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owners are still trying to figure out if there are any cigarettes or any drinks missing, but they probably did more damage than what they got."

The Food Heaven store is located just before the Towns County line on GA 515.

Authorities in Towns County are investigating a Sunday burglary of their own, which also occurred in the early morning hours, only several miles away at the Marathon Station up Bell Creek Road in Hiwassee.

It is believed that the Towns County burglary is connected to the one in Union County, and that these burglaries are connected to a series of burglaries north of Interstate 20, including in neighboring Fannin, Gilmer and Pickens counties.

Less than two weeks after the Aug. 31 burglary in Union County, Towns County was hit by individuals they believe to be the same, with two burglaries of convenience stores in Young Harris on Sept. 11 near the Junction leading to Hayesville.

Sgt. Dyer urges residents and businesses to exercise caution until this group, suspected to be based out of

Atlanta, is apprehended.

Residents should keep an open eye and report suspicious activity to 911, such as parked vehicles outside closed convenience stores, paying special attention to the hours between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m.

For businesses, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason has said that they should keep low cash in their stores, and to make regular deposits by the close of business each day.

The Union County Sheriff's Office has previously offered to escort businesses making deposits to the bank – those interested should call 911 to request a deputy escort.

"As far as security cameras go and that equipment, if these stores can maybe afford it, set up a dummy one and put their recording device somewhere else," said Sgt. Dyer. "Maybe try to get one of these backup security systems where the backup of the security is offsite."

Sgt. Dyer said that the sheriff's office will continue to remain diligent in their nightly patrols of area businesses, and that it's just a matter of time before this group of burglars is caught.

Meeting...continued from Page 1A

The commissioner went on to praise the good work done by victim services organizations like S.A.F.E., and urged "all citizens to actively participate in the scheduled activities and programs sponsored by S.A.F.E. to work toward the elimination of domestic violence."

Also in the meeting, Commissioner Paris announced an agreement between Union County and CHA, an engineering and construction management firm, for the "development of a layout (not to exceed \$4,000) for a proposed access road for the Union County Farmers Market to US 76/GA 515 to tie in at the current signal control intersection with the Glenn Gooch Bypass."

The commissioner expressed his excitement over the possibility of having direct access to the Farmers Market off of GA 515, though he did say that the project is still in the planning stages and "not a done deal yet."

"What we have done, we've applied to GDOT to not only have an access, but to allow them to pay for the access, at least hopefully a majority of it, which is coming off the red light at Wendy's," said Commissioner Paris. "We don't have control of that property yet, but we're negotiating with the folks that do."

"But we had to go ahead and do this contract to get this design on the road to make sure it will work before we actually contract to trade with the property owners right there. It'll give us a different

access into the Farmers Market right there, and make it a lot easier for future expansion, anything we do out there."

The commissioner also finalized the acquisition of the Merritt House off of Earnest Drive, across from the Union County Library, for \$180,000. The property features a little more than an acre of property and a home, and will serve as the new location for the offices of the North Enotah Drug Accountability Court.

"The drug courts now are using a facility in town that's very inadequate," said Commissioner Paris. "They've had mold and mildew problems with it, and they've been on us for about a year and a half to try to find a piece of property that they could build, do something on."

"Drug court receives funding from the state of Georgia, so they will have money to pay us rent on the property – not that we're going to make anything, but I think they can justify the rent over about a 15-year period of payback, so we'll at least get rent on the property."

The county will find a use for the Merritt House in time, which requires interior renovations, and the commissioner said the property will soon be home to a new 2,500 square foot doublewide office complex to be used by the drug court.

Also in the meeting, the commissioner announced his intention to install a passive exercise machine area in Meeks Park II, for use by older residents.

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