



**\*For Immediate Press Release\***

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## **The need of the hour is to strengthen ward committees**

### **Citizens across Bengaluru come together to strengthen ward committees**

**Bruhat Bengaluru Ward Samiti Samavesha**, held on Saturday, May 28, at Mount Carmel College, had a footfall of over 250 citizens spread over 100 wards of Bengaluru participated to share their experiences and insights about their ward committees.

The event is JOINTLY ORGANIZED by various civil society organisations, NGOs, and RWAs such as Janaagraha, BPAC, Sensing Local, Changemakers of Kanakapura, Bangalore Apartments Federation(BAF), Whitefield Rising, Citizens for Bengaluru(CfB), Citizen Participation Program (BBMP SWM), APSA Bengaluru, in association with Department of Public Policy, Mount Carmel College.

The objective of this meeting was to bring together citizens that work on ward committees from all wards to get to know each other, and identify the biggest hindrances to the success of ward committees and learn best practices from wards having successful ward committee meetings.

The Samavesha attendees grouped themselves Zone wise to debate and discuss and to find solutions collectively and make a coherent set of demands on behalf of all citizens to the BBMP.

The samavesha also included a session on basics of city (BBMP) budget and how the budget looks from a ward perspective. Ward Level Budget briefs have been prepared by Janaagraha based on the 2022-23 BBMP Budget and made available to all participants.

The zonal level workshops voted on issues related to ward committees:

#### **Here are the top 4 issues**

1. 14% of outvotes cast called out the lack of standard processes for documenting and reporting on follow up on grievances, and the fact that WCMs had no usable data provided to facilitate decision making
2. 13% votes were cast on the fact that there was no clear process for escalation or arbitration of meetings, and approval of projects

3. 11% of the votes polled called out the lack of accountability with respect to ward committee members roles and responsibilities
4. 10% votes reflected the lack of communication and details on WCMs – date/time/agenda/venue

### **Key Resolutions:**

The samavesha concluded that henceforth the citizens that support Ward committees will organize themselves as Bruhat Bengaluru Ward Samiti Balaga – The Balaga has passed FIVE key resolutions unanimously today and to be submitted on behalf of everyone present to the BBMP Officials and in concerned officials in Government of Karnataka.

1. The BBMP Chief Commissioner has to make Zonal Commissioners responsible for the follow-up actions from Ward Committee Meetings.
2. Make the Ward Committee Meetings in November and December for budget allocation through Ward Development Plan.
3. The Chief Commissioner has to issue clear guidelines on when and how to conduct Ward Committee meetings.
4. Zonal Commissioner to review the status of WC Meetings(WCMs) with Balaga once a quarter with data, followed by a review with the Chief Commissioner at city level
5. BBMP Chief Commissioner must draft a new process for selection of ward committee members and publish for public review. The new process must enable transparency in ward committee member selection and formation post BBMP election.

### **What the Citizens have to Say:**

“Today is a celebration of the love which active citizens have for Bengaluru. We have many problems - garbage, traffic, pollution, bus stops. But, we didn’t discuss any of these; instead, we focused on the biggest of all – citizen participation in local level governance by strengthening ward committees. It is heartening to see hundreds of citizens of all age groups, men and women, from all the corners of our city, congregate for over 3 hours to and the future. Zonal level brainstorming workshops have been held with great participation from 200 citizens across all 8 wards. We are now taking the next steps in taking the resolutions passed by this Samavesha to the BBMP Admin and Commissioners serious discussions with each other at the zonal level. The Bruhat Bengaluru Ward Samiti Samavesha will pass a resolution demanding improvements of ward committee meetings,said **Srinivas Alavilli, Head, Civic Participation, Janaagraha.**

“This Samavesha has been a wonderful effort to uphold citizen participation, which is the backbone of forming robust ward committees. The ward committees need to be empowered through reform on an urgent basis, as it symbolises the true decentralisation of governance,” said **Sandhya Narayan from Citizen Participation Program (BBMP SWM)**

“This has been a terrific event with loads of energy from vibrant citizens and ward committee members. The prioritisation of issues of ward committees and finding solutions to address the problems was very well conducted. We should carry the same energy and

momentum to bring more participation in ward committees and accountability from officers and Netas,” said **Vishnu Gattupalli, Vice President, Bangalore Apartment Federation**

“We at Whitefield Rising have been working for the last several years across Mahadevapura Zones eight wards to have Ward Committee meetings. It was nice to see the energy of the group. I hope that the incoming Corporators, the people fighting elections, need to worry a lot with such a huge momentum in the citizenry of Bengaluru which is getting really charged up to take control of Ward Committees and make the 10,943 crores happen for Bengaluru,” said **Anjali Soni from Whitefield Rising**.

“Ward committee meetings are the core of the city level democracy. When citizens across civic groups come from across Bengaluru to demand some rights, we hope government hears and makes some effective change,” said **Abdul Aleem, President, Changemakers of Kanakapura road Association**

“Citizens are powerful for democracy. Citizen engagement should come from ward committee meetings. It is the responsibility of citizens to engage various parastatals. This event allowed cross-learning,” said **Raghavendra H S, Program Head, B.PAC**

“The event showed us the people power of Bengaluru yet again, not only in representation but also through consensus on the top issues at the ward, zone and city levels,” said **Sobia Rafiq, Co-Founder, Sensing Local**.

CfB members participated and highlighted the emphasis on the regular functioning of ward committees which it has been fighting through its campaign #NammaSamitiNamagagi. This event is an endeavor by various civic organizations and us to demand empowering and strengthening ward committees and also bring in awareness to larger public about ward committees.

The absence of council, transparency in appointing WC members, guidelines for conducting WCM and monitoring/reviewing the WC activities by Zonal/Joint commissioner has rendered WCMs ineffective. Citizens who are attending WCMs regularly have been voicing these issues but to no avail.

CfB believes that the demands raised through this event will strengthen the ward committees and we hope that these demands/resolutions are actioned/implemented by the #BBMP Chief Commissioner at the earliest. - **Yogeesh Prabhuswamy and Shilpa Rao**

“The importance of the ward committees and the enthusiasm of the citizens of Bengaluru to participate in them were evident at Bruhat Bengaluru Ward Samiti Samavesha. People’s participation is the key to strengthening democracy as well as planning the city’s development. Let citizen participation always prevail,” **I S Patil, Coordinator APSA, Bengaluru**.

**To Know More about the event, you can contact:**

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