



## The Role of Citizens in the “Projects of Public Interest”

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### 1.1 Introduction

It is a human nature to point out errors, omissions, misdeeds, misgivings, misbehaving, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, misconduct, of others. Assuming self, as a master, none of the above is acceptable when pointed out at self. Long list of logical reasons, explanations will be forward, in self-defense, in a fraction of a second.

With this principle, any Tom Dick & Harry stands up starts delivering lecture about what should have been done, and advices, free of cost, his long list of suggestions. Further makes a tall claim that, if his suggestions had followed, the lapses, delays, cancellations or foreclosure of any projects of public interest would not have taken place.

Specially, when it comes to "PROJECTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST" the uproar reaches the highest pitch, the culprit is poor Local, / State / Central Government body, having no physical form, hence no retort on the face, no immediate rebutting. The Gentleman, when asked, whether, has he submitted any proposal of "His suggestions" to the concerned body? The answer will be, "OBVIOUSLY - N...O," and immediately he will flash a list of reasons WHY HE DID NOT DO SO. The probable reasons are

- 1) "I have NO TIME,"
- 2) "I don't know which department to approach?"
- 3) "If it is online correspondence, I do not mind."
- 4) "I know they have standard reply that, your suggestion is under consideration, or cannot be considered for policy reasons, or shown the waste paper dustbin."
- 5) "No one pays any attention in Government Organizations to your suggestions, and so on."

This attitude is displayed by the majority of citizens; breeds dormancy, litharge, negligence in the employees of government bodies.

The result is elimination, delay in execution, or improper maintenance of "**PROJECTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST.**"

### 1.2 Objective of the study



- 1) To educate, about proposing, where and how to follow up the proposal in the local / state/ central governmental agencies, care and precautions to be followed, when, which and where to involve the public representatives.
- 2) To alert about their rights, duties, and contributions towards the society and specifically about the "**PROJECTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**".

## **2.0 ROLE OF THE CITIZENS,**

The PROJECTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST, are citizen's own needs or requirements of day-to-day activities, and are direct end users. It is but natural they show interest in the processes of happening and maintenance of such projects. On the other hand, if no interest shown, the project may be canceled, delayed, or the maintenance of the amenity for reservations for deficient public utilities like washrooms, gardens, playgrounds, municipal schools, swimming pools etc., in the upcoming proposal of development plan.

They must be vigilant in-

- (1) Getting implemented the projects of Amenities, and needs,
  - (2) Proper Maintenance of the Requirements and Amenities during its the functioning,
- Essentiality expressed of needs and / or Amenities by the end user are more valid. Hence, the end users; the citizen; must point out such proposals to the concerned Local /State /Central government body. For which citizen must have knowledge of jurisdictions of the respective govt. bodies and purview of the departments; to submit their proposal to concern authority and dept.; only then, it can be pursued for the desired result.

With the spread of technology, effective communication is no longer an issue. A group formed on WhatsApp of local citizens can fill this gap effectively.

### **2.01 Role of employees of the respective departments,**

On receipt of such proposal the executive, scrutinize the same through various aspects such as number beneficent end users, whether there exist unites of the same type in the locality or nearby area there capacity, requirement of space availability etc..., accordingly the proposal is prepared as per the format of the department and processed further.

In majority of cases the staff member/s of the dept. are not resident of the locality and therefore may be reluctant to moot and pursue the proposal. Here the local citizen must step in and follow the proposal, for which they must possesses the knowledge of-

- 1) Statistical data of the locality, the land use reservation in the locality, etc;
- 2) Where to submit the proposal? ,
- 3) With whom to discuss the concerned problem/ proposal regarding Technical, Administrative, nature and



4) How and whom to approach for budget provision of funds,

5) Jurisdiction of the authority's viz. Local /State / Central govt. body,

The administrative staff at the base level proposes, technical staff plans and designs, estimates are then prepared. Fund provision made in budget by Finance dept. follows the administrative sanction, which is accorded by the head of the body.

The backbones for effective utility of the ongoing schemes are the concept, and design of utility, the House Keeping, the Functional Maintenance and the administrative management. Thus, the concerned staff also plays an important role.

### **2.02 Role of Public Representatives,**

The Public Representatives (Councilor / MLA / MP) are supposed to possess the knowledge about the locality, the functional route necessary for administrative sanction of the proposal, Tendering processes, Financial Accord by the house of Public Representatives. They also should help in resolving the minor non-technical issues cropping up during Execution of Project. Further taking into consideration public interest, needs and suggestions, they are expected to Insists for respective reservations of plots in the new/ revision of development plans, and implementation of projects of public interest.

### **2.03 Procedure of Proposing, and where and how to follow up effectively**

It is proposed herewith to educate; the under informed, dormant, ignorant citizens and awaken them about their "rights", Alert them about the "losses", Alarm them about probable "corruption" that may happen, Activate them about their "duties" in public life.

Help the citizens to wish each other every morning with the slogan:-

"IT'S NOW ...OR ... NEVER",

"IT'S NOW HERE" ...ELSE

"IT WILL BE NO...WHERE"

2.04 The expected "Impact" on the alert approach of the citizen, including me, towards "PROJECTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST" will be:-

- 1) Good quality of amenities,
- 2) Better response to their needs,
- 3) Up dated level of facilities,
- 4) Maintenance of functioning utilities.
- 5) Adoption of Eco-friendly execution methodologies.
- 6) Completion and functioning of amenities and utilities.



2.05 The Result will be as follows:-

- 1) The rate of elimination, and or for-closer of proposal of such projects will drop.
- 2) Delay in completion of projects and subsequent loss in the form of cost escalation will be avoided.
- 3) All the projects are related to environment in one way or another, resulting in conservation of energy.
- 4) Betterment in public life.

### **3.01 The new projects / alternatives that can be suggested are-**

- a) New amenities,
- b) Improvement in the existing ones,
- c) Innovative suggestion.

The development of cities is result of coming up of new localities, which in turn define the need for new amenities. The authorities/ locally elected members may or may not feel the same way, but a vigilante, wise and alert citizen/s can and should suggest and insist for the same.

a) The new amenities can be provision of-

- 1) Constitution of FOB, to minimize the number of accidents, and to facilitate smooth flow of vehicular traffic.
- 2) Constitution of ROB, to minimize the waiting period vehicles at traffic lights, to minimize the number of accidents, and to facilitate smooth flow of vehicular traffic, at crossings.
- 3) Constitution of public washrooms at suitable location.
- 5) Provision for control of vehicles by speed breakers, rumbling,
- 6) Provision of additional traffic lights.
- 7) Provision of benches for allowing senior citizens on footpaths

b) Improvement in the existing ones,

- 1) Provision of additional zebra crossing,
- 2) Curbing "U" turning by provision of different models of dividers,
- 3) Trimming of tree branches to allowing the full spreading of streetlights,

c) Innovative suggestion.

- 1) Restricting entry / exit during peak hours.
- 2) Shifting off the bus, Taxi, / Rickshaw stand, public washrooms, which can help in decongestion of moving traffic.

### **3.02 Availability / Provision of Funds for Projects**

For a) New and c) Innovative proposals



There is separate provision of funds for Counselor, MLA's, and MP's in local government's budget, this can be made available with their consent letter for the same. The budget proposals are prepared by local / state / central government, one can present the Proposals to the head of the concerned authorities requesting him to make provision in the upcoming budget proposal. The recommendations of Counselor, / MLA's, / MP's will carry more weight and the provision making will be easier.

b) Improvement in the existing ones,

Funds are available under the maintenance grants for "b" part mentioned above in the local government bodies, or counselor can be requested to provide it from the allotted fund under " Counselor's Fund" provided in the budget of local bodies.

On submission of the proposal to the administrative head of the governing body will get it scrutinized for validity, feasibility of the proposal and will accord administrative sanction. Further asks the concerned department to prepare estimates. Estimates are prepared and presented for making specific provisions. This will ensure the fund part of the proposal.

### **3.03 Invitation of Tenders / Quotations**

Having funds, the concerned departments call for Tenders / Quotations, from bidders, in appropriate category, depending upon the nature of work, and estimated amount. Works of maintenance nature and estimated amounts lower than specified by the administrative head can be executed through the agencies [Petty Work Contractors (PWC's)] appointed for annual maintenance works.

The workers of specialized nature or in case of non-availability of PWC's, Tenders, / Quotations are invited from bidders registered in appropriate categories. The offers submitted by the contractors are compared, a comparative statement submitted to the head of the government body for sanction, and he presents the same, for accord, by the appropriate committee of elected members.

The successful agency is than issued the work order by the Executive Engineer (Ex. E. Alternatively, EE) of the concerned department.

### **3.04 The Executions of the work,**

The Executions of the work, a purview of the Executive Engineer, of concerned department is responsible for quality of material, and workmanship along with completion of work in time. He follows the BIS (Burrow of Indian Standard) code of specifications and recommendations, terms and conditions laid down in the tender documents, in the execution of work.



Furthermore Vigilance department, working directly under head of government body, visits the work site for assurances and assessment of quality, of materials, workmanship and methodology.

### **3.05 Objections, suggestions complains**

For any clarifications, complains, and suggestions about the work, sought by citizens, Executive Engineer of the department is the concerned officer. He will be available with prior appointment in his office, normally from 3-5 pm.

In case of grievances against the Ex. Eng., head of the government body shall be approached. A letter of complaint in the form of soft copy or by e-mail, can be submitted, requesting for appointment. He then calls meeting of redresses asking concerned Ex.Eng., in addition, head of vigilance department to remain present in the meeting.

### **3.06 Procedures dealing with substandard quality of materials used, workmanship and methodology**

In dealing with the cases of adoption of substandard quality of materials used, workmanship and methodology by the contractor, Ex. Eng. instructs the agency to redo the portion at no extra cost, in appropriate manner. Furthermore, in case contractor fails or ignores the instructions, the contractors are issued show cause notice, asking to redo the portion of work in specified time, till than no other works be executed. Warns the contractors, if orders not complied in time, the specific portion of work will be executed through other agency at the his risk and cost, and levies penalty for disobeying the orders.

### **4.01 Duties, rights and contributions of Citizens**

Citizens have rights to ask for amenities, with good quality materials, workmanship and methodology adoptions, and proper maintenance. Along with the same come duties towards possessing rights and contributions towards the same.

#### **Duties comprise of,**

- 1) Be vigilant about quality, and maintenance of civic amenities.
- 2) Should have justification for demanding a amenity,
- 3) To prevent misuse by anyone or wrong doings be brought to the notice of officers of the concerned department,
- 4) To pay the taxes in time,
- 5) To use the amenities, in judicious manners, and teach others to following the same.
- 6) Complaining is fruitless unless proper follow up maintained.

#### **Rights are**



To have apt amenities of best quality and there maintenance Prevent misuse Complain about improper quality, quantity, and methodology

### Contributions

Citizens can contribute during execution of projects and maintaining the amenities by Cooperating during inconvenience, if any, during execution of project works Complaining about misuse and miss-users

### 5.01 Case Study I

In Municipal Corporation of grater Mumbai, budget proposals for the next financial year prepared and submitted by all departments in month of September, to the commissioner. The Municipal Commissioner than studies the same and prepares consolidated budget proposal to presents in the general meeting of corporation, wherein all elected Counselor's, study the same, suggest changes, amendments, if any, and is passed by them.

In a year, large amount of funds were allocated for developing botanical gardens in the city, to elevate greenery and ambiance of the locality. Accordingly, a proposal mooted to develop botanical gardens. Searching for location of such garden on plot reserved for the purpose, since no plot of suitable size as per requirements of botanical gardens was available, it was proposed to develop it on the existing recreation ground in a locality in Mumbai. It was planed, to develop it, as a model, since funds under the specific head were available. Sanction in principle accorded, planes were prepared.

Assistant Municipal Commissioner of the ward felt it essential to sound opinion, of the local residents, to avoid any untoward incident that may take place, at the time of execution of work. As the recreation ground, was in use as play ground for more than 5 decades, and being the only, in about 3 Km. radial circular area. He called meeting of local Counselors, and prominent citizens to learn their views about the proposed change of use.

Assistant Municipal Commissioner explained in details, the proposal, explaining the environmental and other benefits, to the citizens present. Majority of the present citizens expressed their views against the proposal. Assistant Municipal Commissioner than reported the expression of the local citizens to the municipal commissioner who asked to relocate it at other place.

Conclusion of the case study:-

- 1) Assistant Municipal Commissioner initiated and acted in time to avoid the dilemma.
- 2) The citizens expressed against development in place of existing reservation of recreational area.

Assistant Municipal Commissioner played appropriate role of employee, and the alert and concerned citizens played their role. Resulted in avoiding loss of public money and time.

### 5.02 Case Study II



Back in early 80's, a school construction was in progress, on the plot reserved for the same in a sanctioned layout, by MCGM, under slum improvement program. Madarsa a school for Muslim students, teaching religious scripture, had occupied unauthorized, on the reserved plot for school. The structure erected was of temporary nature and was small in area, as compared to the plot area. The proposed school building 22 classrooms were accommodated with amenities viz. Principal and his office staff room, teaching staffroom, separate washrooms for girls, and boys students and for staff.

No sooner the construction began, with the fear in mind of demolition of the Madarsa structure, representation from local slum dwellers started pouring in, in the office of Ex. Eng. He called them for meeting and explained them about the school. They insisted to allow for Madarsa functioning in the campus.

Knowing well, the request was illegal and illogical, but denying at that instant would be calling for trouble. Hence, Ex. Eng. played low, and assured them, that he will discuss the matter with municipal commissioner and seek his permission, but sought assurances that, they will not hinder the progress of construction, which they hesitatingly did so. He then instructed his staff to finish rest of work, at the earliest.

On completion of rest of the work, Ex. Eng. Instructed to demolish the unauthorized Madarsa structure, with the help of the police force.

Residents protested for but which dissolved in fortnight. The rest of the work completed under police protection, and the school campus handed over to school department. The school opened in due course of time, under police protection.

Conclusions of the case study II are-

- 1) Ex. Eng. acted aptly and tactfully and the project was completed.
- 2) Local residents with selfish interests, knowing well, were demanding illegitimate retention of space for illegal Madarsa.

**Finally to sum up the conclusions from case studies as-**

- 1) **Assistant Municipal Commissioner played appropriate role of employee, and the alert and concerned citizens played their role.** Thereby, avoiding loss of public money and time.
- 2) **Action taken by the Ex. Eng. was right in place, resulted in avoiding untoward loss of time and illegitimate intrusion. The school was open to all students seeking education. Thus, the active participation by citizens and dutiful and tactful approach by the officials from government bodies plays important role "Projects of Public Interest."**