Introduction to Conflict Management of Seoul

The State of Public Conflicts in Korea
Conflict Management at Seoul Metropolitan Government

Seoul Metropolitan Government’s Conflict Management Process
Case Studies on Successful Conflict Mediation

※ Seoul Metropolitan Government ※
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Organization Overview

- Newly established on January 1st 2012
- First to establish a separate division dedicated to supporting conflict management and headed by a 4th grade public servant
- Main goal: Preventing and managing public conflict
- Nine staff members including the director who is an outside expert with experience and expertise in conflict mediation

Legal Basis

- SMG enacted the “Seoul Metropolitan Government Ordinance on Preventing and Mediating Public Conflict” in September 2012

Purpose
- To lay down the institutional process to prevent and solve public conflicts that arise from the establishment or implementation of policies of SMG

Major contents
- Formation of the Annual Conflict Management Plan
- Implementation of Conflict Assessment

Major Responsibilities

- To prevent and mediate conflicts that may arise during policy implementation

Prevention
- Identify conflict and plan conflict resolution strategies
- Operate the Conflict Alert System
- Provide education to build staff skills
- Publish the Conflict Management Manual and White Paper

Mediation
- Conduct Conflict Assessment
- Dispatch professional mediators
- Operate the Council for Conflict Resolution

Systematic Conflict Management Process (4-step)

Step 1: Conflict Diagnosis
- Notify projects subject to conflict diagnosis
- Conflict Diagnosis by responsible division
- Expert review
- Conflict Diagnosis & conflict level determination
- Selection of priority management projects

Step 2: Formation of a Conflict Resolution Strategy
- Response plan drafting by responsible division
- Expert review
- Comprehensive discussions

Step 3: Customized Conflict Mediation
- Conflict Assessment
- Council for Conflict Resolution
- Recommend and dispatch professional mediator

Step 4: Consistent Management
- Training programs to boost conflict management competency
- Share offline/online conflict management techniques
1 Conflict Diagnosis
- A process which involves analyzing SMG projects to identify and thoroughly manage at-risk projects
- From 2013-2015, 115 projects were classified as priority management projects after conducting conflict diagnosis, leading to 65% conflict prevention rate

2 Formation of a Conflict Resolution Strategy
- Aim to devise a detailed and actionable plan to manage conflict
- Should include overview of the project, causes of the potential or existing conflict, scope and position of each disputing party, and conflict mediation direction

3 Customized Conflict Mediation
- Swift and systematic handling of existing conflicts is key
- Different support measures are implemented depending on the conflict type including the Conflict Assessment, Council for Conflict Resolution, and dispatch of professional mediators
- Conflict Assessment: A process of analyzing the social impact of a policy to devise a response plan.

4 Continuous Conflict Management
- Offer various training programs related to conflict resolution to boost staff competency.
- Share conflict management techniques and case studies on conflict resolution by publishing documents including Conflict Management Manual and the Conflict Management White Paper

Type | Course Title | Details
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Basic | Conflict Management Outreach Training | Education on conflict management in general at the venue requested by the relevant division or district office
On-the-spot Training | | Training program offered at the site where a conflict was resolved to gain practical knowledge and knowhow

General | Case Study Workshop | Education on conflict management techniques including ADR, negotiation, mediation and role playing
Negotiation & Conflict Management | Education program managed by a special agency affiliated with SMG which includes topics such as understanding conflict, case studies on conflict resolution, and finding alternative solutions

Advanced | Professional Mediation Training | Mediation training program commissioned to an outside organization

※ Conflict Alert System
Introduced to complement the conflict diagnosis process and manage ad hoc, case-by-case conflicts
Civil complaints and media outputs are monitored to identify civil complaints that need to be addressed early on. Then, the Conflict Mediation Division closely works with the relevant division to manage the identified conflict.

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- Different support measures are implemented depending on the conflict type including the Conflict Assessment, Council for Conflict Resolution, and dispatch of professional mediators
- Conflict Assessment: A process of analyzing the social impact of a policy to devise a response plan.

- Council for Conflict Resolution: Facilitates negotiation among interested parties to identify their opinion and work out a settlement

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Resolving conflicts arising from inter-floor noise pollution
SMG suggested a new alternative solution to resolve conflicts arising from inter-floor noise pollution. The Community Mediation Model by Citizen Participation which refers to conflict mediation and resolution process that involves voluntary discussion and negotiation by the citizens started as a pilot project involving an apartment complex located in Eunpyeong-gu. SMG initiated a public-private cooperative network to bring together representatives from the district offices and the private sector, and held meetings and training programs. As a result, the apartment residents created the Neighborhood Committee for Dispute Resolution and drafted the Neighborhood Agreement on Resolving Noise Pollution. This led to the revitalization of the neighborhood community and laid the foundation for voluntary resolution of conflict among the residents.

Mediating conflict over a crosswalk
Relocating a crosswalk is a sensitive issue that involves nearby building owners’ right to business and safety of the pedestrians. Building a crosswalk in Gwanak-gu Seoul in November 2013 sparked conflict among the local residents. In July 2014, public servants from the Conflict Mediation Division stepped forward to begin the mediation process and finally reached a settlement with the local residents in October.