

Hubbard's son will testify today

By BILL PRESCOTT
Sun staff writer

The son of L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology, is scheduled to testify today in the opening round of public hearings on the sect, the city's hired consultant said Tuesday.

Boston attorney Michael Flynn, who proposed the hearings this past fall, said Ron DeWolfe—once known as L. Ron Hubbard Jr.—will be the second witness to be heard in City Hall. Ed Walters, a former high-ranking church officer, will testify first, Flynn said.

The planned eight days of

hearings start at 9 a.m.

Hired by the city for \$80,000 to provide witnesses and evidence about sect activities, Flynn has recommended the city pass consumer-fraud and charitable-solicitation ordinances to regulate Scientology activities.

In his 1972 book "A Look Into Scientology," DeWolfe—who turns 48 Friday—wrote that he helped his father found Scientology in the early 1950s. He was an avid Scientologist until 1959, when he left the church.

In a recent magazine article, DeWolfe said he suspects his father is dead. DeWolfe writes pamphlets and gives seminars to

aid ex-Scientologists.

Flynn said DeWolfe will testify about the origin of church policies and about whether church versions of his father's past are true.

In a preliminary report to the city this past September, Flynn alleged that many church claims about the elder Hubbard's scientific achievements are untrue. Flynn claimed also that church policy resulted in criminal activities.

Flynn said Walters will discuss the scope of the Scientology organization and how it relates to its Clearwater operations. City Manager Anthony Shoemaker

said Walters left the church within the past year.

Meanwhile, Flynn threw out a challenge to the church to produce its own witnesses and evidence. Flynn's presentation is scheduled to take four days. The second block of four days has been set aside for the Scientologists.

Paul B. Johnson, the church's Tampa attorney, said a final decision has not been made whether the church will participate.

"I requested the right to examine witnesses to test their credibility," he said.

The guidelines set up for the

hearings, however, have ruled out cross-examination by Flynn or the church's representatives. Only city commissioners, Shoemaker or City Attorney Tom Bustin will be allowed to question witnesses.

Johnson said he wants a chance to speak at the start of the hearing "to advise the commission on some things that may be helpful to them." He declined to elaborate on his planned comments.

Bustin said it will be up to the City Commission to decide if Johnson can make an opening statement. The Scientology presentation is not scheduled to begin until Monday.

As part of the city's final

preparations for the hearings, Flynn has been provided 24-hour police protection as a "precaution," Shoemaker said.

"There have been no insinuations and no threats," the city manager said.

He said one officer is being kept in Flynn's hotel suite to protect documents the lawyer brought from Boston. Two uniformed officers will be at City Hall during the hearings, Shoemaker said.

A CBS news crew is in the city for the proceedings, the network confirmed Tuesday.

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