

Park Management with Citizen Participation under an Initial Council Style Scheme

- Case Study of Hyogo Prefectural Arimafuji Park -

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Abstract

A requirement of park management is to transfer the focus from emphasizing the management of public materials to providing services to visitors. Therefore, it has become indispensable to create a scheme in which residents can take management initiative. At this time, we look at Hyogo Prefectural Arimafuji Park, which encourages citizen management participation, and try to understand their system and project contents. For an initial scheme, we identify 4 elements that promoted subjective participation in a council style scheme; 1. to begin activities at the earliest possible time before opening the park, 2. to coordinate with expert(s) who take a neutral position, 3. to have places available where participants can debate on an equal footing, and 4. to plan the project while feeding back actual results.

Key Words : Park Management, Citizen Participation, Council, Yume Program, Coordinator

I. INTRODUCTION

Up to this point, park management has given more weight to controlling public materials than providing visitor service. But recently, local governments have been required to offer more efficient and higher quality services, so they have been adopting various new public management (NPM) practices, including corporation type business techniques. The same should be adopted by park management.

With this background in mind, this study focused on the case of park management at Hyogo Prefectural Arimafuji Park (hereafter, "Arimafuji Park") that is

trying to incorporate initial citizen council style participation. We attempt to understand the existing conditions and project content of a council comprised of residents and related organizations as well as suggesting important matters in the scheme's initial activity period to help promote subjective citizen participation. Arimafuji Park was the first park administered by Hyogo Prefecture to introduce council style park operation. In the time since, Hyogo Prefectural Tanba-Namikimichi Central Park, which is scheduled to open in 2007, also adopted this system. Meanwhile, Hyogo Prefectural Hitokura Park, which opened in 1998, adopted it after opening.

II. PARK MANAGEMENT WITH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AT ARIMAFUJI PARK

The following shows an outline of Arimafuji Park and how its management that includes citizen participation is set up.

1. The Outline of Arimafuji Park

Arimafuji Park locates in Sanda City, spreading at the foot of Arimafuji Mountain in 416 hectare area. On April 29, 2001, part of the park, "Deai no Zone" (70 hectare) opened. Buildings included in this park are Sanda Municipal Natural Study Center and Park Center, which is the management office of Hyogo Prefecture. This city park is surrounded by abundant nature, such as small reservoirs, grassland, coppice forest and terrace paddy fields.

2. Arimafuji Park Management/Planning Council

With the intention of park management conducted by citizens' group(s), "Arimafuji Park Management Plan"(1) was developed in the fiscal year 1999, 2 years before the opening of the park. Based on the proposal of this Management plan, the Arimafuji Park Management/ Planning Council (hereafter, the Council) was established with the members including citizens selected by open call for participants, experts in various fields (green tract of land project, city planning, vegetation, marketing), and people from Hyogo Prefectural government, Hyogo Prefectural Horticulture/Park Foundation, Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education, Sanda City, the Sanda City Board of Education, the Museum of Nature and

Human Activities, Hyogo (hereafter, the Museum) and an incorporated NPO (2) that works together with the museum. The incorporated NPO was brought up by the museum. The museum Vice curator of the Museum is the chairman of the council, while its research workers take in charge of coordination of related tasks as members of sectional meetings. Under the council, there are working groups for Coordinating Section to take care of the matters related to the Management of the park and the Location Development Section to take care of the matters related to the planning. At the council, each section reports practices and makes suggestions. These are assessed and deliberated by citizens, researchers and government personnel with their professional view, and offer the issues and ideas for further development. The first council meeting was held in October 2000, and by April 2004, 14 meetings had been held.

Initially, only 2 residents were invited to participate. Currently, there are 2 public participants, 2 invited residential participants from those involved in the projects and 3 committee member from the Northern Hanshin Area Vision Committee (3). There are 7 resident committee members among the 20 council members. Gradually, resident committee members began to carry a lot of weight.

3. Dream Program

Members of the Coordination Section discussed how to train people for resident participation and what initial project should be conducted about a year before the opening. As a result, they asked for applicants from the general public for a self Management/ planning program called the "Yume Program." This program has been responsible for 159 events held by 49 groups, from between April 2001 to the end of March 2004. Events took a total of 991 days, using

3,725 staff members, with a total of 28,646 participants.

The coordination section is mainly comprised of planning experts from the Museum, who are at the center of the project, young staff members from the Sanda Municipal Natural Learning Center and Park Center, as well as contractors that take part in the operation. Adjustments made by the coordination section relaxed the then existing rules for growing rice, using fire and operating events at night, all within the frame of the Yume Program. When a project is confirmed as part of the Yume-program by the council, it is published in a publication issued by Sanda City. Although there are no financial aids, selected group of citizens can use related facilities for free, as they are used for preparation and implementation of the project. They also can check out equipment and fixtures at such facilities. With such an on-site process, coordination section members acquire adjustment skills and a relationship of trust with residents. Additionally, they can take advantage of the know-how earned from previous experiences into next projects. Meanwhile, residents have developed the ability to serve visitors through the Yume Program and deepen their attachment to the park.

The reason why such measure is possible is because the related organizations get together at the council beforehand and make mutual agreement ahead of time. The council is the place that citizens and people from related organizations can gather and share the information regarding the park and equally discuss about the issue. We can say it is an important scheme that not only enabled the Yume Program, but forced organizations to deal with such issues in a lateral way.

III. ISSUES OF THE COUNCIL SYSTEM THE PROMOTED SUB- JECTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

We can say the increasing number of resident committee members on the council and the fact that administration-related groups understand and conduct the Yume-program scheme show a certain degree of success at this point. The following are council system issues that promoted subjective citizen participation.

1. Schemes in the Pre-Opening Period

It is important to hold debates and activities concerning citizen participation in park management in a council, where related organizations gather, at the earliest possible stage before opening a park. At Arimafuji Park, staff members shared in the development of basic personnel training policy before opening the park. It was an important time to conduct a residential participation scheme, and by doing so, they could respond to residents who objected to the plans of affiliated organizations. This was an important factor in the new "Yume-program" scheme being introduced.

2. Coordination with Neutral Expert(s)

At the council, the museum took the role of coordinator. The museum is a social educational facility and is neutral in terms of the park's interest, so they are suitable to mediate between Hyogo Prefecture and Sanda City, as well as between prefectural residents and governments. They can continuously aspire to achieve the park's initial purpose and help with citizen participation, based on the establishment of a relationship of trust between residents and the facility, actual practices and development of residents' independence, while ongoing activities take place.

3. Council Where Participants Can Debate on an Equal Footing

Council is the place where related organizations, including residents, can debate on an equal footing. It is meaningful for citizen committee members to participate in debates at the council regarding park operation schemes and some of the permissible/prohibited matters that used to be determined by prefectural governments' park management staff based on the Municipal Park Regulation and prefectural bylaws.

4. Process Planning

A project which is implemented with the cooperation of residents and government staff is required if a park is to operate under the "process planning method," that involves constant correction. It is necessary to plan the future projects taking into consideration the maturity of residents and governments as well as the degree of their trust in each other. Additionally, since the council is comprised of organizations involved in park operations, the

know-how obtained from activities that have the goal of promoting citizen participation can develop feedback schemes that will be useful in training people who can effectively participate in the establishment of systems and plans. Such practices and feedback are indispensable in developing new operating schemes for citizen participation. In other words, such process should help train people to participate in such projects.

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