

THE POST

Beverly Hills

Speaking Out

By Margaret Harris
Editor

Attack on Greystone, Community

Councilmember Tanenbaum went on the attack at Tuesday's city council study session, shouting, roaring and pointing some heavy verbal artillery at what may be the city's only pacifist organization — the Greystone Foundation headed by the highly regarded Frederick M. Nicholas.

Ironically, several years ago the Greystone Committee became a foundation for the sole purpose of remaining apolitical. Today the Greystone Foundation is perhaps the only organization in Beverly Hills without ties to one or more of the city's political factions.

Tanenbaum's most interesting and confusing statement Tuesday afternoon — "I believe the council should have the responsibility on this issue, not the community" — can only lead us to believe that he wants more power in deciding the future use of Greystone Mansion, and he wants the community to have less input.

After all, the foundation is comprised of community members from all areas of the city, with varied interests and political ties. There is no more democratic organization than this community-oriented group of men and women who are trying to get a good tenant for our historic mansion in the Trousdale area of the city.

An important ingredient in trying to find the "right" tenant for the mansion is that the tenant be willing to spend the money it will take to renovate

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Future Uncertain for Greystone Mansion

Nicholas Says Dissolution is Imminent, Resigns During Heated Council Session

By David Keller
Post Staff Writer

BEVERLY HILLS — In a heated session Tuesday, city council members considered stripping the Greystone Mansion Foundation of its duties, prompting the organization's chairman to resign and casting doubt on its future.

Though the council cannot force the non-profit foundation to disband, the combination of

director Fred Nicholas' resignation and city intervention would likely cause its dissolution, Councilmember Bob Tanenbaum conceded.

"At this point, I see no real reason for the foundation to continue," Tanenbaum said at the council's study session. "I believe the council should have the responsibility on this issue—not the community."

The Greystone issue was de-

bated during a 90-minute discussion that was marked by angry outbursts and saw council members agree that the city should quickly find a use for the mansion, which has been empty for nearly 10 years.

Nicholas, who told the council Tuesday that he was resigning, was sharply critical of the council in a letter to the other 14 members of the foundation released Wednesday morning.

He wrote, in part, "The foundation has spent hundreds of hours investigating and recommending uses for the mansion. Instead of thanking the foundation for its contributions to the city of Beverly Hills, several city council members have attacked the foundation's work."

He also noted that the organization's dissolution is imminent and that he will not contribute his time

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the residence.

Bringing the building up to code will cost between \$2.5 million and \$3 million, plus the cost of insurance. Restoration will cost at least \$3 million. These are costs the city — the residents — will incur if our council decides to take over use of the property.

The ugly part of what Tanenbaum did on Tuesday was to force a man with the fine reputation of Fred Nicholas not only to resign from and disband the Greystone Foundation, but to throw up his hands and walk away from future involvement with community projects.

There was absolutely no need for the councilman to have been so

abusive about the foundation and thus, indirectly, about Nicholas.

Nicholas recently has been named chairman of the special committee to build the new concert hall and related facilities for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. That project is being funded by a

\$50 million gift from Mrs. Lillian Disney and her Lillian B. Disney Foundation.

Certainly a man of Nicholas' stature, and all the members of the Greystone Foundation, deserve better than they got at city hall Tuesday afternoon.

Greystone Debate Heats Up

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to any other city-related projects because he thinks the council has mishandled the Greystone situation.

The fate of both the mansion and foundation may be decided at the council's Aug. 11 meeting, where Tanenbaum is expected to try to convince the city to take stricter control over the property.

The council member's chief concern is to avoid using the mansion for specific, longtime use. He urged that a new council committee be established to deal with the mansion exclusively.

"We need to make this a democratized process," he said. "Having a continuing political process on Greystone's use is essential because reasonable people will differ over the years on the use of the property."

Although Tanenbaum's proposal was met with criticism from Vice Mayor Donna Ellman, Councilmember Charlotte Spadaro and Councilmember Max Salter, they agreed that action needed to be taken.

"This has been such a slow-moving process," Spadaro said. "We have a lot of options we're not looking into. We've been accused of ignoring the Greystone issue, and I think that's not an

inaccurate accusation."

One of the options, Spadaro suggested, is to renovate the mansion into a manor where the city could host important visitors.

Salter disagreed, saying, "There are not that many options. There's no one waiting in the wings with a million dollars wanting to renovate the mansion. You'll need at least a million to bring the thing up to snuff."

The exchange sparked a series of heated outbursts among the council members, who argued over the 55-room estate's direction. The mansion has been the point of much disagreement with several councils for many years.

Most recently, noted art collector Frederick Weisman backed out of a deal he had struck with the foundation to turn the mansion into a museum when several members of the council opposed the plan.

Since 1983, the foundation's role has been to find a user for the mansion and present the council with a candidate, but Tanenbaum — who frequently punctuated his remarks by pounding on the table — said Tuesday he was not pleased with the organization's process and believes "the city can do a better job."