

Ex-Chairman May Return**Independence Urged
for Greystone Panel**By PHILIPP GOLLNER, *Times Staff Writer*

Fredrick M. Nicholas, who resigned in protest last week as head of a committee looking for ways to use the vacant Greystone mansion in Beverly Hills, said he will not change his mind until the City Council assures him that the committee will remain independent.

Nicholas resigned last Wednesday after two City Council members suggested that the council take a greater role in finding a suitable tenant for the famed 55-room mansion. The job of looking for a tenant who will renovate the chateau has been the responsibility of the independent Greystone Foundation, which Nicholas headed since its founding in July, 1984.

"I certainly would urge Fred Nicholas to reconsider his resignation because I think he is an integral part of keeping this team together," Mayor Benjamin H. Stansbury said. "To lose him . . . would be a tragic loss."

Support by Council

Although Nicholas will wait until the council issues an official statement on its relationship to the foundation, it is expected that he will change his mind since a majority of council members support the foundation in its current role.

"I think that [reaffirmation of the foundation's role] happened without it being put to a vote," foundation co-chairman Rudy Cole said.

At Tuesday's meeting, Nicholas expressed anger over the events that prompted him to resign.

"You might not think what you said was abusive," Nicholas told Councilman Robert K. Tanenbaum, who at the earlier meeting called for greater council control over the foundation's activities. "But you can't parade around and yell at the citizens who are trying to help you."

Tanenbaum apologized to Nicholas for angering him but insisted that the panel should be "democratized" by permitting council members to appoint committee replacements in the event of a vacancy. The foundation has power to appoint its own replacements.

"I think the council has given too much responsibility to the foundation," Tanenbaum said. "The elected representatives should have some say in who sits on that group of citizens."

Tanenbaum, a former New York

City prosecutor, denied press accounts that he attacked Nicholas personally at the meeting last week.

"Last week I went out of my way to praise Mr. Nicholas," he said. "It has nothing to do with personalities" but concerns the legal relationship between the council and the foundation.

Councilwoman Charlotte Spadaro sided with Tanenbaum in calling on the council to take direct control over the search for a tenant. She said the foundation could continue as an advisory body but should not be given broad authority to carry on negotiations on behalf of the city.

Mayor Stansbury said the heated exchange last week between Nicholas and Tanenbaum and Nicholas' subsequent resignation stemmed from a lack of communication between the council and the foundation. He said the foundation's status should not be fundamentally changed but called on its members to keep council members better informed on the progress of their search.

"It would be inappropriate to re-politicize the process" of finding a tenant, he said. "The council has lost no control. It sets the rules and parameters of what the committee is supposed to look for with respect to a tenant."

The council formed the committee three years ago to ensure that politics would not get in the way of finding a qualified tenant. The council's control has largely been limited to approving or rejecting a final tenant chosen by the foundation, although the panel must limit its search to users who will restore the mansion at their own expense and agree to keep the 18.6-acre estate open to the public.

A proposal by the Fredrick R. Weisman Foundation to house its highly regarded modern art collection in the mansion fell through last year when the famed art collector found himself in the middle of a political debate over financing for the city's financially strapped schools.

The foundation last Monday unanimously approved a proposal by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History to use the mansion as a museum annex. The proposal, which Cole called the best so far, will be presented to the council Tuesday.