

Tourism group hopes to expand railroad park

BY MARY ELLEN TAYLOR

ROCHELLE — The Rochelle Tourism and Visitor's Association expressed its desire at Monday night's city council meeting to use the city-owned, and recently vacated, property at 108 N. Ninth Street as an addition to the Rochelle Railroad Park.

"Tourism brings people and new money into Rochelle, expanding the overall economy of the city," said Ross Freier, Director of the Rochelle Tourism and Visitor's Association. "It is my desire and the desire of the (tourism) board to enhance the Rochelle Railroad Park whenever an opportunity presents itself. It's important to seize the opportunity we have right now as it's the perfect starting point to expand in a safe manner."

The tourism board offered two suggestions on the future use of the property previously purchased by the city at a cost of \$59,000. The first would utilize the space for additional parking for the railroad attraction and include two or more islands with hook-ups for RV campers. Travelers would be charged a daily fee for the use of the water/electric hook-ups.

"Those people traveling in RVs

would be able to stay in Rochelle for more than a day, thus spending money in Rochelle for more than a day," Freier said.

The second suggestion for the property would eliminate the current gift shop allowing for expansion of the parking lot at the Railroad Park. A replica depot gift shop and a few additional parking spaces would then be built on the 108 N. Ninth Street property. The RV hook-ups could be placed either in the current parking lot or on the lot next to the replica depot gift shop.

Benefits

Freier believes this plan would create benefits for Rochelle and the Railroad Park in the same manner as the original plan, but would also add to the overall look and feel of the Rochelle Railroad Park, increasing tax dollars and visitors to the city.

Freier indicated that the tourism board would like to purchase additional property as it becomes available to continue enhancing the area and allow for additional opportunity for other businesses to open up such as an ice cream shop or food vendor.