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# DELAYS DIM HOPE FOR ETHNIC MUSEUM

By Scott Maier P-I Reporter

MONDAY, September 15, 1986 <

Section: News, Page: D1

Legislation to spur development of an African-American heritage museum in Seattle appears to be in jeopardy.

Four times in the past five weeks, the Seattle City Council has been scheduled to approve hiring consultants to study development options for a museum.

Each time, action on the legislation was postponed because of a lack of support. Council action on the proposal is now scheduled for Sept. 29.

"It's in jeopardy," admits Councilman Norm Rice, the chief backer of the legislation.

Mayor Charles Royer last June proposed hiring consultants to assess space needs, possible sites, costs and management options.

The hiring of consultants was offered as a way to demonstrate the city's commitment to the museum while turning down a bid to fund ethnic museums with funds from the proposed \$29 million Seattle Art Museum levy, which is on tom

Council President Sam Smith, who had pushed for levy support of ethnic museums, said he won't support hiring consultants unless the measure includes development of Nordic and Asian museums.

"We decided we wanted to ante up \$29 million for the downtown museum. I think we ought to ante up for the other, smaller museums," Smith said.

But Smith acknowledged he hopes to pressure the mayor to offer greater financial assistance for an African-American heritage museum.

Several other council members said they were reluctant to hire consultants for a project that lacked clear community support.

Finding a suitable site for the African-American heritage museum has drawn controversy.

Since November, a group of black activists have occupied the Colman School to pressure the city to turn the abandoned school into an African-American heritage museum. The city maintains the school would be a poor site.

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Rice said the consultants' findings could help forge a community consensus on where and how to build the museum.

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"Given that 4,000 people signed a petition asking for this kind of initiative, it might be the glue that brings it together," he said.

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