

**TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING**

**Date:** February 2, 2009

**Time:** 10:00 AM

**Members Present:** George Williams, *Acting Chairman*, Bill Ferguson, Ken Heitzke, *Alternate*

**Members Absent:** Bill Mottel

**Town Staff Present:** Greg DeLoach, *Assistant Town Manager*; Tom Fultz, *Director of Administrative Services*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Vicki Pfannenschmidt, *Administrative Assistant*

**Others Present:** Solicitor Duffie Stone, Sheriff P. J. Tanner, Joe Croley, *Hilton Head Area Association of Realtors*; Mary Amonitti

**Media Present:** None

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**1. Call to Order.**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

**2. FOIA Compliance:**

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

**3. Approval of Minutes:**

Mr. Heitzke moved to approve the Minutes of January 5, 2009. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion. The Minutes of January 5, 2009 were approved 3-0.

**4. Chairman's Report:**

Mr. Williams stated the March regular meeting will be re-scheduled from Monday, March 2 at 10:00 a.m. to Monday, March 9 at 10:00 a.m. The change was at the request of the Sheriff's Department so they can be there to review the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 2008 Crime Stats.

**5. Unfinished Business:**

None.

**6. New Business:**

- **Request of Council by Solicitor Duffie Stone for Town Funds for Career Criminal Team.** Mr. Williams introduced Solicitor Duffie Stone asking that he approach the dais and explain his request. Solicitor Stone stated he would like to review the particulars of his request. He informed the Committee that since he took over in January of 2006 he is constantly reviewing the workings of his office and trying to improve them. He said he spoke with Sheriff Tanner concerning what

he thought was the biggest problem in Beaufort County. The Sheriff told him the problem is not a particular crime but particular criminals. Solicitor Stone said that throughout the State there is a core group of criminals committing crimes and the day to day funding from the County and the State does not address the focus on career criminals. He is convinced if they can be eliminated it will reduce the crime rate. Solicitor Stone stated the detention center is currently over crowded with individuals charged with a variety of crimes. He added the inmates who have been there the longest are charged with armed robberies, burglaries, murders and sexual assaults. Solicitor Stone said it is difficult to prosecute these people quickly thus the need for a Career Criminal Team. He stated most inmates will not plead guilty unless he offers substantially reduced sentences which he is not willing to do. He noted the Career Criminal Team will focus on only these types of criminals and they will be a core group of prosecutors with specialties to focus on such criminals. He explained he has three main goals which are conviction, sentence and time; noting the fast tracking of these cases is very relevant. Solicitor Stone stated the Town of Bluffton has committed an upstart of \$30,000 to this project and are going to include the project in their annual budget process. He also said Beaufort County has contributed \$100,000 and have promised a total of \$186,000. Mr. Ferguson asked where the majority of crimes are being committed. Solicitor Stone responded that 30% of the inmates now at the detention center have committed their crimes on Hilton Head Island. Mr. Heitzke asked about the staffing level of the Career Criminal Team. Solicitor Stone said there will be 3 lawyers and a victim's advocate comprising the Team and they will focus only on Beaufort County. Mr. Williams asked if the Solicitor's Office was doing this in any other Counties. Solicitor Stone said he has one lawyer that handles only Colleton and Jasper Counties but he wanted to assure the Committee this Career Criminal Team will only handle cases for Beaufort County.

Mr. Williams asked if anyone would like to speak. Mary Amonitti spoke on the need to support Solicitor Stone and Sheriff Tanner in their endeavors to get criminals not only off the street, but convicted in a timely fashion with no reduced sentences.

Sheriff Tanner followed up by noting his office or the Solicitor cannot control a bond hearing or timing, and they are trying to do everything they can to speed up trials and get convictions without reducing sentences and this Career Criminal Team will help in that aspect.

Mr. Williams stated he appreciated the need for the Career Criminal Team and what they are trying to do. He noted more and more local governments are picking up State responsibilities and continue to be hampered by the state millage cap.

After discussion, Mr. Heitzke moved the Committee recommend to Town Council that they approve \$30,000 for Solicitor Duffie Stone's Criminal Career Team, providing that \$30,000 is available in the budget, and the \$50,000 request be considered as Town Council goes through the 2010 budget process. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (3-0)

**7. Adjournment:**

Mr. Heitzke moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ferguson seconded the Motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Vicki L. Pfannenschmidt, Secretary

Approved by:

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George Williams, Acting Chairman