

Select board allows scooters to park at bike racks

By Katy Ward

Banner Staff

PROVINCETOWN — Following the confusion caused by rulings on new electric devices on the streets, on Monday the select board reversed itself and will now allow URB-Es to park at bike racks.

The previous vote on June 11 stated that no motorized bicycle, except those with a pedal assist, could be stored at town-owned bike racks, on town-owned property or in the public way — instead, they would have to use designated parking spaces. But when Erica Apicella and Heather Baker, who started an URB-E rental business, parked their foldable devices in two public parking spaces in front of town hall to prove a point, it caused the board to rethink their initial motion.

“We have an existing bylaw, but it’s old and it does not take into account current technologies and variations for these motorized bikes,” Assistant Town Manager David Gardner said at the meeting. “You can’t do parking enforcement on a bike or vehicle that’s not licensed, because there’s no way to issue a ticket. Further, if they want to park at spaces, they are going to show up at the parking department and want a sticker, but they can’t get a sticker, because they are not registered. … We cannot possibly enforce the parking regulation that has been passed. We don’t have the ability.”

Baker and Apicella argued that the board’s earlier ruling was discriminating against their new business, Coast Provincetown, which offers a concierge rental service for their two-wheeled throttleoperated devices.

“We feel like you are targeting us because our [device] looks different,” said Baker on Monday. “We just want across-the-board fairness. If it’s happening to us, then it should be happening to everyone, and it has not felt like that. Right now, it feels like we are separated, like we have our own water fountain.”

The board did not appreciate the racist “fountain” comment.

“Our job is to separate the personalities from the procedures and the work at hand,” select board member Lise King said. “I ask you to be patient with the process. This is not personal. We want to be fair. And this is a difficult one. Seems like we are making a mountain out of a mole hill, but Commercial Street has a lot of traffic.”

The board voted that all registered motorized vehicles must park in designated parking spaces, and unregistered motorized vehicles (including motorized bicycles and scooters, such as URB-Es and those with pedal assist, which are not required to be registered by the state Registry of Motor Vehicles) can park in bike racks and other areas allowed for bicycle parking. The topic will be revisited and discussed at the annual fall traffic hearing in November.

The board also voted to schedule a special traffic hearing on July 23 to address issues related to safe use of motorized bicycles. Currently bikes with a pedal assist are allowed to move both ways on Commercial Street, but URB-Es are not.

“Our concern is safety — that’s what we care about. We are slower than any other e-bike and smaller than any other e-bike,” Apicella said, adding that their top speed URB-E goes a maximum of 18 miles per hour.

Select board member Tom Donegan said that he recently tried out a motorized bicycle with a pedal assist, which he loved and wanted to buy, but said he got up to 23 miles per hour without paying attention.

“That bike should not be going counter flow,” Donegan said. “Motorized things should go the direction of cars. [I] think this is a safety issue.”

Additionally, the board agreed to schedule an executive session to discuss motorized bicycles and motorized scooters prior to the special traffic hearing, and also voted to direct Town Manager David Panagore and Provincetown Police Chief Jim Golden to do enhanced enforcement of speed and dangerous bike traffic during the upcoming season.
