

Los Angeles

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Police to air summary on RFK killing

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In the first step toward releasing police investigative files on the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, the Los Angeles Police Commission agreed Tuesday to make public a 1,500-page summary of the probe.

But before the summary is available, a panel of detectives and legal experts will delete any information they decide could violate rights of privacy, national security or the confidentiality of an informant.

Against the wishes of Police Chief Daryl F. Gates, the commission voted unanimously to create a subcommittee to establish procedures for editing and releasing the bulk of the files —

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50,000 pages of material stored in five file cabinets.

It is unclear how long it will take to edit the 10-volume summary, but Commission President Stephen Yslas estimated that all the files will be released within six months.

"It is a step in the right direction," said Philip Melanson, chairman of the political science department at Southeastern Massachusetts University and curator of the Robert Kennedy archives there, who led the fight for releasing the police files.

"I hope that the commission will follow through in developing the appropriate policies with all the speed and efficiency that the national importance of these records demand," Melanson added.

Historians and researchers consider the police documents the definitive source on the crime and the last remaining non-public record of the assassination 17 years ago at the Am-

bassador Hotel.

Among the 10 people who argued in favor of the disclosure were several university professors, a free-lance writer researching the so-called conspiracy theory, a librarian who offered to house the documents at the California State University, Los Angeles, library, and a television producer.

Numerous letters supporting the release were received by the commission.

Arthur Schlesinger, a biographer of Robert Kennedy, wrote: "There would seem no reason why, 17 years after this tragic event, this information should still be withheld. . . . Every consideration of scholarly and national interest calls for the disclosure."

And Henry Gwiazda, an archivist at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, wrote that he would be interested in the documents because of their "significant research value."