

Man pleads guilty to lesser charge in theft, faces up to 20 years in prison

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Chuck Felmlee,
Deputy commonwealth's attorney

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Rather than face a jury trial Monday on a robbery charge, a Lynchburg man instead pleaded guilty Thursday to a lesser crime.

In Lynchburg Circuit Court, Vincent Paige, 41, admitted to stealing \$75 from the Express Lane Convenience Store at Oakley and Memorial avenues on Jan. 14.

Because Paige pleaded guilty to larceny from a person, rather than robbery, he now faces up to 20 years in prison rather than up to life when he is sentenced in

November.

Paige told Lynchburg police that he had a crack cocaine addiction and couldn't remember what had happened, but said he made a mistake, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Chuck Felmlee said in court.

Paige also confessed his involvement to another jail inmate, Felmlee said.

According to Felmlee, Paige walked in the store around 6:30 p.m., put some penny candy on the counter and when the clerk opened the register, he swiped a handful of cash and ran out.

He didn't demand anything, threaten or harm the clerk, Felmlee said. Without

such evidence, it would have been questionable whether prosecutors could prove robbery, according to Felmlee.

"We felt this charge best fit the crime that the defendant committed. There were no threats made, no demands, no words at all. No weapons were displayed. The defendant mainly lunged over the counter attempting to swipe money out of the open cash register," Felmlee said after court.

Another factor in Paige's plea deal was the defense's challenge of the photo identification by the cashier. Assistant Public Defender Brian Moore said after court that the cashier picked out another man

in the first photo lineup and picked out Paige during a second lineup.

"It was possible he was misidentified. There was no solid identification," Moore said. "There would have been a battle over it, if not an appeal."

Felmlee said they didn't want the cashier's inconsistencies to potentially compromise Paige's conviction.

"This agreement secures a felony conviction on a charge where the defendant faces between one to 20 years in the penitentiary. This agreement also secures that the defendant will remain incarcerated on no bond pending his sentencing hearing on Nov. 18," Felmlee said.