

Contributing to the Breeze - Some Tips & Principles

Our Goal: *The production of an informative, respectful, engaging, professional- quality publication.*

Changes and Limits

Punctuation/spelling fixes and typos - In the interest of producing a professional product of which we all can be proud, corrections of typos, spelling, punctuation, etc., will be made without notice to the person making the submission, as will minor adjustments for clarity. If it's clear from context that you meant to say, "Gosh, I love potatoes; they're the unsung king of vegetables," but the way you wrote your sentence sounds as if you hate potatoes and can't imagine why anyone would eat them, then we'll try to fix that, although neither of us has time to call you about it when we do. If you have trouble remembering whether it's *there, they're or their*, we'll do our best to help you out there, too. On the other hand, it's the intention of neither the editor nor her nitpicking proofreader to remove the "color" or personal style from any writer's submission. We neither pretend nor wish to be your Creative Writing Instructor or your 8th Grade English teacher! Park Point would be nothing without our resident eccentrics, and we're certainly not aiming to make all writers sound alike.

In situations where substantial revisions for clarity, respectfulness, brevity or redundancy (see below) are deemed necessary, the editor will discuss this with the author in the hope of finding common ground on requested revisions. While the editor may sometimes suggest changes, the responsibility for altering the work as needed will fall upon the writer.

Brevity is not a small issue. Your letter or article may indeed be timely and well written, worthy of half a page or more, yet space limitations might not allow that luxury. The Breeze costs money to produce. Lotsa money, when it goes beyond eight pages or so. All editors have an obligation to sort through the submissions received, then choose from among them which pieces to publish. That's what editors do. While there may be times when going into "extra pages" can be justified, protecting the Breeze budget is one responsibility of a *managing editor*. Likewise regarding redundancy. When several articles or letters on the same topic are received, decisions must be made to shorten or eliminate one or more of them. In some instances, the compromise may be to postpone your submission for a later issue. [Hint: Please do not submit long, complex articles or letters at the 11th hour; get your piece in early and it's much easier to work with you. Revisions requested close to the submission due date may require a 24-hour turnaround in order to accomplish printing in a timely manner. Multiple revisions may lead to holding an article for the next month's issue.]

Copyright /Accuracy/Integrity

While neither of us pretends to be an expert in copyright law, both of us have worked in fields where words and graphic arts matter. Plain and simple: you don't get to steal. When it comes to borrowing from other publications, people sometimes operate under the myth that "once something has already appeared in print, it's OK to quote it." Well...yes and no. In general, courts have held that extracting a few words is reasonable, *so long as both author and publisher are acknowledged*. Quoting entire passages, however, is not. It might be OK to say, "As Davy Jones declared, in *The New England Pirate*, 'That's one smart parrot!'" Extracting an entire paragraph including the parrot's full speech is not - unless you've received a written OK from the magazine and, in some cases, the parrot. Perhaps you think Pointers would be enlightened by a long excerpt from an article you've read discussing "Public vs. Private Pedestrian Rights to Great Lakes Waters." Wonderful! Show the editor proof that you have permission to reprint and you're on, depending upon space availability. But please don't expect her to contact the publisher for you. That's your job.

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Accuracy - If you include the spoken remarks of others or submit statistics, you are expected to back them up with a source you can name. Please don't cite "what the majority says" without evidence. Articles will be held to a higher standard than letters to the editor, as readers understand the latter to be a matter of opinion. You should not assume editorial bias just because a smaller number of letters on your side of an issue has been published than on the "other" side. While an effort at balance will always be made, objectivity can be a multi-dimensional creature. If five letters are received representing one perspective, yet only one comes in expressing an opposing view, the Breeze will most certainly reflect that leaning. There are many aspects to fairness, however, and objectivity is not simply a matter of mathematics. If you don't see a letter representing your viewpoint, perhaps it's because you didn't write one!

Naming Names - two issues: Neither articles nor letters will be published anonymously. Period. When there are multiple authors, each writer should be named. At times, it may be acceptable to identify the entry according to a group or committee name, provided membership of the group is generally well known to most readers. In such cases, however, the principal author(s) of the piece should still be identified. Both first and last names should be used the first time a person is mentioned.

When it comes to naming politicians or other public officials in your piece, things can sometimes get a little sticky. Acceptable practice varies among publications. Again, respect will be the editor's primary guide. Say, "I find the actions of the County Board on this issue to be outrageous!" and you'll likely be published, at least in the opinions section. Call a Legislator a "two-timing, pickle-faced, toad eater who couldn't find his way around the block!" and you'll likely end up disappointed. Fair or not, writers in the Breeze are often perceived as representing the entire community of Park Point, not just themselves. The bar when it comes to our volunteer PPCC Officers is set a little higher, and when referring to Park Point neighbors in general, higher still. We admit to a bias in favor of praise. Write, "I've noticed that every single item Coral McDonnell submits about the Edible Garden is respectful, informative and impeccably written," and you'll likely see your remarks in print. Don't say, "that crazy lady with the red hat who's always sweeping the street in front of her house" and expect your description to be published, when you know most people will recognize her. In other words, articles and editorials should address the topic of concern, rather than attacking citizens by name or implication. Comment about the untrimmed shrubbery hanging over neighborhood sidewalks, but don't complain about your next-door neighbor, even in veiled terms. Bottom line: The Breeze will err on the side of courteous communications among residents. We are a neighborhood newsletter. Thoughtful consideration of diverse viewpoints will always be encouraged, but we're neither Mother Jones nor Modern Soldier. For that, you'll need to go elsewhere.

Final Thoughts: You have the editor's commitment to try and produce the most fair, informative, professional-quality publication she can, and her proofreader's commitment to ask questions when she thinks we've "missed." The editor gets the last word. Mistakes will be made, and we expect to be challenged when that happens. [But please be gentle with us when you do! Although the editor may now be receiving a stipend for the first time ever, most would agree that the pay grade for a job that typically requires more than 30 hours a month falls short of even a part-time job. Not that she's ungrateful...but do try to respect that neither the editor nor her proofreader can afford to spend hours on the telephone or in long email exchanges with you.]

We promise to make every effort to produce a newsletter we all can be proud of. Here's hoping the Breeze will continue its long history as but one example of our famously vibrant, "engaged" community of Park Point!

Respectfully, Natalija Walbridge and Ellen Dunlap