

STATE OF MARYLAND

\* IN THE

\* CIRCUIT COURT FOR

v.

\* ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

JERRY LEE BEATTY

\* MARYLAND

*Defendant.*

\* Case No.: 5026692A

\* \* \* \* \*

**MEMORANDUM OPINION**

On December 9-10, 2024, the above-captioned matter came before the undersigned for a hearing on the Defendant, Jerry Lee Beatty’s (“Mr. Beatty”) request for reduction of sentence pursuant to the Juvenile Restoration Act (“JUVRA”). After the hearing concluded, Petitioner filed a Motion for Admission of New Certificates on September 10, 2025. This Court entered an Order granting that request on October 20, 2025. If this Court grants Mr. Beatty’s request, it will facilitate his release from incarceration. This Court, pursuant to Section 8-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article of the Maryland Code, has considered the record, applicable law, testimony, exhibits, and argument of counsel. For the reasons set forth in this memorandum opinion, this Court **DENIES** Mr. Beatty’s motion for reduction of sentence.

**FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

In the early morning hours of April 3, 1982, Stephanie Anne Roper (“Ms. Roper”) drove home from a friend’s house when her car became disabled after striking a tree stump on a narrow road in Prince George’s County. She was stranded and unable to restart her vehicle. Shortly thereafter, Jack Ronald Jones, (“Mr. Jones”) and Mr. Beatty approached her in a Mercury sedan, offering their assistance. Ms. Roper accepted their offer. However, instead of taking her to her friend’s house as requested, they brandished a weapon and raped her. They ultimately kidnapped

and transported her to St. Mary's County where they kidnapped, raped, and murdered her. Ms. Roper was twenty-two years old.

Nine days later, Mr. Beatty and Mr. Jones were arrested. Both men were indicted in St. Mary's County for first-degree murder, first-degree rape, and kidnapping; however, they were tried separately. Due to extensive pretrial publicity, Mr. Jones's case was moved to Baltimore County, while Mr. Beatty's case was transferred to Anne Arundel County. Mr. Jones chose a jury trial and was found guilty on all charges. Mr. Beatty testified as a witness for the State. Mr. Jones was sentenced to concurrent life terms for the murder and rape charges, along with twenty years for the kidnapping charges. The jury opted not to impose the death penalty.

#### **PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On October 19, 1982, Mr. Beatty appeared in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County and entered a plea of guilty to the first, fifth, and tenth counts of the indictment. Namely, first degree murder, first degree rape, and kidnapping. In exchange for Mr. Beatty's guilty plea, the State withdrew their election to seek the death penalty. The court sentenced him to concurrent life terms for murder and rape and twenty years for kidnapping. Mr. Beatty was also indicted in Prince George's County for raping Ms. Roper in that jurisdiction. On February 14, 1985, Mr. Beatty appeared in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County and pled guilty to first-degree rape. That court sentenced him to a consecutive life sentence and suspended all but twenty years.

After forty-three years of incarceration, on June 9, 2023, Mr. Beatty filed a Motion for Reduction of Sentence Pursuant to the Juvenile Restoration Act. The State's Response to Defendant's Motion for Reduction of Sentence Pursuant to the Juvenile Restoration Act was docketed on June 26, 2023. This Court held a hearing on December 9-10, 2024 and took the matter under advisement at the conclusion of the hearing.

## STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Juvenile Restoration Act applies to individuals who: were convicted as an adult for an offense when they were a minor, were sentenced prior to October 1, 2021, and have been imprisoned for at least twenty years for the offense. *See* Md. Code Crim. Proc. §8-110(a). The Court may reduce a sentence imposed for an offense committed while the defendant was a minor only if, after a hearing and upon consideration of the statutory factors, the Court “[d]etermines that: (1) the individual is not a danger to the public; and (2) the interests of justice will be better served by a reduced sentence.” *See* Md. Code Crim. Proc. §8-110(c). The Juvenile Restoration Act is a remedial statute and must be construed liberally. *See Johnson v. State*, 258 Md. App. 71 (2023). The Maryland General Assembly enacted JUVRA “[u]nder the theory that juveniles have diminished culpability at the time of their crime(s) and are likely to have been rehabilitated during their incarceration, and, thus, the public interest may be best served by their release.” *Johnson v. State*, 258 Md. App. 71, 89-90 (2023).

The court must engage in a holistic balancing of the enumerated factors outlined in Maryland Criminal Procedure Article §8-110(d) when determining whether to reduce the duration of a sentence. No single factor is entitled to greater weight than others. *Trimble v. State*, 491 Md. 378 (2022).

## DISCUSSION

Before addressing the statutory factors enumerated in § 8-110(d), this Court must make a preliminary determination regarding whether Mr. Beatty is eligible for relief. The Court finds that Mr. Beatty is eligible for relief under JUVRA because he pled guilty to an offense that he

committed when he was seventeen years old, was sentenced prior to October 1, 2021, and has served a sentence for at least twenty years.

**Application of The Factors Under Criminal Procedure Article § 8-110(d):**

In further consideration of Mr. Beatty's motion for reduction of sentence, this Court considered the following factors:

**1. The Individual's Age at the Time of the Offense**

Mr. Beatty was born on March 31, 1965. At the time of the offense, he was seventeen years and three days old, just one year short of reaching the age of majority.

**2. The Nature of the Offense and the History and Characteristics of the Individual**

Mr. Beatty was one of two defendants who were charged in St. Mary's County with the kidnapping, rape, and murder of Ms. Roper. In the early morning hours of April 3, 1982, Ms. Roper's vehicle was disabled on Floral Park Road in Prince George's County. Ms. Roper was lured into a vehicle driven by Mr. Jones by offering her a ride to her friend's house. Mr. Jones and Mr. Beatty, however, went past the friend's house and drove to a barn. Ms. Roper was then raped by each of the men at gunpoint. As they left that location, Mr. Beatty remained in the backseat holding Ms. Roper down. They then arrived at an abandoned house in St. Mary's County, where she was once again raped by both men. An autopsy report would later reveal that the injuries suggested that Ms. Roper was most likely a virgin at the time of her rape. During the events, Mr. Beatty accidentally used Mr. Jones's nickname in Ms. Roper's presence. As a result, Mr. Jones decided to kill her. Ms. Roper eventually escaped through a hole in the house when Mr. Jones left Mr. Beatty alone with Ms. Roper. However, Mr. Beatty ran after her while he was armed, denied her pleas to be released, and prevented her escape. Mr. Jones then came back to the scene with a large logging chain. Mr. Jones struck Ms. Roper with that chain and cracked her skull. Ms. Roper began to run

away and Mr. Jones tried to persuade Mr. Beatty to shoot her. After, Mr. Beatty refused, Mr. Jones took possession of the rifle from Mr. Beatty and shot her in the forehead. Next, at the direction of Mr. Jones, Mr. Beatty siphoned gas out of the car. Mr. Jones then poured that gasoline on Ms. Roper and lit her on fire while she was still breathing. Mr. Beatty extinguished the flame after the fire burned for several hours. Before leaving the scene, both men dragged her body 100 yards towards the swamp and left her in a puddle of water.

Both men previously had discussed methods to prevent her body from being identified and in the days following the murder returned together to that location carrying a hatchet. Ms. Roper's hands were missing when the body was discovered; however, both men denied removing them. The autopsy report could not definitively confirm whether Ms. Roper's hands were dismembered. The investigators indicated in their report that the crime was among the most heinous in memory.

The State originally sought the imposition of the death penalty due to the following aggravating circumstances: "(1) The victim was a hostage taken or attempted to be taken in the course of a kidnapping or abduction or an attempt to kidnap or abduct; (2) The defendant committed more than one offense of murder in the first degree arising out of the same incident; (3) The defendant committed the murder while committing or attempting to commit rape or sexual offense in the first degree." (Ex. 8, Notice-Death Sentence).

Prior to this case, Mr. Beatty had no contacts with the criminal justice system and a few contacts with the juvenile justice system. Namely, he had two incidents involving destruction of property and drinking an alcoholic beverage in public. Both incidents were resolved at intake. On May 18, 1982, a reverse waiver investigation was conducted by the Juvenile Services Administration at Mr. Beatty's request. The Waiver Investigation Report, dated June 22, 1982, characterized Mr. Beatty as a streetwise individual who had been living an adult lifestyle for a long

time prior to the offense. He hustled pool with Mr. Jones to make ends meet and associated with adults who had criminal records. As a result of his behavior, it concluded that Mr. Beatty's role in Ms. Roper's kidnapping, rape, and murder was not that of a mere follower.

At the time of the crime, Mr. Beatty was an individual who took advantage of people and/or failed to take full responsibility when confronted with his actions. For instance, a former employer declined to pursue criminal charges after Mr. Beatty stole equipment. Mr. Beatty later admitted to stealing the equipment during the juvenile waiver investigation. However, he attempted to minimize the employer's harm by indicating that the equipment was not valuable. Mr. Beatty's tendency to take advantage of people did not end at stealing equipment. In the instant offense, he fully exploited Ms. Roper's vulnerability; however, as discussed below, he repeatedly sought to downplay his involvement in some of the more horrific aspects of the events that occurred on April 3, 1982.

During the investigation into Ms. Roper's kidnapping, rape, and murder, Mr. Beatty's statements regarding his involvement were inconsistent and there were attempts to minimize his involvement. For instance, Mr. Beatty has both admitted to being the one who retrieved the gasoline that was used to burn Ms. Roper's body and denied being responsible for obtaining the gasoline. He has also admitted to having a gun when he recaptured her in the woods and denied having a gun when he recaptured her. Finally, Mr. Beatty attempted to minimize his use of the firearm when Ms. Roper was raped by admitting that although he held the firearm, he did not point it directly at her.

### **3. Whether the Individual Has Substantially Complied with the Rules of the Institution in Which the Individual Has Been Confined**

Mr. Beatty has been incarcerated for over forty-three years and has only had the following minor infractions between May 1986 and March 1990: On May 11, 1986, Mr. Beatty verbally

threatened another inmate. On March 27, 1987, he refused a search by a correctional officer and was found in possession of contraband, namely a cassette radio. On November 7, 1989, Mr. Beatty refused an order from a correctional officer. Finally, on March 7, 1990, he tested positive for cannabinoids. Notably, Mr. Beatty was found guilty only of the 1987 and 1990 infractions. Given the absence of infractions since 1990, the Court finds that Mr. Beatty has substantially complied with the institution's rules.

**4. Whether the Individual Has Completed an Educational, Vocational, or Other Program**

Mr. Beatty has a long and notable record of completing various programs during his incarceration, including but not limited to Narcotics Anonymous, religious studies, automotive training, electrical safety courses, earning his GED, and obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree from Coppin State College. He continues to engage in educational and vocational training, most recently completing the OSHA 10-Hour General Industry (Automotive) Course and earning certifications from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. Throughout his incarceration, Mr. Beatty has also held multiple employment positions, such as safety inspector, panel assembly worker, groundskeeper, vocational aide, and dietary department worker.

**5. Whether the Individual Has Demonstrated Maturity, Rehabilitation, and Fitness to Reenter Society Sufficient to Justify a Sentence Reduction**

Mr. Beatty was placed in the Clifton T. Perkins State Hospital on September 18, 1984, through September 26, 1984. He was diagnosed with alcohol and mixed substance abuse (by history) in 1984. Mr. Beatty abused drugs prior to being incarcerated. After his mother's death, his drug and alcohol use increased dramatically. He was under the influence of drugs and alcohol when he first approached Ms. Roper. Mr. Beatty has not undergone formal substance abuse treatment. However, he has maintained his sobriety and has participated in Narcotics Anonymous.

As previously indicated, Mr. Beatty has obtained his bachelor's degree, completed various vocational and religious programs, consistently complied with institution's rules, and maintained employment. His track record has earned him the ability to operate some of the most dangerous equipment without supervision from correctional officers. This Court finds that he has demonstrated significant personal growth and maturity in those specific areas.

However, this Court finds that Mr. Beatty has failed to demonstrate sufficient growth, rehabilitation, and fitness as it relates to Ms. Roper's murder. When Mr. Beatty was hospitalized at Clifton T. Perkins State Hospital in 1984, a forensic conference was held after the completion of an evaluation of Mr. Beatty. It was the unanimous opinion of the participants that Mr. Beatty had antisocial personality disorder, had no regards for the laws of society, and exhibited no remorse for his crimes. This opinion was reached two years after the offense when Mr. Beatty would have had time to reflect on his actions. While incarcerated, Mr. Beatty has never received mental health services except for briefly receiving an unknown psychotropic drug very early in his incarceration. During the hearing, Mr. Beatty presented expert testimony from Dr. Eric J. Lane, Psy.D. Dr. Lane completed a Psychosexual Evaluation of Mr. Beatty and documented his findings in a report dated June 5, 2023. Dr. Lane's assessment is that although Mr. Beatty exhibited some indicators of antisocial personality disorder during adolescence, he does not currently meet the DSM-5 criteria for this disorder.

Notwithstanding that opinion, this Court was not persuaded that Mr. Beatty has demonstrated current fitness to reenter society. More specifically, this Court was not persuaded by Dr. Lane's opinion that Mr. Beatty poses a low risk for sexual offense recidivism in the community. Dr. Lane notes that Mr. Beatty has not demonstrated any sexually assaultive behavior while he has been incarcerated. However, this observation is not persuasive given that Mr. Beatty

did not have a history of sexually assaultive behavior prior to this crime. This case involved a vulnerable woman, stranded in the middle of the night, in the woods, where there were no witnesses. Those conditions do not exist in prison.

This Court further finds that Mr. Beatty has failed to demonstrate sufficient growth, rehabilitation, and fitness as it relates to his role in the events surrounding Ms. Roper's murder. During his evaluation with Dr. Lane, when asked about his current thoughts and feelings, Mr. Beatty focused on his actions related to the rape not his choices that led to Ms. Roper's murder. For example, he independently chose to recapture Ms. Roper after she escaped from the cabin while Mr. Jones was absent and refused her pleas for release. This pattern of avoiding accountability and minimizing his actions mirrors his behavior when faced with misconduct during his youth. This negatively impacts this Court's ability to conclude that Mr. Beatty is fit to reenter society.

#### **6. Any Statement Offered by a Victim or a Victim's Representative**

Ms. Roper's mother, Roberta Roper ("Mrs. Roper"), made an oral statement at the JUVRA hearing as the victim's representative. Mrs. Roper described her daughter as being an intelligent woman with a promising future. She was just one month shy of graduating from college, *magna cum laude*. Mrs. Roper had an extremely close relationship with her daughter.

Mrs. Roper described the impact of Ms. Roper's kidnapping, rape, and murder on their family. She stated that it almost destroyed their family, their confidence in government, their trust in people, and their faith in God. Ms. Roper was missing for nine agonizing days before her body was found. There was intense public interest in the circumstances surrounding Ms. Roper's murder. The family was further traumatized by learning about the more gruesome details of the crimes from the evening news.

Ms. Roper's four younger siblings struggled to cope in the months that followed. Her younger brother's birthday fell on the day Ms. Roper's body was discovered and her sister ran away from home. Mrs. Roper's son participated in risky behaviors and his school grades fell. In the forty-three years since the murder, the family has never healed. This impact extended beyond their immediate family. Ms. Roper was visiting her childhood friend, Lisa Thomas ("Ms. Thomas"), the night of her kidnapping. Instead of spending the night at Ms. Thomas's house as planned, Ms. Roper chose to leave and drive home. Ms. Thomas has never recovered. She blames herself for what happened and no longer associates with the Roper family.

Mrs. Roper also described the impact of not having a voice in the original court proceedings. In 1982, crime victims had no rights, no advocates, and no meaningful recognition. The Roper family turned to advocacy and founded the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc. That foundation later became the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center. Mrs. Roper's efforts led to significant state and federal legislation ensuring that victims had rights and resources during criminal proceedings.

Mrs. Roper has urged this Court to deny Mr. Beatty's request to reduce his sentence. The circumstances surrounding Ms. Roper's kidnapping, rape, and murder unfolded over five hours. Mr. Beatty did nothing to prevent it. The crime deeply scarred the Roper family. Mr. Beatty has only now begun to hear and understand the depth of the family's suffering. The Roper family's pain is a direct result of Mr. Beatty's choices and actions. Mr. Beatty's sentence reduction would be viewed as an injustice by the Roper family.

**7. Any Report of a Physical, Mental, or Behavioral Examination of the Individual Conducted by a Health Professional**

At the time of the Juvenile Waiver Investigation, Mr. Beatty was in good physical condition and had not been under the care of a psychiatrist or psychologist prior to his incarceration. Mr.

Beatty was examined by a psychiatrist at the University of Maryland Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behavior while he was incarcerated in Prince George's County. Additionally, on September 24, 1984, he was diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder and alcohol and mixed substance abuse (by history). However, the substance of those reports was not provided to this Court. While Mr. Beatty underwent examination at the Clifton T. Perkins State Hospital on September 18, 1984 through September 26, 1984, he admitted to having a history of using PCP, LSD, amphetamines, quaaludes, and cocaine.

As previously indicated, Dr. Lane conducted a psychosexual evaluation of Mr. Beatty in preparation for these proceedings. This Court was not persuaded by Dr. Lane's conclusion that most of the risk factors for recidivism have disappeared. For instance, when reaching his conclusion that Mr. Beatty's sexual offense recidivism risk is low, Dr. Lane placed great importance on the lack of sexually assaultive behaviors exhibited by Mr. Beatty while incarcerated. As previously indicated, this Court found that conclusion unpersuasive given Mr. Beatty's history lacked sexually assaultive behavior prior to his incarceration. Moreover, this Court regards Dr. Lane's conclusion that Mr. Beatty poses a low risk of sexual offense recidivism with skepticism, considering that Mr. Beatty has not received any mental health treatment during his incarceration to address this or any other issue. As a result, this Court gave Dr. Lane's report very little weight.

**8. The Individual's Family and Community Circumstances at the Time of the Offense, Including any History of Trauma, Abuse, or Involvement in the Child Welfare System**

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The Individual's Family and Community Circumstances at the Time of the Offense, Including any History of Trauma, Abuse, or Involvement in the Child Welfare System

Mr. Beatty experienced trauma and adverse family circumstances prior to his incarceration. Specifically, Mr. Beatty's mother passed away in November 1977 when he was twelve years old. He dropped out of school at age fifteen and worked various odd jobs. Following his mother's death, Mr. Beatty's father was extremely hostile, drank constantly, and was physically violent toward him. He experienced additional problems with his father's girlfriend and eventually left the home at age sixteen. At the time he was charged in this case, he was living with Mr. Jones and supported himself by hustling pool.

Mr. Beatty's other family members, at the time of the offense, included two sisters, two brothers, and one child. He maintained a good relationship with his siblings. However, he did not have a relationship with his child because he was not aware of the child's existence until after his incarceration.

Mr. Beatty had no involvement with the child welfare system prior to his incarceration.

**9. The Extent of the Individual's Role in the Offense and, if the Individual was A Minor at the Time of the Offense, Whether and to What Extent an Adult was Involved in the Offense**

Mr. Beatty was a minor at the time of the offense. At twenty-six years old, Mr. Jones was nine years older than Mr. Beatty. From the start, Mr. Beatty has not shied away from admitting his role in raping Ms. Roper. He has accepted responsibility and admitted he knew it was wrong to repeatedly rape Ms. Roper. Mr. Jones was the first to rape Ms. Roper; however, Mr. Beatty acted on his own volition when he raped Ms. Roper at gunpoint. Mr. Beatty independently took advantage of Ms. Roper's vulnerability rather than being encouraged, pressured, or forced by Mr. Jones.

However, since this crime has occurred, Mr. Beatty has consistently attempted to minimize his role in Ms. Roper's murder. The crimes committed against Ms. Roper took place over five

hours, forty miles, and two counties. This Court acknowledges that it was Mr. Jones, rather than Mr. Beatty who committed the physical acts to ultimately end Ms. Roper's life. However, it rejects Mr. Beatty's attempts to portray himself as a mere bystander who succumbed to the whims of an influential adult. Although a minor, Mr. Beatty made independent decisions regarding his level of participation. More specifically, when Mr. Beatty and Ms. Roper were alone in the house, she escaped through a hole in the house and ran toward a ravine. Mr. Beatty made the independent decision to chase and recapture her even after he knew of Mr. Jones's plan to murder her. Mr. Beatty made the independent decision to reject her pleas for him to release her. Importantly, Mr. Beatty did not succumb to pressure from Mr. Jones to shoot Ms. Roper when she tried to escape a third time. As a result, this Court finds that Mr. Beatty's role in Ms. Roper's kidnapping, rape, and murder is a direct result of his choices.

#### **10. The Diminished Culpability of a Juvenile as Compared to an Adult, Including an Inability to Fully Appreciate Risks and Consequences, if Applicable**

It is well-established that juveniles are constitutionally different from adults for purposes of sentencing because they have diminished culpability and greater prospects for reform. *See Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012); *See also Montgomery v. Louisiana*, 577 U.S. 190, 195 (2016). More specifically, the United States Supreme Court recognized three "significant gaps between juveniles and adults":

First, children have a lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility, leading to recklessness, impulsivity, and heedless risk-taking. Second, children are more vulnerable to negative influences and outside pressures, including from their family and peers; they have limited control over their own environment and lack the ability to extricate themselves from horrific, crime-producing settings. And third, a child's character is not as well formed as an adult's; his traits are less fixed and his actions less likely to be evidence of irretrievable depravity.

*Miller*, 567 U.S. at 471.

Here, this Court has considered Mr. Beatty's diminished culpability as a juvenile as well as his inability to appreciate risks and consequences fully at the time of the offense. For instance, Mr. Beatty was continuously warned about not associating with Mr. Jones because of his criminal background and his general abuse of drugs. Some of those warnings came from his older brother, with whom he maintained a good relationship. However, those warnings did not prevent him from moving in with Mr. Jones or from participating in the offenses. In short, this Court has considered that Mr. Beatty's brain development in 1982 was not yet complete, and because he was a minor at the time of the offense, he has a greater capacity for reform.

**11. Any Other Factor the Court Deems Relevant**

The Court did not find any other factor relevant.

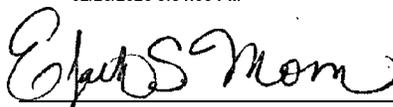
**FINDINGS UNDER CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE § 8-110(C):**

Under JUVRA, the Court may reduce the duration of a sentence imposed on an individual if it determines that the individual is not a danger to the public and that the interests of justice will be better served by a reduced sentence. CP § 8-110(c). Here, this Court is unable to make such a determination. After balancing the statutory factors, the Court is not convinced that Mr. Beatty is no longer a danger to the public or that reducing his sentence would serve the interests of justice.

**CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated above, the Motion for Sentence Reduction under the Juvenile Restoration Act is **DENIED**.

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Judge Elizabeth S. Morris  
Elizabeth S. Morris  
Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County

Copies to: All parties

Entered: Clerk, Circuit Court for  
Anne Arundel County, MD  
February 26, 2026