

Tony Evers
Governor



Mailing Address

Post Office Box 7960
Madison, WI 53707-7960
Telephone (608) 240-7280
Fax (608) 240-7299

Melissa Roberts
Chairperson

State of Wisconsin Parole Commission

E-Mail:
ParoleCommission@Wisconsin.Gov

Parole Commission
Staff Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 25th, 2026
3099 East Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Presiding: Melissa Roberts, Chair

Present: Regina Beloungy, Jennifer Kramer, Sara Tome, Oliver Buchino

The meeting began at approximately 9:00 AM over Zoom.

Chair Roberts and Commission members introduced themselves.

Chair Roberts began answering questions submitted in advance of the meeting by members of the public.

When will the new Chair begin signing off on release recommendations that have been pending since January?

Chair Roberts noted she had just started the position and would be carefully reviewing all grant recommendations, noting that a recommendation does not automatically mean it will be approved.

Will the Commission consider instituting a policy of finalizing decisions within 30 days after an applicant's parole hearing? While there are currently no administrative or statutory requirements surrounding the timeframe for issuing parole decisions, lengthy and indefinite delays are harrowing for applicants and their families. If there were a set, known timeframe in which applicants could rely upon receiving a decision in their case, it would go a long way toward alleviating the anxiety that understandably mounts, especially for those who have been recommended for release.

Chair Roberts mentioned further discussing timeframes with Commissioners, and that Commissioners are clear with individuals when recommending parole grants that there is no concrete timeline for when a decision will be finalized. The impacts of the decision on victims is also carefully considered.

Is participation in a work release program considered a requirement or an important factor when determining whether someone is eligible for parole?

Chair Roberts noted that work release, and readiness for employment, are important factors in assessing parole eligibility, but that it is not a requirement for parole by itself, as parole-eligible individuals vary greatly in age and health circumstances. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

When receiving a "No Action" What does The Wisconsin Parole Board think is a reasonable time frame of receiving an answer?

No action reviews are held at monthly staff meetings, with the goal that a pending No Action review is not left unaddressed for too long.

Working outside the fence seems to be a requirement as far as release. How would you say we navigate this if the Centers are not letting Lifers work outside the fence?

Chair Roberts has had conversations with Warden Bryant and DAI Administrator Shannon Butcher addressing this. The Commission can endorse for work release, but the assignments ultimately fall under the institution.

Would it be helpful to meet via zoom or in the office of creating a space with The Wisconsin Parole Board and people that have been released from the Parole Board System and have been out 4plus years? Just to talk about what works, what does not work, the good, bad, ugly and most importantly the success stories.

Chair Roberts was open to the idea, as there are similar forums elsewhere in the DOC for friends and family members of the incarcerated.

What specific, measurable criteria does the Commission use to determine whether an individual is no longer a risk to public safety at the time of review?

These can be found on the DOC-1204 form, Notice of Parole Consideration.

How does the Commission distinguish between the seriousness of the original offense and the individual's current level of risk after decades of demonstrated conduct, programming, and personal development? For individuals appearing before the Commission for the first time after 25 or more years of incarceration, what baseline expectations must be met for release consideration, and how are those expectations communicated in advance?

Chair Roberts detailed how the goal when granting parole is for the individual to never be returned to the institution, so the Commission carefully uses the administrative code to balance risk and rehabilitation in its risk assessment.

How does the Commission determine whether work release is necessary for parole, given that some individuals are released without it while others are unable to access it due to custody level or sentence-based limitations, such as life sentences?

This was answered previously.

How does the Commission evaluate individuals who have completed extensive programming, pursued higher education, maintained long-term institutional employment—including positions of

trust—and established stable release plans, where additional programming or work release would not add to their readiness?

In many parole cases, individuals have been incarcerated for decades, so the outside world and job market are quite different from when they entered. Work release is important in that it aids in a successful reintegration with the community, and allows for monitoring of progress and compliance with Commission goals.

At what point does continued incarceration, despite demonstrated rehabilitation and the absence of further available programming, cease to serve a rehabilitative or public safety purpose?

This is difficult to answer but it is done on a case-by-case basis, with input by the sentencing Judge and any victims playing an important part in this consideration.

Will the Commission commit to providing clear, actionable guidance in the event of a denial so individuals understand what specific steps—if any—remain necessary to improve their likelihood of release?

In cases of Parole denial, Commissioners are clear at reviews as to which requirements for parole have been satisfied and which remain unmet. Decisions about whether sufficient time has been served fall under the Chair.

What would the Commission need to see today to feel confident that an individual who has served decades, demonstrated sustained change, and exhausted available rehabilitative opportunities is ready to return to the community safely?

This is similar to previous questions, but the criteria are under the DOC-1204 form.

How does the Commission address situations where institutional progression depends on parole endorsement, while parole consideration is influenced by institutional placement—effectively creating a circular barrier to advancement?

Chair Roberts compared this process to a three-legged stool, with the Commission working in conjunction with the Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement (BOCM) and the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI), with the Chair maintaining communication with each of those bodies.

What safeguards are in place to ensure that individuals are not required to seek judicial intervention to obtain relief that could have been granted through the parole process?

The Chair mentioned that sometimes there will be these kinds of disagreements as to parole outcomes and that the judicial process is there for those who intend to use it.

The meeting then transitioned to closed session, and the No Action case presented was reviewed.

