

# FeedBack

## Of Bollards and Break Balls

I enjoyed Joel Leininger's Point to Point article, "Our Insular World," in your July/August issue, but I fear that the second paragraph contradicts the first. The local idiom, without explanation, seems to be used freely in the second paragraph. To me a "bollard" is a post used to attach a ship to a dock. By means of a "line" or "rope", it can be either on the ship or the dock, or it is a metal post used to protect a building or some structure from vehicles. I presume that is the case here. After discussions with colleagues, we decided the "break balls" must be circles drawn at the ends of lines where no monumentation was found or set. This is a new term to us up here in Maine, and as I originally commented, an explanation of the local idiom would have been helpful.

**Louis T. Maguire, LS**  
**South Portland, ME**

## Leininger Replies

*You are entirely correct that "break balls" are "circles drawn at the ends of lines where no monumentation was found or set." I did not know the term was not in wide use, and, accordingly, recommend it to all. The term is certainly more succinct than reciting what amounts to its definition every time one tries to distinguish it from similar items on a plat – bollards, for instance. Break balls, I fear, are an endangered species given that most drafters using CAD programs omit them, or, if they include them, do not trim out the actual boundary line running through them (which destroys most of the panache they can add). They are one of the little touches that separate good drawings from great ones. (At least I think so!) – J.L.*

## "Something Else Entirely"

Wendy Lathrop's recent article ["Where There's a Will," Sept 2007] criticizing "the railroad heiress" for petitioning against the presence of an elementary school in place of the original nature center does not acknowledge that there is inadequate infrastructure to support the sewage that is generated by that elementary school, that visitors cannot access the natural areas without walking

among the school's 250+ inhabitants, that the ponds are now stagnant and smelly, and that the Center threw out all the organizations that had been meeting at their location for decades – organizations dedicated to astronomy, mineralogy, bird watching, etc. Nor does she recognize the art of the "new" nature center which features a series of twelve loudspeakers placed in the trees along the paths in the woods. Each speaker is equipped with a motion sensor so that the visitor may be unexpectedly entertained now by the loud sounds of an explosion, a child sobbing, a train roaring by, glass shattering, a man whistling a flirt call to a girl, a loud sneezing, cries of farm animals, and other sounds equally disturbing and inappropriate. It is not about a simple active versus passive as Lathrop suggests. The Schuylkill does actively hire bow and arrow hunters to shoot deer, and they have spent thousands of dollars on deer fencing. They do attend waterfront development meetings and have big plans for their future on the corporate scene. They do actively focus on their founders. Aside from the hidden speakers that frighten visitors, there is a series of laminated signs along the paths that tell you to use your cell phone to text for code words. A large sign states that you need to "reconcile the remoteness of the natural world" by using your cell phone. What you get when you do text are messages about the burning of the historic River House, "Let it burn," and other messages that mock the founders. Who needs to hear that stuff? Membership has declined to the lowest levels ever. There is no longer any admission fee. Gone are the monies paid in the past by the adult educational nature groups that rented the place for their meetings. Apparently, SCEE doesn't need those sources of revenue. The Schuylkill Center is now dependent upon grants and generous gift contributions. The Schuylkill Center is no longer either an active or a passive nature center. It is something else entirely.

**Nancy McBreen**  
**Philadelphia, PA**

## Lathrop Replies

*Ms. McBreen writes of criticism, which was not my intent. The article as a whole is meant to point out that land use is often affected by legalities beyond the usual local zoning and building ordinances. In attempting to introduce two such examples in a short article, obviously many details must be left out due to space restrictions. Ms. McBreen is probably not aware that I have been a part-time naturalist for groups visiting the Schuylkill Center since 2007, and have seen dramatic changes in that time. I am not in favor of all the decisions made by the Trustees, particularly regarding its management, but I still believe the Center has much to offer. Center staffers take an active part in the annual Schuylkill Watershed Congress and advise other local groups regarding environmental aspects of projects, as well as the other activities mentioned in the letter. Some of the art exhibits at the Center are wonderful, and others not so much. The current (and hopefully temporary) mixed-media with sound show that Ms. McBreen refers to is, as she states, intrusive and disruptive, and as a result I avoid those areas in the woods where it is placed when leading groups. As for the ponds being "stagnant and smelly", that is what can happen to small (and in this case, manmade) ponds that shrink with lack of precipitation. However, even in this state they provide a real-life look at wildlife footprints, macro-invertebrate larvae, the battle between dragonflies and tadpoles for survival, and the root system of emergent plant life. None of the children I have taken to these ponds, from pre-kindergarten to high school, have ever complained about the ponds being smelly. Instead, they focus on what is happening as the water recedes in drier seasons. – W.L.*

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