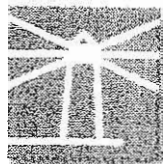


THE CINCINNATI POST



SCRIPPS HOWARD

Former auxiliary cop will face sex charge

By Jessica Brown

Hamilton Journal News

HAMILTON – A former New Miami Police Department employee is scheduled to go to trial Tuesday in Butler County Common Pleas Court on charges he had sex with a 15-year-old female.

Former auxiliary officer Joseph E. Ferguson, 21, of Hamilton, is charged with two counts of unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, a fourth-degree felony.

Each charge is punishable by up to 18 months in prison. If convicted, Ferguson also would be classified as a sex offender.

According to the Hamilton Police Department, Ferguson met the teen on the Internet and portrayed himself as being 17 years old. The victim's parents filed a report with police after Ferguson tried to

set up a meeting with the teen, police said.

"We are alleging he knew the victim's age and was reckless in that regard," said Assistant Butler County Prosecutor Jennifer Muench-McElfresh.

Ferguson's attorney, Clyde Bennett, said his client did not know the victim was underage.

"He took every precaution to ascertain that," Bennett said.

Ferguson is a 2001 graduate of Hamilton High School and earned his police certification in May 2004 from the peace officer academy at Butler Tech, according to his personnel file.

The New Miami Police Department hired Ferguson on June 13, 2004, as an auxiliary police officer, meaning he was not paid and worked only one shift a week.