Mr. Woodson for his hard work and commitment while being incarcerated. He then questioned how many times he pulled the trigger or if there was someone else there who could have shot a gun.

Mr. Woodson stated he only pulled the trigger once and no one else shot.

Ms. Globokar stated she could not find any reference that more than one bullet had been fired.

Mr. Tupy stated he did not think Mr. Woodson understood the question; therefore, he questioned him about if he pulled the trigger, then realized it did not fire so he fired it again.

Mr. Woodson stated yes, he pulled the trigger twice, but the gun only went off the second time.

Ms. Courtney Quam, Cook County State's Attorney stated his case was already modified by the appellate court, to which they considered the institutional adjustment and his age during the resentencing. She states age and lack of maturity provide context to the crime, but they do not excuse the choice he made to shoot Mr. Patton. Ms. Quam stated he planned to steal a car and how he also chose to bring a gun. She stated how he attempted to shoot the gun, but it did not go off, so he chose to pull the trigger



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again. She stated that Mr. Woodson said that Mr. Patton lunged at him, but he was sitting in the car, and they never gave him the chance to comply. Ms. Quam stated that the victim's son, also opposes his parole.

Ms. Globokar stated the victim was sitting in his friend's vehicle, when he got out to turn off his vehicle, there was a struggle between the victim and co-offender.

Ms. Elmer, pro bono counsel, stated he has been a model individual in custody with only five tickets during his entire incarceration and none of them were for violence. Ms. Elmer stated granting Mr. Woodson parole would show other youthful offenders if they prove themselves while in custody, they could have a second chance as well. She stated the sentencing court knew he would have a chance to see the Prisoner Review Board since he had served 20 years. She also stated how several IDOC employees, along with St. Leonard's, support his release.

Ms. Sansonetti stated when they reduced the sentence from 40 to 30 years, they did not go through the Circuit Clerk. She stated youthful offenders are resentenced after a nonconstitutional sentence.

Ms. Globokar questioned if Mr. Patton was struggling with the co-defenders.

Ms. Sansonetti could not verify this.

Mr. Bohland stated the appeal was based on mitigating factors not being taken seriously and they do not want to disrupt something that was resentenced twice.

Ms. Sansonetti stated he did appeal twice; the first one was unconstitutional, and it should have never happened in the first place. She stated it was an illegal and an invalid sentence. She stated the circuit court did not do a full analysis of mitigation, and the second resentencing was based off an average resentencing. She stated the appellate court was in June of 2024 and circuit clerk was 2022. She stated that Illinois Supreme Court denied the State's appeal. She questioned Ms. Quam where she got the January date from on her protest letter.

Ms. Quam stated it was finalized in January 2025 because that was when it was filed.

End of Discussion.



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**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to grant parole (JGLOBOKAR-MCOATES). Motion failed with a 4-4 vote. Members voting in favor of the motion were Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Ms. Terrones, and Ms. Tison. Mr. Bohland, Mr. Grubbs, Mr. Heaton and Mr. Tupy dissented.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Woodson's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Woodson's parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*



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***EN BANC MINUTE SHEET***  
***OPEN SESSION- April 24, 2025***

Individual in Custody's Name: Eddie Pitts IDOC Number: L01404

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on April 24, 2025, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Eddie Pitts L01404.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Mr. Grubbs, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Terrones, Ms. Tison, and Mr. Tupy.

Recording Secretary: Ellen Wayne

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

The basis for the Board's decision, at this time, is as follows:

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Eddie Pitts was interviewed in person by Board Member, Mr. Jared Bohland at Lawrence Correctional Center on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Pitts was represented by Pro Bono Counsel Ms. Carolyn Klarquist. Mr. Pitts was polite and open to questions but also showed some obvious frustration that appears to be rooted in not understanding why the Prisoner Review Board has not released him after 47 years. Mr. Pitts appears to be of above average physical fitness, particularly given his age and placement in the health care unit. Mr. Pitts explained his escalating issues with memory loss which proved to be apparent at different times in the interview. The interview was not particularly linear because of this as subject matter bounced around a bit. Ms. Klarquist was incredibly helpful in moving the interview forward and helping Mr. Pitts to recall certain events or facts.

Mr. Pitts holding offense is a 1977 conviction for Murder out of Cook County with a 150 – 300 year sentence. His Mandatory Supervised Release date is February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2117, with his Maximum Discharge date being August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2120. Mr. Pitts was 24 years old at the time of the offense and he is currently 72 years old. Mr. Pitts has been in Illinois Department of Corrections custody for 47 years.

Mr. Pitts was last heard at En Banc for parole consideration six months ago on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1976, the victim, Mr. Jerry Keane, worked for People's Gas Co and was making a service call at the time with another employee, Mr. Winston McCain. The service call was for a gas leak at the residence where the petitioner as well as Mr. Edward Stewart were present. All four individuals proceeded to the basement to inspect the furnace. The victim, Mr. Keane had trouble removing the furnace panel, so his co-worker Mr. McCain began to proceed upstairs to retrieve a screwdriver. Mr.



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Pitts then snuck up behind the Mr. Keane and began stabbing him. When Mr. McCain heard Mr. Keane scream for help, he immediately returned to the basement and witnessed Mr. Pitts attacking Mr. Keane. He saw Mr. Pitts arm around the victim's neck, hitting or stabbing Mr. Keane in the chest with his right hand. Mr. McCain ran outside to radio for help and the petitioner fled, later disposing of the knife.

Mr. Keane was found lying dead on the floor with bloodstains all over his body. He was transported to St. Bernard's Hospital where he was pronounced dead upon arrival. It was determined that he had been stabbed 23 times in the back, neck, arm, chest, abdomen, and thigh.

Mr. McCain gave the police a description of Mr. Pitts. Officers learned that Mr. Pitts was the attacker and had spent the night in a vacant building. He was arrested the next day. He was initially found unfit to stand trial. In 1977, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and transferred to the Illinois Department of Mental Health for treatment to restore fitness. He received treatment at multiple facilities until ultimately being declared fit to stand trial in 1978.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979, the petitioner was evaluated by judge's order by the Forensic Psychiatric Program. He was diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia in partial remission with medication; and was again deemed fit for trial. After returning to Cook County Jail and medication being discontinued, petitioner admitted to a recurrence of disturbing auditory hallucinations as well as some suicidal thoughts. He stated the auditory hallucinations came from within, such as "Eddie, let me out!". Despite the hallucinations, the petitioner was found to be fully aware of the charges against him, of the acts he had committed which he ascribed to forces and pressures within him, and the nature of purpose of the trial proceedings. Medications proved to improve his spirits while the hallucinations remained mild.

Mr. Pitts' plead not guilty by reason of insanity which was not accepted, and Mr. Pitts was convicted by a jury and incarcerated in 1980. The State's Attorney at the time argued that if Mr. Pitts were ever to be considered for parole that he should receive a full mental health evaluation to be reviewed for civil commitment pursuant to the mental health code.

### **CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Mr. Pitts' only prior offense on record include a 1975 conviction for Unlawful Use of Weapon for which he was sentenced to probation, and while on probation was arrested for an assault that was ultimately dismissed.

### **INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Mr. Pitts has no emergency contact or next of kin but does maintain a visitor list. His last in person visit was with his sister in May 2024 preceded by a visit from his nephew in April of 2024. Mr. Pitts does receive financial support from family. During the interview, Mr. Pitts had to be reminded that his brother had died recently.

Mr. Pitts is incredibly physically fit for his age. He states that he exercises regularly in order to stay alive and describes his workouts as hundreds of repetitions at a time. He did have a successful hernia surgery in October of 2024 and reports having a knot on his knee.





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As for programming, Mr. Pitts was involved in arts and sports related programming from the 1980's to early 2000's, with a preference for exercise as he found it therapeutic. He is free to request academic program enrollment but there is no indication that he has. He is waitlisted for Money Smart at the moment.

Mr. Pitts' disciplinary record continues to be a point of concern. He had two pages of tickets on the old forms including multiple tickets and segregation for dangerous contraband, an assault of inmate ticket, and Gang Activity. Mr. Pitts has two pages of tickets from 2000 to present, including a 2006 dangerous contraband ticket for an altered razor blade; 2012 contraband for homemade ropes and an altered blanket; 2014 contraband for needles; 2021 major ticket for disobeying a direct order for refusing to enter his cell and lock up resulting in seven days of segregation; and lastly a 2022 Violent Assault of a person ticket.

The facts around that ticket include a witness observing the assault which took place in the health care unit inside of a cell. The witness observed Mr. Pitts throwing closed fist punches to the victim who was laying on the floor and the victim attempted to defend himself and stop the assault by throwing a chair. Mr. Pitts was then seen yelling at the victim to "stay down" while continuing to throw punches. Mr. Pitts admitted to punching the victim in the head repeatedly each time the victim tried to get up until Mr. Pitts eventually just walked away. IDOC found the witness credible. The victim was transported by ambulance to the hospital, but the head injury was so severe that he was transferred again to OSF Saint Anthony's for a higher level of care. The victim suffered from a brain bleed and required a craniotomy.

During the interview, Mr. Pitts stated that he felt the need to defend himself and he claims the other individual threw a wheelchair at him. He felt as though the victim could have hurt him, and therefore needed to protect himself from further attack. Mr. Pitts stated that the victim was 80 years old but was very fit. He stated that he was scared of the victim and could not act like a coward.

Later in the interview, he argued that the 2022 ticket was a plot against him to stop his parole. He stated the victim had a mental problem. He then admitted that he really could not remember much about the day of the ticket at all. It was clear his memory issues had made it difficult to recall any details surrounding the event.

Mr. Pitts further made statements that he will protect himself and he will not let someone kill him or harm him. When asked what he meant by those statements, Mr. Pitts clarified that he envisions protecting himself by ducking or covering himself. He argued he is in danger due to his age, both in the prison as well as out in the community.

Mr. Pitts has not had any disciplinary tickets since his transfer to Lawrence Correctional Center.

Mr. Pitts shared that he has enrolled in school at varying institutions over the years, but there is not anything he is attending at the moment. He currently studies law on his own and held a number of job assignments from the 1980's through the 2000's.



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Mr. Pitts is currently Maximum Security with no escape risk. He is also A grade and general population, although he resides in the infirmary unit.

**STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSE**

Mr. Pitts does seem to acknowledge the facts of the case, although he did not discuss the details further this year. Mr. Pitts maintains that he is sorry for what occurred, and he has historically shown remorse including sorrow for the victim's family. In the past, he argued that he suffered from hallucinations that day and feared that someone was going to kill him, and he felt the compulsion to kill them before they killed him and described his hallucinations as perceiving the service men to be dogs and seeing Satan with the two dogs.

Prior to the offense, Mr. Pitts describes being raised in a church that taught mysticism to him as a child. He states he grew up in a slave environment in the south where he picked cotton instead of attending school. He ultimately joined the Job Corps and traveled the country working construction in Kentucky, Florida, Mississippi, and eventually Chicago where he worked for the Local 150.

At different points in the interview, Mr. Pitts expressed his firm frustration with the Prisoner Review Board for not releasing him despite being in custody for 47 years. He does not believe that we as members are using our sense to properly determine threat levels and he argues that the Eddie who committed the crime is gone, and he is just an old man now. He stated he does not want to die in prison, and that the Board is treating him terribly. He later shared that the Board is cheating him and that he struggles with our denials. He believes the Board is doing him wrong intentionally, and he believes race is a factor.

Mr. Pitts seemed focused on the notion that the Board's issue was rooted entirely on the holding offense, he was reminded that his 2022 violent assault ticket was a major factor in considering public safety. Mr. Pitts made it clear that he sees himself as the victim of that incident having to defend himself from an attack. He stated that he was very frustrated with the October 2024 denial.

**PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Pitts' parole plan prior to the actual hearing was to maintain a parole plan based on admittance to Balmoral Nursing Home, which is a skilled nursing home with programs for mental health and dementia. This is an IDOC approved host site with residents who were released under the Joe Coleman Act. There were concerns even six months ago about the facility not rising to the level of security needed for a patient like Mr. Pitts based on recent events like the 2022 violent assault, and concerns for the safety of both staff and other residents. Mr. Pitts states he would like to be paroled to a place where he can work his mind, create things, and make art.

Mr. Pitts has letters of support and offers of post release services from NAMI Chicago as well as the Illinois Prison Project.



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**OPPOSITION TO PAROLE RELEASE**

The Cook County State's Attorney opposes granting parole in 2025 with a letter. They argue there is substantial risk that the petitioner will not conform to conditions of parole. They do not believe he has presented an adequate parole plan, nor has he shown evidence that he is rehabilitated and is no longer a threat to society. They bring up the 2022 ticket as evidence of concern. They also believe his mental health poses cause for concern including present signs of dementia. They argue for deprecation based on protests both historically and current. They also argue that given the nature of the 2022 ticket, that release would have a substantially adverse effect on institutional discipline. They state that even with the strongest parole plan, the risk of another life lost is too high.

**ENBANC HISTORY**

Mr. Pitts' first year of consideration for parole was in 1988. He has been heard 23 times prior to this date with the last hearing being on October 31, 2024. He received a three-year set in 1988, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2016.

Mr. Pitts began receiving votes in favor in 2019 when a motion to grant failed with a 3-8 vote. This was followed by a motion to deny prevailing with a 7-7 vote in 2020, a motion to deny prevailing by 11-3 vote in 2021, and in 2022, a motion to grant parole failing by a 3-5 vote. Since the 2022 violent assault ticket, a motion to deny prevailed by a 10-1 vote in 2023 and a motion to deny prevailed by 8-2 in 2024.

Closed Executive Session: MCOATES - JGRUBBS

Open Executive Session: JBOHLAND - JGLOBOKAR

**DISCUSSION**

Ms. Carolyn Klarquist, Mr. Pitts' attorney, stated she never received the Cook County State's Attorney protest letter. She stated they had never protested before so it must be under the new Cook County State's Attorney. She stated elections have consequences and this must be one. She stated she emailed a new parole plan as of April 17, 2025, and stated how Mr. Pitts would like to go to Central Nursing Home in Chicago. She explained how he would be confined to the second floor which is for dementia and mental health issues. She stated they would assess him for any risk, and he would be alone in his own room. She stated they place all new patients in there, but they are aware of his history and how the doors are locked 24 hours a day where someone would be always watching him. He would also not be allowed to check himself out of this nursing home and his nephew would be Power of Attorney. He is not receiving the psychiatric treatment at Lawrence Correctional Center that he needs for his Dementia. Ms. Klarquist stated an informant is the one who saw the serious attack that Mr. Pitts did on another individual while in custody, but he did not see what caused the fight. Mr. Pitts was then put in segregation for six months due to the incident that occurred. Ms. Klarquist stated that Mr. Pitts is one of the longest



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serving individuals in custody in the State of Illinois, but he is not the worst; therefore, he should be able to transition to a secured facility at Central Nursing Home on the second floor.

Mr. Heaton thanked Ms. Klarquist for finding the type of nursing home she could for him and being his lawyer. He stated he would only have a five-year parole time, so assuming he's still living, he questioned if the nursing home would only be voluntary after that.

Ms. Klarquist stated Mr. Pitts' nephew would be his power of attorney, and it would be the nephew's decision on where he goes after the five years of parole has been completed. She stated the nursing home also has hospice, so he could stay there for the remainder of his time.

Ms. Terrones stated being a power of attorney is different than being a guardian.

Ms. Klarquist stated Mr. Pitts would not be able to leave the facility and if he does somehow leave the facility, he would violate his parole.

Ms. Terrones questioned if the nursing home understands his story and diagnosis.

Ms. Klarquist stated she sent all of his records. She stated he would be alone in his room, and they have people on staff 24 hours a day.

Ms. Tison questioned who this contract would be between.

Ms. Klarquist stated the contract would be between nursing home and Mr. Pitts' nephew.

Ms. Tison questioned if he was to be treated, medicated, and makes improvements, could he be moved to the first floor.

Ms. Klarquist stated he would remain on the second floor due to security reasons.

Ms. Tison questioned the cost of him staying in a nursing home with specialized needs verse being incarcerated.

Ms. Klarquist stated she believes it is cheaper for the State to pay a nursing home than the correctional center. She stated that Mr. Pitts would be able to collect disability as well.

Ms. Quam, Cook County Assistant State's Attorney, opposes the granting of parole for Mr. Pitts. She stated she does not believe he would follow the rules of his parole and how he had a violent assault in 2022 while in custody. She stated the sentencing judge found this was a brutal murder. She stated Mr. Keane was a public servant who was stabbed 27 times in a very violent way, and she believes the risk is too high, considering his mental health issues and aggression and he has shown he is violent.

Mr. Grubbs stated he spent a lot of time on this case last year and he even made a trip to Chicago himself. He stated he is worried about the nursing home and if it would truly be a good fit for him.



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Ms. Klarquist stated he could be held for another 90 days in custody if it is not approved by IDOC for a host site. Ms. Klarquist submitted a change in parole site.

The Board discussed sending a Board Member to the parole site being presented to have a tour.

Ms. Klarquist requested a continuous to the July 2025 En Banc.

Mr. Tupy motioned to continue the case.

Motion to continue to July 2025 En Banc: (KTUPY – MCOATES)



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***EN BANC MINUTE SHEET***  
***OPEN SESSION- April 24, 2025***

Individual in Custody's Name: Ricardo Norals      IDOC Number: C61253

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on April 24, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Ricardo Norals C61253.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Coates, Ms. Globokar, Mr. Grubbs, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Terrones, Ms. Tison, and Mr. Tupy.

Recording Secretary: Ellen Wayne

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

The basis for the Board's decision, at this time, is as follows:

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Ricardo Norals was interviewed by Board Member, Mr. Jeffrey Grubbs on February 13, 2025. He is currently serving a sentence of 100 – 200 years for Murder, 100 – 200 years for Rape and 100 – 200 years for Attempted Murder. He has most recently been incarcerated at Shawnee Correctional Center since October 2003. According to the most recent overview provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections in November 2024, Mr. Norals is classified as A Grade, Medium Security and his Escape Risk designation is Low. He is 69 years of age and has been incarcerated for 50 years. His projected date for Mandatory Supervised Release is currently not until the year 2065.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On or about November 25, 1974, when Mr. Norals was 18 years of age, he, Co-Defendant James Brimmer, and a third unknown assailant, who has never been identified, gained access to the apartment of 35-year-old female Joyce Britt on West Crystal Street in Chicago. The 16-year-old daughter of Ms. Britt was also present. Mr. Norals was known to the juvenile victim, and she was later able to identify him to police authorities. During the Attempted Robbery, both victims were beaten and raped. The juvenile victim was raped by Mr. Norals, Co-Defendant James Brimmer, and the third unknown assailant.

At the conclusion of the sexual assaults, Ms. Joyce Britt was shot five times and died as a result of the gunshot wounds. In an attempt to silence the sole remaining witness, Ms. Britt's juvenile daughter was shot five times, but miraculously survived the attack by pretending to be deceased.





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Following a bench trial, Mr. Norals was found guilty of Murder, Attempt Murder and Rape. In April 1976, he was sentenced to 100 – 200 years for Murder, 100 – 200 years for Attempt Murder and 100 – 200 years for Rape, with all sentences to run concurrently.

**CRIMINAL HISTORY**

There is additional Criminal History Record information regarding Mr. Norals, beginning when he was a juvenile and progressing into the infancy of his adult criminal record. This includes convictions for Burglary, Robbery and Aggravated Assault & Unlawful Use of a Weapon. He was on probation when he committed the Murder, Attempt Murder and Rape for which he was convicted of in 1976.

**INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

According to the most recent Illinois Department of Corrections Offender Overview of November 2024 and Mr. Norals's testimony, he only has minor health issues and is not in need of mental health counseling. He has been unassigned for around 10 years and has not participated in any programming for years and his last disciplinary ticket was in 2019.

Mr. Norals has not had any visitors since 2018 but indicated he has attempted to remain in phone contact with one of his sisters, as well as a former incarcerated individual he met years ago.

**STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSE**

During the interview, Mr. Norals failed to acknowledge his role in the rape and murder of Ms. Joyce Britt, and the rape and Attempted Murder of her juvenile daughter. He only acknowledged knowing them and asserted he is innocent. He acknowledged knowing co-defendant James Brimmer, but indicated he had no knowledge of the third, unidentified co-defendant.

**PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Norals does not have a parole plan. If released, he would like to convince his sister in Chicago to allow him to live with her. He would look for unspecified employment.

Mr. Norals is not represented by legal counsel, but indicated he attempted to engage with an organization for assistance around five years ago, though he did not receive a response. He indicated a desire to be paroled but acknowledged very candidly he had done nothing since his previous parole hearing to improve himself for consideration of parole release.

**OPPOSITION TO PAROLE RELEASE**

The Cook County State's Attorney submitted an April 2025 letter of opposition. They had written multiple years with opposition, though until this year, none had been received since 2017.



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There are current and compelling letters of opposition from immediate members of the victims regarding the impact they continue to suffer based upon the criminal actions of Mr. Norals, as well as the impact his parole release hearings continue to have on them.

**ENBANC HISTORY**

Mr. Norals was first considered for parole around 1984 and has received a continuous number or multi-year sets over the last 20 years.

Closed Executive Session: RHEATON - JGRUBBS

Open Executive Session: JGRUBBS - KTUPY

**DISCUSSION**

No Discussion.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (JGRUBBS - KTISON). Motion prevailed by a unanimous vote.

Motion for a 3-year set (JGRUBBS-RHEATON). Motion prevailed by a unanimous vote.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Norals's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Norals's parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*