

About two months ago, a young person came to the lobby of City Hall and asked to meet with me. Ms. Hope Brownlee, an 11 year old 6th grader, introduced herself and told me about her idea to put a “little free library” near the Gazebo in Lake David Park. She inquired about what steps would need to be taken to make her concept a reality.

I was familiar with the model as I’ve placed a similar facility in another community. I was quite taken with Ms. Hope and her enthusiasm, and I told her, “no problem, approved – let’s do it”. After reflecting for a day or two I realized I had made a mistake and robbed her of an important opportunity to learn about government and process. As good fortune would have it, she came back to City Hall a few days later to tell me she wanted to reconsider the location. The Mayor and the Parks Manager happened to be in my office at the time and she was able to articulate her vision. I told her I also had a chance to think about it, and to do it properly she would have to go to the Recreation Advisory Committee (RAC) and get their approval. If she received their endorsement she would then need to present her idea to the Mayor and Council and ask for their consent.

In less than 90 days, Hope Brownlee came to City Hall with an idea, got approval from the RAC, presented to the Mayor and Council (a remarkable presentation without notes btw), got resources, found labor, coordinated with Parks and installed the Little Free Library outside the Puryear Building.

Anytime any of us think something can’t be done, or will take too long to go through the process, I suggest we take a book out of the library. I did, and I certainly learned something today.