



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
 BRUCE RAUNER, GOVERNOR  
**PRISONER REVIEW BOARD**  
 Craig Findley, Chairman

**EN BANC MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION—November 1, 2018**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for the following inmates:

- C01441      Dennis Pearson**
- C77579      Michael Drabing**
- C72940      Donald Woodruff**
- C70938      Theodore Ross**
- C70938      Robert Jones**
- L36032      Jacob Bramlett**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Findley.

Roll call was taken by Recording Secretary Janet Crane.

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Ms. Edith Crigler	X	
Ms. Lisa Daniels	X	
Mr. Salvador Diaz	X	
Mr. Donald Wayne Dunn	X	
Mr. Pete Fisher	X	
Ms. Vonetta Harris	X	
Ms. Ellen Johnson	X	
Ms. Virginia Martinez	X	
Mr. William Norton	X	
Mrs. Aurthur Mae Perkins	X	
Mr. Joseph Ruggiero	X	
Mr. Donald Shelton	X	
Mr. Ken Tupy	X	
Ms. Patricia Wilson	X	
Chairman Craig Findley	X	

15 Members Present

The Recording Secretary presented the July 26, 2018 Open Session Minutes for approval.

Motion to approve Open Session Minutes from **July 26, 2018**. (EC—AMP). Leave.



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The Board heard and ruled upon the scheduled cases as detailed in the individual case minutes.

Meeting was adjourned (CF—DS). Leave.

November 1, 2018 Open Session Minutes submitted by Recording Secretary Janet Crane.



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*EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET  
OPEN SESSION— November 1, 2018

Inmate Name: **DENNIS PEARSON**

IDOC Number: **C01441**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Dennis Pearson C01441.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Norton presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

A parole assessment interview was conducted with Dennis Pearson C01441 on August 8, 2018. Mr. Pearson was born on May 2, 1942, is currently 76 years of age, and was a resident of Lawrence Correctional Center on the date of the interview. According to the file, following a jury trial Mr. Pearson was found guilty of the following offenses and received the following sentences for such offenses on July 29, 1969: Aggravated Kidnapping (100-125 years), Rape (100-125 years), Theft (5-10 years), all to be served concurrently, and Attempt Murder (10-15 years) to be served consecutively (Cook County Case Number 68-4405). The convictions of Mr. Pearson were affirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court on September 20, 1972.

The record indicates that the offenses took place on or about October 22, 1968, and that the victim of the crimes and offenses of Aggravated Kidnapping, Rape, Theft and Attempt Murder was a lady by the name of Sally Heaton, who was married and the mother of three children. After getting off work, Ms. Heaton went with some friends to the Capri Lounge in Kalamazoo, Michigan. As she was getting ready to leave, one of her friends asked her to drive two men, Dennis Pearson and Nelson Weaver, toward Mattawan, Michigan. Ms. Heaton reluctantly agreed, but as they approached Mattawan, Michigan, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Weaver directed Ms. Heaton to drive down a deserted road, where Mr. Weaver produced a revolver and told Ms. Heaton they were going to rob her and steal her car. At this point, Mr. Pearson pulled Ms. Heaton from the car and put her into the back seat, where he struck her several times and then raped her. Mr. Pearson and Mr. Weaver told Ms. Heaton they were taking her to Chicago. The car stopped again at Bent Harbor, Michigan, where Ms. Heaton was again beaten and raped by Mr. Pearson. Ms. Heaton was then raped by Mr. Weaver. The two offenders then drove Ms. Heaton to the Northwest side of Cook County, Illinois, where they drove off the Northwest Tollway onto a deserted road. Ms. Heaton was again beaten and raped by both Mr. Pearson and



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Mr. Weaver. Mr. Pearson and Mr. Weaver decided they would need to kill Ms. Heaton, and Mr. Weaver again produced his revolver and shot Ms. Heaton point-blank four times, once in the back of the head, once in the throat, once in the right eye, and once in the right hand. Thinking Ms. Heaton was dead, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Weaver then put her body in a field, covered her body with straw and manure, and left her for dead. After about an hour, Ms. Heaton regained consciousness and then walked more than a half mile to the Northwest Tollway, where she was rescued by a passing citizen and taken to a hospital, where, somehow, she survived this brutal ordeal, despite losing six pints of blood. The vehicle of Ms. Heaton was later found abandoned in Berwyn, Illinois, and both Mr. Weaver and Mr. Pearson were arrested the following Saturday, on October 26, 1968, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Battle Creek, Michigan. It is important to note that at the time of this offense, Dennis Pearson had been released just three weeks earlier from Jackson Penitentiary in Michigan on parole, for a prior conviction for Breaking and Entering. At trial, Mr. Pearson maintained his innocence and denied any involvement in the crimes and offenses. Prior to his trial, Mr. Pearson attempted to escape on two separate occasions, and Mr. Pearson was removed from the courtroom during a portion of his trial due to his continued disruptive behavior. At the time of his parole consideration interview, Mr. Pearson continued to maintain his innocence. Mr. Pearson admitted that he was a friend of co-defendant Nelson Weaver and also admitted to being present with Mr. Weaver at the Capri Lounge on the date of the offense. Mr. Pearson stated that it was Nelson Weaver and another individual that left the lounge with Ms. Heaton, and that Mr. Pearson stayed at the lounge with another woman, until he left and went to the house of his girlfriend. Mr. Pearson blames his conviction on ineffective assistance of legal counsel for failing to call his alibi witnesses to testify at trial.

The parole assessment as completed by the Illinois Department of Corrections and the interview of Mr. Pearson reveal that Mr. Pearson was admitted to the custody of the Illinois Department of Correction for these offenses on August 1, 1969, and has remained in custody ever since, for a total of approximately 48 years. During this time period, the institutional adjustment of Mr. Pearson has been marginal, but he has shown improvement in recent years. In 2002, Mr. Pearson had four major disciplinary tickets within a short period of time, with one involving a threat to a former employee and three for making a threat to the President and Commander-In- Chief. Mr. Pearson reported that he has earned his GED and has an interest in astronomy. Mr. Pearson also stated that he has held various work assignments over the years, but that he does not have a current work assignment due to health issues. Mr. Pearson reported that he was born and raised in Battle Creek, Michigan, that his parents are deceased, and that his four brothers are also deceased. Mr. Pearson stated that he was never married and has no children. Mr. Pearson further advised that his last visit was in 1995, with one of his brothers. Mr. Pearson appeared to be in good health, but advised that he does not feel well as a result of his bypass heart surgery in 1990, a prior stroke, and due to being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2011. Mr. Pearson advised that he does not have any parole plans and did not think he would be able to support himself if granted parole. Mr. Pearson was courteous, pleasant, polite and attentive during the parole assessment interview.



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**DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Mr. Norton spoke about the victim and the State's Attorney confirmed that the victim passed away in 2014.

Ms. Wilson asked about the co-defendant. Mr. Norton stated there was nothing in the file. Chairman Findley stated that the co-defendant had died in prison.

Ms. Wilson asked about a statement in Mr. Pearson's letter where he stated he was innocent and not at the crime scene. She asked if the victim was able to identify Mr. Pearson and Mr. Norton answered that she was able to.

Mr. Fisher asked if Mr. Pearson had any charges in Michigan also, because the crime stated there. Mr. Norton stated that he didn't know and hadn't been able to find that out.

Mr. Diaz made a motion to go into closed session for the purposes of discussing victim statements and Mr. Shelton seconded the motion.

The Board returned from closed session and continued its discussion.

Mr. Norton stated that he remains very concerned with the very serious nature of his crime. Mr. Pearson continues to deny involvement and there continues to be an outstanding warrant in Cook County for his arrest for contempt of court. Mr. Pearson's complete lack of remorse continues to be of concern. Mr. Norton is not able to recommend parole at this time.

Chairman Findley stated that although a representative of the Attorney General's Office was not physically present, they would ask that any grant of parole release to Mr. Pearson would include a 90 day stay of release, so that they could address possible filing of a civil case for his commitment.

The Assistant State's Attorney from Cook County was asked if she would like to make any comments. She stated that in light of the high-risk assessment and his aggression issues, the Board's concern for public safety is absolutely warranted. The State absolutely opposes parole for Mr. Pearson. Mr. Fisher asked how old the victim was when she passed. The Assistant State's Attorney answered that she believed the victim was in her seventies.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (WN—AMP). Motion prevails by a vote of 15–0.

Motion for a 3-year set (WN—PF). Motion prevails by a vote of 13–2. Members voting in favor of the Motion were Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Johnson, Ms.



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Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley. Ms. Crigler and Ms. Harris dissented.

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

The Board further specifically finds, pursuant to its authority under 730 ILCS 5/3-3-5(f), that it is not reasonable to expect parole release to be granted prior to August 2021, and therefore continues Mr. Pearson's next parole consideration hearing to that docket.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm."*





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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION—November 1, 2018**

Inmate Name: **MICHAEL DRABING**

IDOC Number: **C77579**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Michael Drabing C77579.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Mr. Norton recused himself from the hearing because he felt he had a conflict of interest with Mr. Drabing's case.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Dunn presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

The parole assessment interview was conducted by a Prisoner Review Board Member with Michael Drabing C77579 on August 8, 2018, at the Lawrence Correctional Center. Mr. Drabing is a 63-year-old inmate that entered the Illinois Department of Corrections on January 26, 1977; his projected release date August 18, 2032. He was convicted of the offenses of three counts of Murder/Intent to Kill (1976), one count of Attempt Murder/Intent to Kill/Injure (1981), and one count of Armed Violence/Category II Weapon (1981). For the 1976 offenses, he received concurrent sentences of 75 to 100 years. For the 1981 offenses, he received concurrent sentences of 30 years.

Michael Drabing, on August 19, 1976, had a premeditated plan to brutally murder the entire Schneider family. The offender entered the Schneider family home and bound the only two people that were home, namely Terri Schneider and her boyfriend, Jeffrey Richardson. Later, Phyllis and Lloyd Schneider arrived home, with their other daughter, Sheryl. A struggle ensued between Drabing and the parents. As a result of that struggle, Drabing killed Phyllis and Lloyd Schneider, and their daughter, Terri. The second daughter, Sheryl, and Jeffrey Richardson were able to escape.

The medical records indicate that all three of the victims died as a result of hemorrhage due to multiple stab wounds. The victims sustained multiple stab wounds of approximately 30 stab wounds each, with the wounds being at least six inches deep.



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During the interview, Drabing admitted guilt, and he did indicate the offenses were pre-meditated. He indicated he did not know the Schneider family personally, but that he knew who they were. He was 21 years of age and at the time of the murders, he says, "I was crazy". He professes to have been depressed. According to the inmate, all the psychiatrists believed he had depression problems, and three psychiatrists agreed the he was schizophrenic. This evidence was presented at the bench trial. Mr. Drabing further states he was medicated at the time, and he believes he was misdiagnosed.

In further discussion with Mr. Drabing, he indicates that he resented the victims because of their wealth. He felt people of their financial status were part of the problems of this country. He felt this was causing his depression. He also stated that he is sorry for what happened and is ashamed of the crime. He says he was delusional at the time of the crime.

In 1981, Mr. Drabing was charged with Attempt Murder/Intent to Kill/Injure and Armed Violence. According to Mr. Drabing, these offenses involved another inmate coming at Mr. Drabing with a shank, and stabbing him twice, before he could gain control of the situation. Mr. Drabing admits that he then stabbed the other inmate approximately 9-10 times. He received concurrent sentences of 30 years for these offenses.

Mr. Drabing's institutional adjustment in recent years has been very good. Prior to 2016, when he came to Lawrence, he had a number of assignments while at Menard Correctional Center. Currently, he is unassigned. He has completed the following programs: Lifestyle Redirection, Coping Skills, Life Skills, and Reentry Summit. He has received a total of 28 tickets, including a 1989 Sexual Misconduct ticket. and a 1981 Fighting ticket (as detailed in the 1981 Attempt Murder and Armed Violence convictions). He has not had a ticket since 2017.

At the time of the interview, Mr. Drabing indicated that his mother, brother, and a niece were still living. His wife lives in St. Louis. He indicated his father was abusive. His mother and his niece came to visit him last month. He has no children, and he has been married twice. His post incarceration plans are to live with his 83-year-old mother in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Drabing presents very well, but he showed no emotion when discussing the Murder convictions; his affect was very flat. He has a high school education and has completed three years of college. He was an Illinois Scholar. Mr. Drabing's health is relatively normal. He has arthritis and some minor health issues. Per his report, when he was first incarcerated, he received medication for mental illnesses and was hospitalized three times for schizophrenia. At last year's *en banc* hearing for Mr. Drabing, a psychiatric evaluation was requested by the Board. This evaluation reports that, at the present time, Mr. Drabing does not exhibit any mental health illnesses.

### **DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Mr. Shelton added additional details of the case to Mr. Dunn's summary. Mr. Drabing and some friends had crashed a party at the home of the victims. They were asked to leave and





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were not leaving fast enough and became belligerent with Mr. Schneider. The group ultimately left. Mr. Drabing came back later to the house and tied up the young couple at gunpoint and waited for the rest of the family members to return. When the returning family members realized what was happening, they barricaded the bedroom door long enough for Sheryl and Jeffrey to escape. The mother, father, and one daughter were found murdered when help returned to the house. The victims were stabbed more than 90 times. Mr. Shelton stated that when Mr. Drabing was ultimately captured and questioned, he was very clear in his intentions. Mr. Drabing stated he had issues with this family because they had money and were what he considered wealthy. He felt that rich people were the source of the trouble in the world. Mr. Drabing admired Charles Manson and wanted the notoriety that the Manson family had acquired due to their murders and this is the reason he came back to the house and murdered the victims. Mr. Shelton stated it was a very brutal set of offenses, and that he would have more details from the protest hearings. Mr. Shelton further noted that the three mental health professions that diagnosed Mr. Drabing at the time of the trial could not agree on Mr. Drabing's mental state.

Ms. Crigler asked how old Mr. Drabing was at the time of the crime. Mr. Dunn answered that he was 21. She asked about the differing opinions of the state of Mr. Drabing's mental health at the time of the crime. Ms. Crigler commented that the state psychiatrists currently do not find that Mr. Drabing has any sort of mental illness, but that in 1977 some thought that he was a sociopath. Ms. Crigler asked about the number of people murdered. Mr. Shelton explained that the young couple were tied up and Mr. Drabing was waiting for the rest of the family to return home. Ms. Crigler also asked if he acted alone and Mr. Shelton replied that he did. Mr. Shelton explained that in an interview, Mr. Drabing stated that he had certain things that he wanted to do to each member of the family, including, that he wanted to murder one person in the swimming pool, one person he wanted to put on the pool table and skin them alive, and more.

Mrs. Perkins asked if Mr. Drabing actually said those things about how he wanted to kill the family and Mr. Shelton replied that he had, noting that these statements were documented in the record.

Ms. Crigler asked how one man could have killed three people. Mr. Shelton explained that Mr. Drabing came in and held them at gunpoint after tearing the door off the hinges. Ms. Crigler asked how big of a person Mr. Drabing was. Chairman Findley asked Mr. Dunn if he could answer that question. Mr. Dunn replied that Mr. Drabing was a fairly large man.

Mr. Shelton stated that Mr. Drabing was not even on the mental health case load and that Mr. Shelton was concerned, given what the Board knows about the circumstances of the crime and the statements Mr. Drabing made when he was interviewed. Mr. Shelton observed that Mr. Drabing was so vicious that he stabbed himself in the leg in the course of stabbing his victims. Mr. Drabing was found after he had gone to a hospital for his wounds. He was interviewed at the hospital and he made admissions about brutally murdering these people and made admissions about what his intentions were.



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Ms. Crigler read over the statement of facts from the file especially in reference to Mr. Drabing's mental health.

The Board went into closed session for the purposes of discussing victim's statements, with Mr. Shelton making the motion and Mr. Fisher seconding.

The Board then returned from closed session to conduct a vote regarding Mr. Drabing's parole consideration.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (DWD—DS). Motion prevails by a vote of 14–0. Mr. Norton did not participate in the deliberation or vote on the Motion as a result of his recusal.

Motion for a three-year set (DWD—DS). Motion prevails by a vote of 14–0. Mr. Norton did not participate in the deliberation or vote on the Motion as a result of his recusal.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Drabing's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board noted that this case involved the very brutal murders of three innocent people, without any provocation. In addition, Mr. Drabing's further offenses in 1981 and behavior while incarcerated affect the Board's consideration of release.

The Board feels that a release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Drabing would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole, that release of Mr. Drabing would have an adverse effect upon institutional discipline, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of his offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

The Board further specifically finds, pursuant to its authority under 730 ILCS 5/3-3-5(f), that it is not reasonable to expect parole release to be granted prior to August of 2021, and therefore continues Mr. Drabing's next parole consideration hearing to that docket.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm."*



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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION— November 1, 2018**

Inmate Name: **DONALD WOODRUFF**

IDOC Number: **C72940**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Donald Woodruff C72940.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Ms. Johnson presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

Donald Woodruff C72940 was interviewed on August 7, 2018, at Stateville Correctional Center. Also present was his attorney, Mark Hersh. On the day of the interview, Mr. Woodruff was being released from segregation.

On August 26, 1977, Mr. Woodruff was sentenced in Dewitt County Case Number 77CR34 to 60-100 years for Murder, 15-30 years for Armed Robbery, 15-30 years for Aggravated Kidnapping, 3-10 years for Theft Over \$150, and 1-3 years for Unlawful Use of a Weapon. On September 1, 1977, he was sentenced in Champaign County Case Number 77X219 to 75-150 years for the Murder of Richard Ogden, to be served consecutively to the DeWitt County case. On August 28, 1979, he was sentenced in Livingston County to 10 years for one count of Aggravated Battery and 364 days each on three counts of Battery, to be served consecutively to the Champaign and Dewitt County cases.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

While working at Lee's Beauty Shop in Chicago, Mr. Woodruff met a man by the name of Percy Jones. In the early morning hours of February 11, 1977, at approximately 01:00 a.m., with Mr. Woodruff acting as a lookout and getaway driver, Mr. Jones confronted a young man by the name of Derek Smith outside of the Apollo Lounge at 79th and Morgan. At this time, Mr. Jones was armed with a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun. At gunpoint, he forced Derek Smith to enter Mr. Smith's car, a 1973 Buick. Mr. Jones then ordered Mr. Smith to drive around the corner, but Mr. Smith grabbed the gun. During the struggle, Mr. Jones fired the shotgun, but the shot only grazed Mr. Smith in the leg. Most of the pellets of the shotgun embedded in the driver's side floorboard of the Buick. Mr. Smith was then able to flee. Mr. Jones and Mr.



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Woodruff then drove to Champaign County in Derek Smith's Buick. They arrived there at approximately noon on February 12, 1977. Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff then spent the weekend in Champaign County.

On Monday, February 14, 1977, they drove to Clinton, Illinois, looking for a car to steal. Once in Clinton, they spotted a white Pontiac Firebird Trans Am parked outside the grocery store. They waited for the driver and owner of that vehicle, an 18-year-old young man by the name of Tony Fairchild. When Fairchild came out of the grocery store, they confronted him with a shotgun and told him they were going to take the car. At this point Fairchild pushed the button down on the driver's side door and slammed it shut, locking it. Since the keys were at that time in the ignition, this successfully foiled the attempt to steal the car. However, his actions so angered Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff that they forced him to get into the Buick and drove him out to a country road, approximately 10 miles from the City of Clinton itself. Once there, they forced him to lie face-down in a ditch. With the shotgun nearly resting against his head, they then fired one round into the back of his head, resulting in the instantaneous death of Tony Fairchild, as the blast from the shotgun succeeded in removing the upper portion of Mr. Fairchild's head.

After killing Mr. Fairchild and removing money from his body and his car, Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff then returned to Champaign, arriving late in the afternoon of February 14, 1977. They had ultimately decided not to steal Fairchild's vehicle, because they had gained entry only by breaking a window and did not want to drive a car with a broken window. In the late afternoon of February 15, 1977, at approximately 5:00 p.m., they went to University Avenue Auto Sales in Champaign. At that time, Richard Ogden, a salesman and assistant manager, was the only employee present. No customers were present. Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff then entered the small office area of the company. They confronted Ogden with a sawed-off shotgun and forced him to provide them with his vehicle keys, documentation, and title papers to two 1973 Oldsmobile Cutlasses which were on the company's lot. They additionally obtained approximately \$800.00 in cash from Ogden, after which they forced him at gunpoint to a storage area of the office. Once he was there, they fired a single 12-gauge shotgun blast into the back of his head, at point-blank range. Richard Ogden died instantly.

As fate would have it, one of the Oldsmobiles they stole was defective, so they left it approximately one block from the scene of the crime. They then fled to Peoria, Illinois, taking the remaining 1973 Oldsmobile and the Buick they had stolen from Derek Smith in Chicago four days earlier.

Once they were in Peoria, they obtained two motel rooms and substantial quantities of beer, wine, and champagne. They contacted two girls from Chicago and asked them to come down for a party. However, prior to the arrival of the girls, Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff were apprehended for the Murder in Dewitt County and the Murder in Champaign County earlier that week. The two girls were apprehended at the bus station.

Per the statement of the State's Attorney of Champaign County:





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“In imposing sentence in this case, Judge Little, who was presiding trial judge and heard the six days of evidence presented against Donald Woodruff, had the following comment: ‘This was certainly a brutal murder, very brutal... there are no two-for-one murders as far as this court is concerned’ . . . ‘I must admit that in seven years as a practicing trial attorney, four of those having been spent as a prosecutor, I have never encountered such a cold-blooded, calculated, and ruthless slaughter as that perpetrated by Donald Woodruff and his accomplice. Indeed, I have seldom even read of a murder much less two murders perpetrated in such a ruthless manner. It should be noted, that Woodruff and Jones were totally unacquainted with the two people they killed. The murders were motivated solely by greed and profit. While Woodruff cried when the jury returned a verdict of guilty, it should be noted that frequently during his six-day trial, he was observed smiling and sometimes laughing. Perhaps the best indication of his total lack of remorse was the fact that after the brutal murder of Tony Fairchild on February 14, he was able to turn around and participate in an equally brutal murder on the 15th.’”

On or about January 23, 1979, Mr. Woodruff committed Aggravated Battery at Pontiac Correctional Center, in Pontiac, Illinois. In that case, he caused bodily harm to a correctional officer by pushing the officer backwards and subsequently slamming the officer’s head into a wall key safe.

There are letters of objection from Champaign County and Dewitt County. The most recent letter from Champaign County is dated May 2018. The letter from DeWitt is not dated.

MR. WOODRUFF’S STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSES

In the past, Mr. Woodruff has denied any involvement in the offenses. He stated he was 19 years old, going to the school of cosmetology. He noted that Percy Jones had just maxed out of juvenile. Mr. Woodruff stated the Robbery was committed by Percy Lee Jones. Mr. Woodruff claimed that he didn’t even know what happened, because he was parked in a space 70-80 feet away. He said they went to Champaign the same night, then to Clinton, to the Kroeger store. He said he met Tony Fairchild there, and he got into the car. While Mr. Woodruff was driving, listening to music, and smoking marijuana, “next thing [he knew], Percy Lee Jones shot Fairchild.” Mr. Woodruff noted he was paranoid, and asked Jones “why did you do that?” Mr. Woodruff stated he doesn’t remember Mr. Jones’s answer. Mr. Woodruff then stated that he knew he had to get away from Mr. Jones. They then went together back to Champaign.

Later in the night, Mr. Woodruff went to Steak and Shake and called his mother. Mr. Jones and Mr. Woodruff stayed in a rented house, before then going to a friend’s house, where they played some cards. They then went back to the rental house. (At this point in the interview, Mr. Woodruff stated that he is sorry he didn’t say anything, and that failing to speak up still bothers him to this day. He states he saw Mr. Fairchild’s mother at the trial and watched her the whole time.) The next day was spent with Percy Lee Jones. Mr. Woodruff went to the liquor





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store, where he heard a car backfire and then left the store. Mr. Jones had gone to the used car lot, where Mr. Woodruff met him outside. Mr. Jones asked Mr. Woodruff to drive a car Mr. Jones had just gotten. Mr. Woodruff then drove the pair to Peoria. They got a room at Washington Inn. At the Inn, Mr. Jones pointed a pistol at Mr. Woodruff, to show him the gun. Mr. Woodruff stated that he slapped the gun, and it went off. Mr. Woodruff noted thinking that Mr. Jones was going to shoot Mr. Woodruff. The bullet left a hole in the wall of the Inn. After this event, the pair went to some lounges and clubs.

Mr. Woodruff stated that Mr. Fairchild was a drug dealer. Mr. Woodruff stated he had no juvenile history. He stated he came to prison in 1977, and in the first week witnessed a killing. Regarding the Aggravated Battery, Mr. Woodruff stated that the correctional officers came to get him for the hospital, and he fought them. He admitted he stuck an ink pen in the Lieutenant's neck. He stated seeing the murder in the yard, then the guy in the next cell beaten down, then Mr. Woodruff himself being beaten for witnessing the beating, "changed [him]." Mr. Woodruff states he then became a prison rights advocate.

Mr. Woodruff's lawyer states that Mr. Woodruff was only 19 at the time of the offenses. He was the accomplice, not the shooter. The shooter has since been released. Mr. Woodruff hasn't been released because of institutional adjustment. He has no other criminal history other than the pending matter.

### CRIMINAL HISTORY

Per the SPIN Assessment, Mr. Woodruff reported his 1<sup>st</sup> arrest at age 17.

- August 22, 1975: Unlawful Use of a Weapon. Case discharged on September 10, 1975.
- September 17, 1975: Unlawful Use of a Weapon. Case Stricken Off With Leave to Reinstate.
- October 23, 1975: Possession of Marijuana. Case non-suited.
- December 7, 1975: Aggravated Battery. Sentenced to 2 years of probation and 60 days in the county jail.
- September 16, 1976: Robbery. Case Stricken Off With Leave to Reinstate.
- October 1, 1976: Aggravated Assault, Unlawful Use of a Weapon, and Failure to Register. Case Stricken Off With Leave to Reinstate.
- March 10, 1977: Murder, Kidnapping, Robbery. Instant case.

### INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Woodruff has received an additional consecutive sentence of 10 years for Aggravated Battery, concurrent with three sentences of 364 days for three counts of Battery, in 1979. As of July 13, 2018, Mr. Woodruff is currently C grade. Since his last appearance before the Board in 2017, he has received four major tickets. On May 10, 2018, he received tickets for Damage or Misuse of Property, Contraband/Unauthorized Property, Insolence, Disobeying a



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Direct Order, Violation of Rules, and Drugs and Drug Paraphernalia (refused to provide a sample for testing). On October 26, 2017, he received a ticket for Contraband/Unauthorized Property.

Since August 11, 1998, Mr. Woodruff has received a total of 53 major tickets and 30 minor tickets. Prior to that date, he had received 236 tickets. His total number of tickets while incarcerated is 319. Of particular note in recent years is a major ticket from May 14, 2013, wherein Mr. Woodruff was found to have engaged in selling legal services by force, including sexual force, while on the MSU at Pontiac Correctional Center.

Mr. Woodruff is not currently involved in any programs. He has had no work assignment since being placed at Stateville in October of 2015. Mr. Woodruff claims that he has no work assignment because Internal Affairs blocks him, and he blames one particular member of the Internal Affairs office for this situation.

In the past, Mr. Woodruff has taken paralegal studies, both at the introductory and advanced levels. He has an Associate Degree in Old Testament Studies, and Business Management, and a lot of religious certificates. He is taking a religious course with Operation Push. He wants to have a hotline for youth on a bad path and how they will end up.

Regarding Mr. Woodruff's personal history, he is the oldest of 3 children. He graduated from Dunbar High School in 1975, where he participated in jazz, marching band, orchestra, and chorus. He attended La'Tees College of Cosmetology from December 1976 to February 18, 1977 (studies not completed due to arrest). His parents divorced when he was 10 years old. His father died in 2003 and his mother died in November of 2015.

Per the SPIN Assessment, Mr. Woodruff has a concern with his brother selling the family home "recently". Mr. Woodruff's last visit was May 18, 2018, with legal counsel. His last family visit was June 11, 2014, with his brothers. Mr. Woodruff was never married and has no children. His step-father is his sole support. Mr. Woodruff's step-father is in Maryland, and contacts Mr. Woodruff by phone. His sister is there with his step-father.

Per Mr. Woodruff's pre-sentence investigation, he has no military history. He noted no medical concerns prior to arrest but had been stabbed in the chest previously. He denied any history of mental or emotional condition or treatment. He admitted using drugs frequently such as snorting coke and smoking cannabis. He described his use of alcohol as mild.

Regarding Mr. Woodruff's health, the record since his incarceration indicates he has had several psychiatric diagnoses indicative of anxiety, adjustment, and personality disorders, including both paranoid and antisocial personality disorders. He claimed to have epilepsy during a psychiatric evaluation in 1977, but no further evidence of epilepsy is present. He was reportedly stabbed in the chest prior to 1977.



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Mr. Woodruff currently states he is in good health. He states when he was younger he had blackout spells until about age 20 or 21. He states he is currently on medications for cholesterol and blood pressure, and that he has some prostate issues.

His SPIN assessment was completed on August 15, 2017, and it indicates that his overall risk to recidivate is moderate, with low static and dynamic risk factors. His protective factors are rated high, with notation that “[a]ggression represents an area that is of some concern in [Mr. Woodruff’s] case.” The assessment also notes that substance abuse is not an issue for Mr. Woodruff, and that he is currently in a prosocial environment.

### EN BANC HISTORY

In recent years, Mr. Woodruff has received mixed votes, summarized as follows:

- September 2017: Denied parole by a vote of 10–3. Voting in favor of release were Ms. Crigler, Mr. Dunn, and Ms. Martinez.
- August 2016: Denied parole by vote of 7–6.
- August 2015: Denied parole by vote of 8–4.
- August 2014: Denied parole by vote of 11–3.

### PAROLE PLANS

Mr. Woodruff indicated that he was not willing to provide any additional information for preparation of parole release plans, and that all relevant information was already in his master file with the Department of Corrections. In 2006, he presented a plan to live with brother in a house owned jointly with his brother. Beginning in 2014, he is noted to need alternate placement or has said that “everything is in the master file.” In 2016, he stated he has no plans.

During his interview he stated his lawyer will go to St. Leonard’s to verify they will take him, or that he has a cousin in Chicago with whom he could reside. He wants a job as a paralegal or to attend a truck driving school for his CDL.

Mr. Woodruff stated that he wants to be transferred to Dixon to get away from violent people and murderers at his current facility. He stated “I don’t know if I can keep going sometimes. I’m just here. No win situation, People just throw discipline at me. I have violent people I have to live with. I can’t even get in the shower.” He stated that Percy Jones was paroled for saving an officer’s life, and then claimed that “I told Mr. Shelton I saved a couple lives. I did it but felt bad for trying to use that.” He finished his interview by noting that “If you go to bat for me, I will not let you down. I’m not coming back to prison. I don’t care if I have to shovel elephant do-do. I’m not coming back to prison.”

### DISCUSSION

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:



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Mr. Fisher asked about the two girls who met Mr. Woodruff and his co-defendant. Ms. Johnson stated they were stopped at the bus stop. Mr. Fisher stated that was not in the police report; that they had spent time with Mr. Woodruff drinking and doing drugs.

Mr. Shelton noted that Mr. Woodruff has told a number of different stories and doesn't seem to think that people keep notes. He feels that Mr. Woodruff continues to be dishonest. Ms. Johnson said that Mr. Woodruff continues to deny any involvement. Mr. Shelton spoke about Mr. Woodruff taking a container of change from one of his victims to cash in at a bank. Mr. Shelton doesn't feel that Mr. Woodruff has been honest. Mr. Woodruff said he was not at the car dealership when the victim was shot; he was across the street in a grocery store, but his fingerprints were found on the scene. Mr. Shelton told about Mr. Woodruff giving a statement to the state police that he arrived at the scene of a crime with his accomplice in a white van. The victim of that crime testified that Mr. Woodruff was with the co-defendant when the crime was committed; Mr. Woodruff continues to state he was not there. Mr. Shelton noted that Mr. Woodruff is a very compulsive and violent person. He threw a shoe in the courtroom and had to be removed for his violent outbursts.

Mr. Woodruff's attorney, Mark Hersh stated that at trial it was acknowledged that the co-defendant was the shooter and as that was established, he hoped not to keep going over that again. Mr. Hersh stated that he has been representing Mr. Woodruff for about four years now and wanted to bring up a couple points that make this case unique. He was not the shooter, but he was "all-in" as Mr. Shelton mentioned. Mr. Woodruff has no incentive to lie. Mr. Woodruff's co-defendant, Percy Lee Jones, was released by the Board six years ago. Mr. Hersh contends that if the State is going to keep the accomplice in prison longer than the shooter, there has to be a good reason. Mr. Hersh submits that the reason for this discrepancy is Mr. Woodruff's personality. He is abrasive, obnoxious, and an "odd ball," which probably rubs people the wrong way. Mr. Woodruff's personality has not served him well in prison. Mr. Hersh feels that Mr. Woodruff is not dangerous, and that his personality is not enough to keep him in prison. Mr. Woodruff wants to get out and he has a place to go. He wants to be productive and has a paralegal certificate.

Ms. Crigler spoke about Mr. Woodruff's personality. She said he's a big man and when he comes into the room, he kind of sucks the air out because he's opinionated, and he wants you to know what he's thinking; he talks a bit too much. Ms. Crigler agrees with Mr. Hersh that it's the discipline issues and Mr. Woodruff's personality that are keeping him in prison. She feels he's a man's man and he's not going to let anyone intimidate him or think he's a "punk." She totally agrees that Mr. Woodruff is not the shooter and supports him.

Mr. Shelton states that he feels Mr. Woodruff is still dishonest.

Ms. Johnson stated that Mr. Woodruff was caught and charged with selling legal services for money and sex in 2014, which concerned her.





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Ms. Daniels asked Mr. Shelton if he doesn't trust Mr. Woodruff now or in the past. Mr. Shelton said he doesn't trust Mr. Woodruff now because of statements he made just last year.

Mr. Shelton spoke to the fact that Mr. Woodruff's co-defendant had been paroled. Mr. Shelton said there is some discussion as to whether that was a good idea or not. Mr. Shelton noted that Mr. Jones has been re-arrested for theft in the past.

Chairman Findley asked Mr. Hersh whether, if Mr. Woodruff was paroled, Mr. Hersh's involvement with Mr. Woodruff would end at that point. Mr. Hersh stated they have not had that discussion, but he would continue to help Mr. Woodruff. Chairman Findley asked if Reed-Smith ever hired ex-cons. Mr. Hersh stated he did not know. Chairman Findley mentioned a former parolee who did find a job with a law firm.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (EJ—PF). Motion prevails by a vote of 11–4. Members voting in favor of the Motion were Mr. Diaz, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, and Ms. Wilson. Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Dunn, and Chairman Findley dissented.

Motion for a 2-year set (EJ—AMP). Motion prevails by a vote of 8–7. Members voting in favor of the Motion were Mr. Diaz, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, and Ms. Wilson. Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Harris, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Tupy, and Chairman Findley dissented.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Woodruff's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that a release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that he would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole, and that his release at this time would have a substantially adverse effect upon institutional discipline.

The Board further specifically finds, pursuant to its authority under 730 ILCS 5/3-3-5(f), that it is not reasonable to expect parole release to be granted prior to August of 2020, and therefore continues Mr. Woodruff's next parole consideration hearing to that docket.

*“The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm.”*





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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION— November 1, 2018**

Inmate Name: **THEODORE ROSS**

IDOC Number: **C71583**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Theodore Ross C71583.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Tupy presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

On June 18th, 2018, Theodore Ross C71583 was interviewed for parole consideration by Board Member Ken Tupy. Mr. Ross is serving a sentence of 50-150 years for Murder. The facts of the crime indicate that on March 10, 1975, Mr. Ross murdered a 57-year-old female, who was a family member by marriage to Mr. Ross. He stabbed, beat, and choked the woman to death in her own apartment. Mr. Ross indicated that he was raised by the victim, and, according to him, she was more of a mother to him than his own mother. He indicated that he helped her with laundry that morning and they were at the kitchen table drinking coffee. He stated that she did not do anything or say anything to make him angry, but when she got up to wash her coffee cup, he grabbed a knife, came up behind her, and began stabbing her. He stabbed her in the throat, back, and hands. He also beat her with a two-by-four he had left there earlier. He remembers her pleading for him to stop, but he continued to beat and stab her until she was dead. He does not know why he killed her.

Mr. Ross was remorseful. He stated that he had used LSD in the past, but that he had not used LSD on the day of the offense. His attorneys, however, claimed he had an LSD flashback which lead to the Murder, although Mr. Ross has never had any other LSD flashback, either before or since the offense. The jury did not support his defense and found him guilty of Murder. He is 72 years old and has served approximately 43 years in prison.

Mr. Ross's institutional adjustment record is good. He has received 39 disciplinary tickets. He received a ticket in April 19, 2016, for Sexual Misconduct with another inmate. His last ticket was three months ago for an altered hot pot. He has worked a number of jobs at the institution, but he is currently unassigned. He has completed college while in prison. Mr. Ross denies that he has any mental health issues and states he is not receiving any mental health



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treatment in the facility. His criminal history indicates he was on parole for Theft at the time of the Murder. Letters in the file indicate he was stealing and causing trouble before this incident.

The State's Attorney's protest indicated he needed money for an abortion and was robbing Ms. Abrams. Mr. Ross denies that he was robbing her and stated he did not know his girlfriend was pregnant until after the Murder. Mr. Ross also submerged the body of the victim in the bathtub and cleaned himself up after the Murder.

Mr. Ross has received a vote for parole in 2010 from David Frier, with no other votes. He was last interviewed and presented for parole consideration by Edith Crigler in 2015, and he is coming off a 3-year set.

Mr. Ross has no parole plans. He has a friend whom he would like to live with, but he has not made any plans or asked if he can live with her. In the event he is paroled and unable to live with his friend, he would need to go to a half-way house.

### **DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Mr. Fisher asked whether Mr. Ross has had any other violent offenses. Mr. Tupy referenced letters from the file that indicated Mr. Ross had thrown things at his mother as a juvenile, but that he has never been charged with other violent crimes.

Ms. Perkins asked about the victim. Mr. Tupy said she was a woman when took care of Mr. Ross and he was closer to her than his own mother. Mr. Tupy noted that the only protests received by the Board have been made in the State's Attorney's letter.

Mr. Dunn asked about Mr. Ross's post-incarceration plan. Mr. Tupy said Mr. Ross doesn't have one, other than to go to a half-way house.

Mr. Shelton asked whether Mr. Ross had been on any mental health case load during his 40-plus years in the Department of Corrections. Mr. Tupy noted that mental health was brought up at the trial and intake to the institution, but Mr. Ross has never been diagnosed with mental illness.

Mr. Dunn asked Mr. Ross's age at the time of the crime. Mr. Tupy said he was 18.

Chairman Findley asked about tickets during Mr. Ross's early institutional years. Mr. Tupy replied that most tickets were small, for unauthorized movement, theft, etc. Mr. Tupy noted that Mr. Ross's last major ticket was April 2016, and he has had 39 tickets total during his incarceration.



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Chairman Findley stated that Mr. Ross needs a parole plan.

Ms. Wilson noted her concern was the fact that he still doesn't know why he committed the crime, and that he has not tried to get any help to figure out why. Mr. Tupy says Mr. Ross remembers every detail of the crime. Mr. Ross says he was angry at the time, but his victim did not do or say anything to make him attack her.

Mr. Tupy noted that the SPIN Risk assessment finds Mr. Ross to be a low risk to recidivate. Mr. Tupy noted that the State's Attorney believes that the cause of the Murder was a robbery to pay for an abortion for his girlfriend. Mr. Ross says he didn't know his girlfriend was pregnant until after he was arrested, and she told him while he was in the county jail. He has had no acts of violence in all these years of incarceration.

Mr. Shelton asked whether Mr. Ross had any sort of relationship with anyone. Mr. Tupy said no.

Mr. Tupy noted that he is bothered by Mr. Ross's lack of a parole plan and the violence of his crime.

Mr. Diaz inquired if Mr. Ross has had a psych evaluation in the last few years. Board Members agreed that a psych evaluation was needed.

Mrs. Perkins asked about visitors. Mr. Tupy noted that Mr. Ross has had no visitors since 1992.

The Assistant State's Attorney stated that Mr. Ross's offense was an extremely violent crime and the State does oppose parole.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (KT—EC). Motion prevails by a vote of 15–0.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Ross's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that a release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that he would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole, and that his release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of this offense and promote a lack of respect for the law. Accordingly, the Board hereby continues Mr. Ross's next parole consideration hearing to the July 2019 docket.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm."*



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**EN BANC MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION—November 1, 2018**

Inmate Name: **ROBERT JONES**

IDOC Number:

**C70938**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A., Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Robert Jones C70938.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Fisher presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

**CURRENT STATUS**

On May 1, 2018, Mr. Fisher interviewed Robert Jones C70938 at Illinois River Correctional Center. Also present at the interview were Mr. Jones's attorneys, Courtney Kelledees and Susan Ritacca. Mr. Jones is a 76-year-old male, born on April 26, 1942. On August 16, 1978, Mr. Jones was sentenced to 100-300 years for the Murders of Samuel and Campbell Thompson (ages 28 and 30, respectively). Mr. Jones has been incarcerated for approximately 41 years. Mr. Jones's projected release date is July 3, 2127. He is currently A grade, minimum security, and low escape risk according to his offender overview from January 25, 2018.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On June 16, 1977, victims Samuel Thompson and Campbell Thompson were intending to purchase a vehicle from Robert Jones. Mr. Jones was acquainted with Campbell Thompson while both were in jail and was later introduced to Campbell's brother Samuel. According to the record, Jones went with both victims to the west side of Chicago to allegedly pick up the car that the victims were going to buy. Once there, Jones had the victims park in a lot on West Lake Street. Mr. Jones then pulled out a gun and shot both victims in the back of their heads. Both victims died as a result of the shooting. The victims were found the next day in the front seat of their car. Neither had any money on their person when discovered.

During the investigation, Chicago Police investigators located the gun used in the Murders at the apartment of a neighbor of Mr. Jones, after Mr. Jones had given it to her to hold while police were seeking Mr. Jones for questioning.



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Mr. Jones was arrested October 3, 1977, for Possession of a Stolen Vehicle and used the alias of Ronald Montgomery at the time of his arrest. A check of his fingerprints revealed Mr. Jones's identity and he was subsequently charged with the Murders of the Thompson brothers.

Mr. Jones was found guilty of both Murders by a jury and was sentenced on August 16, 1978 to 100-300 years. During sentencing, Judge James Bailey commented that:

*"I feel if you elected under the new Code, I could have given you Natural Life, and I intend to give you Natural Life now, but since you elected under the old Code, just terms of years, so for that reason and the reason because of the nature of the crime, double Murder, under the new Code it would be punishable by electrocution, which would be the Death sentence, no question I have to give you Natural Life to have any justice at all."*

During the interview with Mr. Jones, he was asked about the plan to lure the victims to the west side to sell them a vehicle. He stated he never said anything about selling any vehicle and does not know where that story originated. He stated that he knew that Samuel Thompson was having an affair with Mr. Jones's brother's wife. Mr. Jones stated he also knew that Samuel Thompson was involved in the brutal beating of Mr. Jones's brother with a tire iron, causing Mr. Jones's brother to be in a coma. Mr. Jones knew Campbell Thompson from being previously incarcerated together, so Mr. Jones asked Campbell to take Mr. Jones to Samuel to talk to him about the beating of Mr. Jones's brother.

During that conversation, Samuel was blaming another person for the beating of Mr. Jones's brother and agreed to take Mr. Jones to meet with that person. That is when the two victims drove Mr. Jones to the west side. Mr. Jones admitted he was armed and angry. The conversation became heated when Mr. Jones asked why they needed to drive from the south side to the west side to get answers he already knew. They pulled into a parking lot on West Lake Street and continued to argue. There were threats made to get out of the vehicle, at which time Mr. Jones stated he then shot both brothers in the head on impulse. He stated it was revenge for his brother because Mr. Jones knew Samuel was involved in beating Mr. Jones's brother. When asked why Mr. Jones shot Campbell, who was basically a friend of Mr. Jones, he stated he knew Campbell would defend his own brother against Mr. Jones. When asked if he took money from the victims after he shot them, he replied "There was never any car for sale. I took no money. I thought at the time I was avenging my brother."

Mr. Jones stated the .38-caliber revolver used during the Murders belonged to him. He said he only remembered firing 2 shots. Mr. Jones stated he had never used narcotics, and drank alcohol very little, if any, stating he had no tolerance for alcohol.

Mr. Jones has never denied his responsibility for the Murders of Samuel and Campbell Thompson and expresses his remorse.





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CRIMINAL HISTORY

- January 14, 1962: Robbery (strong arm). Received a fine and 11 days in jail for reduced charge of Petty Theft.
- August 21, 1963: Burglary. Sentenced to 6 months in the House of Corrections for reduced charge of Theft.
- November 20, 1964: Burglary. Convicted of reduced charge of Theft and sentenced to 8 months in the House of Corrections.
- July 20, 1965: Burglary. Sentenced to 5 years of probation.
- December 8, 1965: Burglary. Sentenced to 1-10 years for Burglary and 1-10 years for Violation of Probation on prior Burglary. Paroled on February 28, 1968.
- July 17, 1969: Attempt Burglary. Sentenced to 1 year in the Department of Corrections. Paroled on November 9, 1970.
- September 7, 1972: Unlawful Use of a Weapon. Sentenced May 17, 1973, to 2 years and 1 day in the Department of Corrections. Paroled on November 21, 1973.
- September 4, 1974: Arrested for Murder of Floyd Richardson. Mr. Jones told investigators he lured Mr. Richardson to Mr. Jones's apartment with \$600.00 in cash, under the pretext of buying a car. Mr. Richardson was later found shot in the head. Mr. Jones admitted to taking the \$600.00 from Mr. Richardson before he was shot. Mr. Jones was found not guilty of the Murder after a jury trial.
- Mr. Jones was also charged with the Murder of 79-year-old Albert Bell in 1974. Witnesses told investigators that Jones came to Mr. Bell's house, claiming to be a counselor for an imprisoned son of Mr. Bell. Mr. Jones promised to provide legal services if the family paid \$50.00 per month for a lawyer. Mr. Bell was shot and killed. Mr. Bell's wife, who was present in the home at the time, identified Mr. Jones as the shooter. On October 10, 1974, there was a finding of no probable cause regarding the Murder of Albert Bell.
- March 23, 1977: Charged with Theft. No disposition available.
- March 25, 1977: Charged with violating his mandatory parole release in the 1972 Unlawful Use of a Weapon case. Released again May 10, 1977, one month before committing the double Murders of the Thompson brothers.

INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Jones stated for the most part his health is good. He takes medication for borderline high blood pressure, and eye drops to relieve eye pressure. He added that his eyesight has diminished over the years.

Mr. Jones has received nine disciplinary violations during his incarceration. The last such violation occurred in 2014.



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For the past two years, Mr. Jones has been assigned to 1st Shift in the Correctional Industries Bakery Worker Program. Prior to that, he held a position of dietary worker for over two years. He also worked in the bakery for over nine years.

Mr. Jones has earned college credits in general studies and welding science. He also holds a certification in the Industry Science of Baking. Mr. Jones has received a Toastmasters International Membership Certificate, which focuses on communication and leadership development. Mr. Jones is active in Bible study and is a mentor to younger inmates.

Mr. Jones has little family left, but he reconnected in 2015 with the mother of his child when she came to Illinois River Correctional Center for a visit. She remains in frequent contact with Mr. Jones.

### RELEASE PLANS

In regard to a parole plan, Mr. Jones currently has two viable housing options according to his attorneys, with ABD Property Management and St. Leonard's Ministries; these are confirmed housing opportunities. Additionally, Mr. Jones has three confirmed opportunities for employment, with Inspiration Corporation, Greater West Town Community Development, and Roosevelt University.

### DISCUSSION

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Regarding Mr. Jones's parole plan, Ms. Kelledees, his attorney, stated that St. Leonard's House has a confirmed letter of support as recently as Sept 21, 2018. He also has a housing option in Iowa. Mr. Jones strongly prefers to parole to St. Leonard's. St. Leonard's does have a very strong track record for helping individuals on parole. In regard to Mr. Jones's employment, Greater West Town and Inspiration Corporation are both short public transportation rides from St. Leonard's. Both companies know of Mr. Jones's conviction history and his age, making a very strong support system for Mr. Jones. Mr. Fisher complimented Ms. Kelledees on the job she did putting together Mr. Jones's parole plan package.

Mr. Fisher stated that overall Mr. Jones' SPIN assessment was low. Mr. Fisher also noted that prior to 2017, Mr. Jones never received a vote for parole. In 2017, the vote was 6 to 6. There is strong protest from the Cook County State's Attorney, as well as a former Assistant State's Attorney ("ASA") from Cook County. Chairman Findley asked if there were any family protests from Cook County. None were noted. It was noted by Ms. Kelledees that in 2017 Mr. Jones was not represented by an attorney and did not have a parole plan. Chairman asked Mr. Fisher to read the names on the vote for Mr. Jones from 2017. Voting for parole in 2017 were Ms. Martinez, Chairman Findley, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Perkins, Ms. Crigler and Ms. Harris.



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Mr. Shelton asked what, if anything, is known about the victims. Mr. Fisher said from the file he knows very little. Mr. Shelton asked if the victims and Mr. Jones had any history. The Cook County ASA stated that there is indication that one of the brothers and Mr. Jones met in jail.

Mr. Diaz asked for clarification on the nature of the crime as to whether it was a crime of impulse or it was planned. Mr. Fisher felt it was planned. Mr. Jones's brother was attacked, beaten with a tie iron, and put into a coma, and Mr. Jones knew that Samuel Thompson was one of the people who did the beating.

Mr. Ruggiero asked about Mr. Jones's trial version of the events, and whether he stated that he was guilty of the crime or not. Mr. Fisher said that Mr. Jones took full responsibility at the trial.

Mr. Diaz asked if Mr. Jones felt he was justified in the killing. Mr. Fisher said yes, Mr. Jones felt it was revenge for his brother, but now he is remorseful, and the crime bothers him.

Mr. Diaz asked about the institutional adjustment. Mr. Fisher said Mr. Jones's last ticket was in 2014 and he has only had nine violations in his entire incarceration. Mr. Shelton stated that was an accomplishment.

The Cook County ASA spoke to Mr. Jones's ticket count and his relationship with the victims. She stated the victims were 28 and 30 years old, and that there was some sort of previous contact between them and Mr. Jones. She noted that the Murders were premeditated, and that under today's sentencing laws Mr. Jones would have a mandatory minimum of Natural Life in prison. She further stated that Mr. Jones has an extensive criminal history, and that there is a good chance that he is not going to be able to comply with the conditions of parole, as the housing and employment plans are not confirmed. She feels parole would deprecate the seriousness of the crime and the State opposes parole.

Mr. Shelton asked whether she feels that this 76-year-old man will have trouble meeting the conditions of parole. Her response was that without a lot of family support it would be hard for anyone to meet parole conditions.

Ms. Kellede spoke about the housing stated in the parole plan, noting that it is confirmed by St. Leonard's House. St. Leonard's House claims to have an 85% success rate, with particularly high success with individuals who have served more than 20 years incarcerated. Inspiration Corporation and Greater West Town Community Development do not guarantee employment because there is a process that individuals would go through prior to being accepted. Ms. Kellede highlighted three correctional letters of support for Mr. Jones that are included in his parole plan.

Chairman Findley spoke to the concern of Mr. Jones's age in reference to parole. Chairman Findley spoke about meeting with two other parolees who are at St. Leonard's House



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and doing extraordinarily well there. The Chairman particularly made note of a recent visit with Mr. Soto, who was recently paroled and is of about the same age as Mr. Jones, and who seems to be thriving.

Mr. Dunn stated that the recidivism rate at Mr. Jones's age is very low.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (PF—PW). Motion fails by a vote of 5–10. Members voting in favor of the Motion were Mr. Fisher, Mr. Norton, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Tupy and Ms. Wilson. Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Shelton, and Chairman Findley dissented.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Jones's case, the Board voted to grant parole. The Board hereby finds that Mr. Jones is an acceptable risk 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.”*



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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION— November 1, 2018**

Inmate Name: **JACOB BRAMLETT**

IDOC Number: **L36032**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 319 East Madison Street, Suite A, Springfield, Illinois, on November 1, 2018, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Jacob Bramlett L36032.

Members present were Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Harris, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, Ms. Wilson, and Chairman Findley.

Recording Secretary: Janet Crane.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Mr. Norton presented the following summary of the parole consideration interview and review of the inmate's file:

A parole assessment interview was conducted with Jacob Bramlett L36032 on September 12, 2018. Mr. Bramlett was born on September 1, 1944, is currently 74 years of age, and was a resident of Lawrence Correctional Center on the date of the interview. According to the file, following a jury trial, Mr. Bramlett was found guilty of the Murder of 16-year-old David B. Skurat. On February 4, 1983, the trial judge sentenced Mr. Bramlett to 50-100 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections in Randolph County Case Number 82-CF-74. Additionally, as a result of a guilty plea, on June 20, 1983, Mr. Bramlett was sentenced to 25 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the Murder of Michael A. Throop in Jackson County Case Number 83-CF-52, to be served consecutively to the Randolph County conviction.

The record shows that the Randolph County Murder offense of Mr. Bramlett took place on or about July 4, 1977, and that the victim of this offense was a young man by the name of David B. Skurat, who was 16 years of age. Mr. Skurat went missing following his attendance at an Independence Day picnic in Steeleville, Illinois. An extensive investigation was launched, but the body and remains of Mr. Skurat were not found or located until approximately April 29, 1979, in a wooded area in the adjacent Village of Percy in Randolph County, Illinois. On October 15, 1982, a charge of Murder was filed against Mr. Bramlett in the Circuit Court of Randolph County, Illinois, alleging that on or about July 4, 1977, the Defendant, Jacob J. Bramlett, without legal justification and with the intent to kill David B. Skurat, knowingly struck David B. Skurat on and about the head with a tire tool, thereby causing the death of David B. Skurat. Mr. Bramlett was an immediate suspect in this homicide investigation primarily due to the fact that he returned the automobile of David B. Skurat to the residence of the parents of David B. Skurat in the nearby Village of Ava, Illinois, on the following morning, being July 5, 1977.





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After being taken into custody on October 15, 1982, Mr. Bramlett was interviewed at his request by law enforcement authorities. He stated that he was at a bar in Steeleville, Illinois, on July 4, 1977, when he was approached by Mr. Skurat, who asked Mr. Bramlett to purchase some beer for the underage youth. Mr. Bramlett stated he agreed to buy the youth beer in exchange for Mr. Skurat giving Mr. Bramlett a ride home to his residence in nearby Ava, Illinois. Mr. Bramlett stated that while Mr. Skurat was giving Mr. Bramlett a ride home, their vehicle was flagged down by another vehicle driven by Phil Bramlett, who is the brother of Jacob B. Bramlett. After a short discussion between Phil Bramlett and Mr. Skurat, they continued on their journey until Mr. Skurat pulled off on a farm road, stating that Phil Bramlett wanted to give him some stuff. According to Jacob Bramlett, he stayed in the Skurat vehicle and smoked a cigarette while Mr. Skurat got out of the vehicle and met with Phil Bramlett on the deserted road. Jacob Bramlett stated that his brother, Phil Bramlett, and Mr. Skurat got into an argument, that Phil Bramlett then hit Mr. Skurat in the head with a tire tool, thereby killing Mr. Skurat, and Phil Bramlett then carried Mr. Skurat's body into a nearby wooded area, later returning with the wallet of Mr. Skurat. The authorities did not believe the story of Jacob Bramlett, and a jury later rejected this story as well, finding Jacob J. Bramlett guilty of the Murder of David B. Skurat.

Jacob Bramlett was sentenced for this Murder in the Circuit Court of Randolph County, Illinois, on February 4, 1983. On March 17, 1983, charges were filed against Jacob J. Bramlett for Murder in adjoining Jackson County, Illinois, wherein it was alleged that on or about July 7, 1981, Defendant Jacob J. Bramlett committed the Murder of Michael A. Throop. As stated, Mr. Bramlett entered a plea of guilty to this offense of Murder, and on June 20, 1983, he was sentenced to 25 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, to be served consecutively to his conviction for Murder in Randolph County, Illinois. At the time of this interview, Mr. Bramlett continues to maintain his innocence in the Randolph County Murder of David B. Skurat and continues to maintain that it was his brother, Phil Bramlett, who committed the murder of David B. Skurat. Conversely, at the same interview, Jacob Bramlett did admit that he committed the Jackson County Murder of Michael A. Throop.

The parole assessment as completed by the Illinois Department of Corrections and the interview of Mr. Bramlett reveal that Mr. Bramlett was admitted to the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections on February 4, 1983, and he has remained in custody ever since, for a total of approximately 35 years. The institutional adjustment of Mr. Bramlett was marginal during his early years of incarceration, but of late his institutional adjustment has been excellent, with no disciplinary reports since 1998. The current work assignment of Mr. Bramlett is floor maintenance.

Mr. Bramlett stated he was born in Chicago and his family moved to southern Illinois in about 1962. He reported that his parents are deceased, and that he has 11 siblings. He stated he has four brothers and two sisters still living. Mr. Bramlett further advised he is divorced, after more than one marriage. He stated that he has two children from his first marriage, but that he has no contact with his children. Mr. Bramlett stated his last visit was with a friend in 1994.



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Mr. Bramlett did enlist in the U.S. Army in 1964, but due to numerous disciplinary infractions, he received a dishonorable discharge in 1971. It would appear that Mr. Bramlett may have received his GED while in the Army.

Mr. Bramlett appeared to be in good health and reported that he is in good health. Mr. Bramlett stated that if he were to be granted parole he would plan to live with his brother, Phil Bramlett, in Ava, Illinois. Mr. Bramlett advised that he would attempt to seek employment as a laborer in the construction industry, if he were to be parole. Mr. Bramlett was courteous, pleasant, polite, and attentive during the parole assessment interview.

### DISCUSSION

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. Norton if he asked Mr. Bramlett about living with his brother, whom he blames for the Murder. Mr. Norton said Mr. Bramlett does not address that question.

Ms. Harris asked Mr. Norton how he assessed Mr. Bramlett, as to him having any remorse for the crime and the events that happened. Mr. Norton said he gave that question a lot of thought. He referenced the protest letter from Randolph County that stated Mr. Bramlett was nothing but a self-serving murderer with no concern for the victim's or his own families. Mr. Norton also raised the question that Mr. Bramlett may have a compulsion or disorder because of all the perjury and forgery charges in his past, and that he may be a compulsive liar.

Mr. Norton stated that Mr. Bramlett was calm and courteous during the interview. Mr. Norton talked about Mr. Bramlett's family in the area where he lived, and how they terrorized the area. Mr. Norton noted that there are a lot of inconsistencies with the story Mr. Bramlett professes, and, up until three years ago, Mr. Bramlett did not admit or take responsibility for the crime.

Chairman Findley said that a few years ago the State's Attorney of Randolph County also mentioned the Bramlett family's activities in that county.

Mr. Shelton shared his concerns about the family environment and wondered what kind of family support could be expected.

Ms. Wilson's concern with the parole plan was that Mr. Bramlett planned to live and work with his brother, whom Mr. Bramlett had originally blamed for the Murder.

Ms. Wilson asked about Mr. Bramlett's ex-wife. Mr. Norton said that the ex-wife had testified that Mr. Bramlett stated that he had only married her to prevent her from testifying against him.



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Mr. Diaz spoke about the family and how, given the family's many issues, the Board could discuss them forever.

Mr. Norton stated that after his interview and review of the file he is not able to recommend parole at this time.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (WN—PW). Motion prevails by a vote of 15–0.

Motion for a 3-year set (WN—DS). Motion prevails by a vote of 11–4. Members voting in favor of the Motion were Ms. Daniels, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Fisher, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Perkins, Mr. Ruggiero, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Tupy, and Ms. Wilson. Ms. Crigler, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Harris, and Chairman Findley dissented.

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

The Board further specifically finds, pursuant to its authority under 730 ILCS 5/3-3-5(f), that it is not reasonable to expect parole release to be granted prior to September 2021, and therefore continues Mr. Bramlett's next parole consideration hearing to that docket.

*“The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm.”*