



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

45175 Ten Mile Road  
Novi, MI 48375  
(248) 347-0415 Phone  
(248) 735-5600 Facsimile  
[www.cityofnovi.org](http://www.cityofnovi.org)

## ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS STAFF REPORT

**FOR:** City of Novi Zoning Board of Appeals

**ZONING BOARD APPEALS DATE:** December 14, 2021

**REGARDING:** 28115 Meadowbrook Road, Parcel # 50-22-11-400-006 (PZ21-0072)

**BY:** Larry Butler, Deputy Director Community Development

### I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

**Applicant**

MSU Tollgate Farm

**Variance Type**

Sign Variance

**Property Characteristics**

Zoning District:	Residential Acreage
Location:	East of Novi Road and South of Thirteen Mile Road
Parcel #:	50-22-11-400-006

**Request**

The applicant is requesting variances from Sections 28-1(7), 28-5 (a) Chart, 28-5(b), and 28-5(f) of the City of Novi Code of Ordinances to allow for the installation of three (3) additional signs; Two (2) additional fence-mounted signs of 6 square feet each displayed on the south entry way driveway fence, and an additional non-conforming Ground Pole sign of 24 square feet, in the public right-of-way, as a second property identification ground sign. A single Ground sign is allowed and is currently in place. Pole signs are not allowed. Per Code, Ground Pole signs are only allowed as a temporary sign. This property is zoned Residential Acreage (R-A).

### II. STAFF COMMENTS:

### III. RECOMMENDATION:

The Zoning Board of Appeals may take one of the following actions:

1. I move that we **grant** the variance in Case No. **PZ21-0072**, sought by \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ because Petitioner has shown practical difficulty requiring \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) Without the variance Petitioner will be unreasonably prevented or limited with respect to use of the property because \_\_\_\_\_.

(b) The property is unique because\_\_\_\_\_.

(c) Petitioner did not create the condition because\_\_\_\_\_.

(d) The relief granted will not unreasonably interfere with adjacent or surrounding properties because\_\_\_\_\_.

(e) The relief if consistent with the spirit and intent of the ordinance because\_\_\_\_\_.

(f) The variance granted is subject to:

1.\_\_\_\_\_.

2.\_\_\_\_\_.

3.\_\_\_\_\_.

4.\_\_\_\_\_.

2. I move that we **deny** the variance in Case No. **PZ21-0072**, sought by \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ because Petitioner has not shown practical difficulty requiring \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) The circumstances and features of the property including \_\_\_\_\_ are not unique because they exist generally throughout the City.

(b) The circumstances and features of the property relating to the variance request are self-created because\_\_\_\_\_.

(c) The failure to grant relief will result in mere inconvenience or inability to attain higher economic or financial return based on Petitioners statements that \_\_\_\_\_.

(d) The variance would result in interference with the adjacent and surrounding properties by\_\_\_\_\_.

(e) Granting the variance would be inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the ordinance to\_\_\_\_\_.

Should you have any further questions with regards to the matter please feel free to contact me at (248) 347-0417.

Larry Butler

Deputy Director Community Development, City of Novi



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## ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

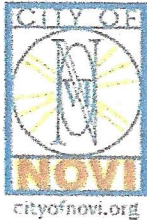
RECEIVED

NOV 09 2021

**APPLICATION MUST BE FILLED OUT COMPLETELY**

CITY OF NOVI  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

<b>I. PROPERTY INFORMATION (Address of subject ZBA Case)</b>				Application Fee: _____	
PROJECT NAME / SUBDIVISION <b>MSU Tollgate Farm</b>				Meeting Date: _____	
ADDRESS <b>28115 Meadowbrook Road, Novi MI 48377</b>		LOT/SIUTE/SPACE #		ZBA Case #: <b>PZ</b> _____	
SIDWELL # <b>50-22- 11 - 400 - 006</b>		May be obtain from Assessing Department (248) 347-0485			
CROSS ROADS OF PROPERTY <b>12 Mile/Meadowbrook Roads</b>					
IS THE PROPERTY WITHIN A HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION JURISDICTION?			REQUEST IS FOR:		
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO			<input type="checkbox"/> RESIDENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> VACANT PROPERTY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIGNAGE		
DOES YOUR APPEAL RESULT FROM A NOTICE OF VIOLATION OR CITATION ISSUED? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO					
<b>II. APPLICANT INFORMATION</b>					
<b>A. APPLICANT</b>		EMAIL ADDRESS <a href="mailto:prentic1@msu.edu">prentic1@msu.edu</a>		CELL PHONE NO. <b>248 330 3623</b>	
NAME <b>Roy Prentice</b>		TELEPHONE NO. <b>248 347 3860 X251</b>			
ORGANIZATION/COMPANY <b>Michigan State University</b>		FAX NO. <b>248 380 9193</b>			
ADDRESS <b>28115 Meadowbrook Road</b>		CITY <b>Novi</b>		STATE <b>MI</b> ZIP CODE <b>48377</b>	
<b>B. PROPERTY OWNER</b> <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK HERE IF APPLICANT IS ALSO THE PROPERTY OWNER					
Identify the person or organization that owns the subject property:		EMAIL ADDRESS		CELL PHONE NO.	
NAME <b>MSU Board of Trustees</b>		TELEPHONE NO.			
ORGANIZATION/COMPANY <b>Michigan State University</b>		FAX NO.			
ADDRESS <b>426 Auditorium Road</b>		CITY <b>E. Lansing</b>		STATE <b>MI</b> ZIP CODE <b>48824</b>	
<b>III. ZONING INFORMATION</b>					
<b>A. ZONING DISTRICT</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> R-A <input type="checkbox"/> R-1 <input type="checkbox"/> R-2 <input type="checkbox"/> R-3 <input type="checkbox"/> R-4 <input type="checkbox"/> RM-1 <input type="checkbox"/> RM-2 <input type="checkbox"/> MH <input type="checkbox"/> I-1 <input type="checkbox"/> I-2 <input type="checkbox"/> RC <input type="checkbox"/> TC <input type="checkbox"/> TC-1 <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____					
<b>B. VARIANCE REQUESTED</b>					
INDICATE ORDINANCE SECTION (S) AND VARIANCE REQUESTED:					
1. Section <u>28-1(7)</u> Variance requested <u>Permanently install a ground pole sign</u>					
2. Section <u>28-5(a) chart</u> Variance requested <u>Allow one additional property identification sign at MSU</u>					
3. Section _____ Variance requested <u>Tollgate's North entrance (24 ft<sup>2</sup>) and two additional "Service</u>					
4. Section _____ Variance requested <u>Entrance Only Signs" at Tollgate's south entrance (6 ft<sup>2</sup> each)</u>					
<b>IV. FEES AND DRAWINGS</b>					
<b>A. FEES</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Single Family Residential (Existing) \$200 <input type="checkbox"/> (With Violation) \$250 <input type="checkbox"/> Single Family Residential (New) \$250					
<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple/Commercial/Industrial \$300 <input type="checkbox"/> (With Violation) \$400 <input type="checkbox"/> Signs \$300 <input type="checkbox"/> (With Violation) \$400					
<input type="checkbox"/> House Moves \$300 <input type="checkbox"/> Special Meetings (At discretion of Board) \$600					
<b>B. DRAWINGS 1-COPY &amp; 1 DIGITAL COPY SUBMITTED AS A PDF</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dimensioned Drawings and Plans</li> <li>• Site/Plot Plan</li> <li>• Existing or proposed buildings or addition on the property</li> <li>• Number &amp; location of all on-site parking, if applicable</li> <li>• Existing &amp; proposed distance to adjacent property lines</li> <li>• Location of existing &amp; proposed signs, if applicable</li> <li>• Floor plans &amp; elevations</li> <li>• Any other information relevant to the Variance application</li> </ul>					



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# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

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DOES YOUR APPEAL RESULT FROM A NOTICE OF VIOLATION OR CITATION ISSUED? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		
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2. Section <u>28-5(a) chart</u> Variance requested <u>Allow a second property identification sign</u>		
3. Section _____ Variance requested _____		
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<b>IV. FEES AND DRAWINGS</b>		
<b>A. FEES</b>		
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<b>B. DRAWINGS 1-COPY &amp; 1 DIGITAL COPY SUBMITTED AS A PDF</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dimensioned Drawings and Plans</li> <li>• Site/Plot Plan</li> <li>• Existing or proposed buildings or addition on the property</li> <li>• Number &amp; location of all on-site parking, if applicable</li> <li>• Existing &amp; proposed distance to adjacent property lines</li> <li>• Location of existing &amp; proposed signs, if applicable</li> <li>• Floor plans &amp; elevations</li> <li>• Any other information relevant to the Variance application</li> </ul>		



# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

## V. VARIANCE

### A. VARIANCE (S) REQUESTED

DIMENSIONAL    USE    SIGN

There is a five-(5) hold period before work/action can be taken on variance approvals.

### B. SIGN CASES (ONLY)

Your signature on this application indicates that you agree to install a **Mock-Up Sign ten-(10) days** before the schedule ZBA meeting. Failure to install a mock-up sign may result in your case not being heard by the Board, postponed to the next schedule ZBA meeting, or cancelled. A mock-up sign is **NOT** to be actual sign. Upon approval, the mock-up sign must be removed within five-(5) days of the meeting. If the case is denied, the applicant is responsible for all costs involved in the removal of the mock-up or actual sign (if erected under violation) within five-(5) days of the meeting.

### C. ORDINANCE

#### City of Novi Ordinance, Section 3107 – Miscellaneous

No order of the Board permitting the erection of a building shall be valid for a period longer than one-(1) year, unless a building permit for such erection or alteration is obtained within such period and such erection or alteration is started and proceeds to completion in accordance with the terms of such permit.

No order of the Board permitting a use of a building or premises shall be valid for a period longer than one-hundred and eighty-(180) days unless such use is establish within such a period; provided, however, where such use permitted is dependent upon the erection or alteration or a building such order shall continue in force and effect if a building permit for such erection or alteration is obtained within one-(1) year and such erection or alteration is started and proceeds to completion in accordance with the terms of such permit.

### D. APPEAL THE DETERMINATION OF THE BUILDING OFFICIAL

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:

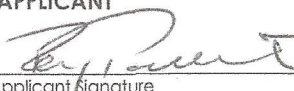
The undersigned hereby appeals the determination of the Building Official / Inspector or Ordinance made

CONSTRUCT NEW HOME/BUILDING    ADDITION TO EXISTING HOME/BUILDING    SIGNAGE

ACCESSORY BUILDING    USE    OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

## VI. APPLICANT & PROPERTY SIGNATURES

### A. APPLICANT


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant signature

10/28/21  
Date

### B. PROPERTY OWNER

If the applicant is not the owner, the property owner must read and sign below:

The undersigned affirms and acknowledges that he, she or they are the owner(s) of the property described in this application, and is/are aware of the contents of this application and related enclosures.

 Brian Quinn, Acting Secretary of the Board of Trustees  
of Michigan State University  
Property Owner Signature

October 28, 2021  
Date

## VII. FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

### DECISION ON APPEAL:

GRANTED

DENIED

The Building Inspector is hereby directed to issue a permit to the Applicant upon the following and conditions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Zoning Board of Appeals

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Community Development Department**

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**REVIEW STANDARDS  
SIGN VARIANCE**

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) will review the application package and determine if the proposed Sign Variance meets the required standards for approval. In the space below, and on additional paper if necessary, explain how the proposed project meets each of the following standards. (Increased costs associated with complying with the Zoning Ordinance will not be considered a basis for granting a Sign Variance.)

**Standard #1. Extraordinary Circumstances or Conditions.**

Explain how the circumstances or physical conditions applying to the property that do not apply generally to other properties in the same Zone District or in the general vicinity. Circumstances or physical conditions may include:

- a. **Shape of Lot.** A sign could not be placed in the location required by the Zoning Ordinance due to the shape, topography or other physical conditions of the lot or due to the location of an existing structure. **Describe below:**

OR

- b. **Environmental Conditions.** A sign could not be placed in the location required by the Zoning Ordinance without removing or severely altering natural features, such as trees, topography, drainage courses or encroaching upon storm water facilities. **Describe below:**

OR

- c. **Abutting Property.** A sign could not be reasonably seen by passing motorists due to the configuration of existing buildings, trees, signs or other obstructions on an abutting property. **Describe below:**

- d. **Scale of Building or Lot Frontage.** A sign that exceeds permitted dimensions for area and/or height could be considered appropriate in scale due to the length of the building frontage (wall sign only) or length of the lot frontage (ground sign only). **Describe below:**

MSU Tollgate has over 2500' feet of frontage on Meadowbrook Road. The existing sign on the corner of 12 Mile and Meadowbrook is over 1200 feet from the public entrance to the property. MSU Tollgate proposes a second identification/directional sign to ensure the safety and proper direction for visitors to the property.

- e. **Not Self-Created.** Describe the immediate practical difficulty causing the need for the Variance was not created by the applicant or any person having an interest in the sign, sign structure, or property. **Describe below:**

Before Meadowbrook Road was paved, the sight lines for the south entrance to the property were adequate to ensure safe egress from the property. The re-grading and paving of Meadowbrook in the 1990's greatly decreased the south entrance's visibility along Meadowbrook to the North. Designating the North Drive as the public entrance/exit to the property would greatly decrease traffic hazards.

## **Standard #2. Limit Use of Property.**

Explain how the failure to grant relief will unreasonably prevent or limit the use of the property and will result in substantially more than mere inconvenience or inability to attain a higher economic or financial return.

Over the years there have been many near misses and one accident at Tollgate's south entrance. The public's use of the south entrance also puts vehicles near children and others participating in site programs. Designating the farm's south entrance as a **Service Entrance Only** and the north entrance as the **Public Entrance** would greatly improve Meadowbrook Road sight line issues and would direct cars to the parking area and thus avoid locations where programming may occur.

Explain how the Sign Variance will not result in a use or structure that is incompatible with or unreasonably interferes with adjacent or surrounding properties, will result in substantial justice being done to both the applicant and adjacent or surrounding properties, and is not inconsistent with the spirit and intent of this chapter.

MSU Tollgate hosts over 20,000 visitors annually. The goal of the farm is to have every visitor experience the farm in a safe and enjoyable manner. Identifying the property's North driveway with signage as the primary Public Entrance enhances safety by providing adequate traffic sight lines and increasing separation between cars and pedestrians. Tollgate's property boundaries extend for more than 1000 feet to the north and south of the proposed sign location. It is not anticipated that the sign placement will impact any of Tollgate's neighbors or significantly affect the character and/or safety of Meadowbrook Road. The farm is a unique Novi property. MSU seeks to create an environment that allows all to experience the farm in a safe manner.

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

October 28, 2021

Zoning Board of Appeals  
City of Novi

Greetings,

MSU Tollgate is working to improve safety and access to its property at 28115 Meadowbrook Road, Novi, MI. The property currently has two entrances. The south entrance is at the base of a hill with limited sight distance for vehicles coming from the north over the hill. Over the years there have been many near accidents at this entrance due to the limited sight distances. It is planned that the south entrance will be designated as a Service Entrance Only.

The North entrance to the property accesses Tollgate's main parking lot. It is proposed that a break away sign be installed at this entrance to mark the north entrance as Tollgate's main entrance. The placement of this sign was discussed on-site with Novi City Engineer, Ben Croy, who was supportive of the new signage and the improved site safety that it engendered.

It is not anticipated that traffic or existing utilities will be impacted by this project. I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding this project.

Sincerely,



Roy Prentice  
MSU Tollgate Farm Manager

28115 Meadowbrook Rd.  
Novi, Mi 48377  
248 330 3623  
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/tollgate/>



**MSU**  
**Extension**  
**Tollgate**  
**Farm and**  
**Education**  
**Center**

28115 Meadowbrook  
Novi, MI 48377

248 347-3860  
Fax: 248 380-9193  
[www.tollgate.msu.edu](http://www.tollgate.msu.edu)



# MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center

## Entrance Sign Placement

### Supporting Documentation for Zoning Appeals Application

#### Introduction

The existing entrances to MSU Tollgate Farm need updating to ensure safety and ease of access for staff and visitors. Traffic on Meadowbrook Rd. continues to increase with the addition of the new subdivision directly across the street from the farm. We have been fortunate that to date, only one car accident has occurred at south driveway, and this accident occurred before the new housing development was built.

Tollgate's South entrance, located at the bottom of a hill with a restricted view of south-bound Meadowbrook Road traffic, will be used as a service entrance.



Figure 1: Current Tollgate entrances.



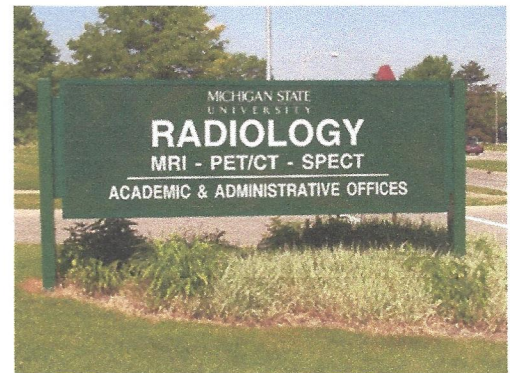
Figure 2: Current South Driveway with restricted street view. Looking north toward 13 Mile.

## Signage proposal

The south driveway will have new signage indicating that it is a **Service Entrance Only**. These signs will be 2' x 3' and attached to the fence on either side of the gate. The north driveway will have a large new 2-sided sign stating that **Tollgate is open to the public and identifying the drive as the public entrance**. Although there is currently one sign identifying Tollgate on the corner of 12 Mile and Meadowbrook Roads, there is no signage on Meadowbrook Road indicating Tollgate's name, that it is open to the public, or the location of the public entrance. The proposed sign would be constructed with break-away posts. The proposed new signage is consistent with other identification signs used by MSU on campus and at field stations (figure 3) which aids in identifying the farm as an MSU property.

## Summary

MSU Tollgate has long been open to the public without charge. It's 160-acre farm setting is a wonderful compliment to City-owned green spaces available to Novi residents. Many people come to Tollgate to enjoy the gardens, woods, rural atmosphere, events, camps, and other activities. MSU wants to make sure that individuals can continue to visit the farm safely. The proposed new sign will help achieve this goal.



*Figure 3: Appearance of proposed new entry sign to be located at MSU Tollgate's North gate. The sign is consistent with signs at other MSU facilities*

Proposed Entrance Sign  
Location  
28115 Meadowbrook Road  
Novi, MI 48377

Proposed Sign  
Location



Meadowbrook Road

Image Landsat / Copernicus

Google Earth



MSU Tollgate North  
Entrance  
Designated  
**Public Entrance**

Michigan State University

MSU Tollgate South  
Entrance  
Designated  
**Service Entrance Only**

28115 Meadowbrook Rd

Beacon Hill Park

Google Earth

W 12 Mile Rd

W 12 Mile Rd

Meadowbrook Rd



**MSU Tollgate south gate**

To be converted to a service entrance. Informational signs to flank gates each "Service Entrance Only" sign is 2'x3'