

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor
Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter
UPDATE, OCT. 20, 2023

Full board votes 5-4 to release Sheldon Jackson on parole



The Ohio Parole Board on Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023, voted 5-4 to release inmate Sheldon Jackson on parole effective Dec. 18, 2023.

Parole board chairwoman Lisa Hoying announced the vote for parole after a two-hour full board hearing at the parole board's office in Columbus.

Jackson, 52, is serving a life sentence after being convicted of the aggravated murder of 79-year-old Theodore Emerson during a home invasion in a Warren home in 1993.

The Ohio Public Defender's office argued for the release of Jackson who had served 29 years and three months of his life term. Jackson's attorney said the inmate had served in a position of trust as staff barber for the last several years at the Grafton Correctional Institution and did not have any disciplinary action in recent history. The attorney said the inmate has a long-term goal of teaching barbering skills after working in a downtown Warren barber shop.

Speaking in favor of the release of Jackson were his mother Shirley Thomas and a sister Tina Falk.

Hoying said Jackson will be released into a halfway house and be subjected to five years of parole supervision.

Trumbull County Assistant Prosecutor Charles Morrow argued that this office opposed Jackson's release because of the horrific violence inflicted on an elderly couple in their Warren home. Morrow also noted of Jackson's history of repeated violations during his time in prison. Briefly to summarize the case, Jackson repeatedly struck then 78-year-old Theodore Emerson with a screwdriver during the 1993 home invasion, beating and kicking the victim, which ultimately led to his death, which occurred shortly after his 79th birthday.

Jackson and his two co-defendants had forced their way into the Jefferson Street SW home in Warren, knocked Emerson down stairs, where Jackson and another man followed Theodore into the basement and severely beat him. A third man went upstairs and beat and stabbed 74-year-old Kathryn Emerson. Some personal items and \$46 in cash were stolen during the home invasion. Mrs. Emerson was hospitalized a little less than two weeks in critical condition. After the home invasion, she moved out of her house to Pennsylvania, where she died. Mrs. Emerson was unable to testify because of her injuries.

On that same day prior to the home invasion, Jackson and his two co-defendants had attacked another couple on the street, robbing them of money.

Also speaking was Emerson's grandson Ernest, who talked to board members via telephone hookup. Ernest Emerson said his family all feels that Jackson didn't deserve to be released.

"He doesn't deserve to get out because my grandfather couldn't come back," Ernest Emerson told the board, saying at the time of the murder, he was serving in the U.S. Army. "I had to fly home to see my grandfather die in the hospital."

Jackson pleaded guilty before a three-judge panel to charges of aggravated murder with aggravating circumstances, attempted aggravated murder, burglary, aggravated robbery and robbery. He was sentenced to life in prison with first possibility of parole after 20 years. In 2013, the parole board had extended Jackson's term for 10 years before his next hearing this year.

Prosecutor Dennis Watkins further notes that his office – over many years— has been involved with hundreds of parole board hearings (and he is preparing for another next month). Watkins respects the difficult job the parole board members have and has stated in one of his letters: "I know the board will – as always—make its own independent judgment in this case as you (parole board members) do in all of them, and I am experienced enough to know that at times our arguments may not prevail, nonetheless... you should know how (our victims feel today) and that this office will always vigorously argue on behalf of victims and seeing justice done for the community."

Public comments about this case can be forwarded to the Ohio Adult Parole Authority, via their website <https://drc.ohio.gov/systems-and-services/1-parole/parole-board-hearing-input>.

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