

Assails Beverly Hills Council

Greystone Mansion Panel Head Resigns

By PHILIPP GOLLNER, Times Staff Writer

The head of a citizens committee exploring uses for the famed Greystone mansion in Beverly Hills has resigned after two City Council members suggested that the council take over the duties of the independent panel.

"I have been totally disgusted by the attitude and the treatment those two City Council people have given me and the committee," said Fredrick M. Nicholas, who served as chairman of the 15-member Greystone Foundation since its founding in 1984. "I find it impossible to do *pro bono* work which is maligned and unappreciated."

Rejection Expected

Rudy Cole, a longtime associate of Nicholas' on the foundation, said he would vote not to accept the resignation and expects the entire panel to resign if Nicholas does not change his mind. And Beverly Hills Councilwoman Donna Ellman, a supporter of the foundation, said she expects the council to reject the resignation at its meeting Saturday.

"Mr. Nicholas and his foundation have done a tremendous job and I would hope that he would reconsider," Ellman said.

Nicholas resigned July 29, one day after council members Robert K. Tanenbaum and Charlotte Spadaro announced that they would seek means to give the council direct control in selecting tenants for the 55-room mansion, which was purchased by the city in 1965 for \$1.1 million.

The foundation has authority to lease and administer

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the mansion on behalf of the city, as long as it adheres to general guidelines established by the council. Although the council votes on the panel's final choice of a tenant, it has no direct say on which prospective tenants should be considered or how negotiations should be carried on.

The nonprofit foundation has been seeking a tenant who would pay \$1 a year in rent in return for restoring the mansion and keeping it open to the public. Prospective tenants have included the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara and the Fredrick R. Weisman Foundation, which sought to use the museum to display its collection of modern art.

Both proposals fell through, though, and the foundation is considering a plan by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History to establish a museum annex on the property. The mansion has been vacant since the American Film Institute's \$1-a-year lease with the city expired in 1981.

Tanenbaum said that the negotiations would be quicker and more successful if the city had direct

control over the mansion's fate.

"I would like to see the council have input," Tanenbaum said. "I don't think you have oversight to the extent that you ought to. I'd like to see the council staff come up with ideas" for using the mansion.

He said the council has been kept in the dark while the foundation has been carrying on negotiations in a "chummy chummy" fashion more suited to a private club than a city.

"I profoundly disagree with the notion of doing business for the city in that manner," he said. "We should not lease it for \$1 a year. That's an affront to the people of Beverly Hills."

Other Uses

Tanenbaum was elected in 1986 on a platform that included a proposal to sell part of the 18.8-acre estate, valued at \$25 million to \$40 million, and use the funds for the city's financially strapped public schools.

Spadaro said the mansion should be used for city purposes such as entertaining dignitaries or serving as an annex to the public library. She agreed with Tanenbaum that

the foundation has been moving too slowly and that the city should have more control in choosing a tenant.

"I would question the idea of an independent foundation rather than a committee that reports to the council," she said. "I think the foundation could certainly exist as an advisory body and could assist the city in renovating the estate."

The Greystone Foundation's Cole said he was confident Tanenbaum and Spadaro would change their minds when presented with the arrangement being worked out with the County Museum of Natural History. Among other things, the plan calls for museum funding of science studies at Beverly Hills High School, he said.

"It's just one of the most tremendous proposals we've ever had," he said. "I think they [Tanenbaum and Spadaro] ought to be patting us on the heads rather than criticizing us."

The foundation voted unanimously July 27 to approve the museum's proposal, Cole said. Foundation members plan to outline the proposal to the council at its Saturday meeting.