

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF NORTHVILLE**  
**Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**December 16, 2020**

**DATE:** December 16, 2020

**APPROVED:** January 20, 2021

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Meeting held remotely via video/teleconference

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as authorized under the Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, *ET SEQ.*, AS AMENDED by Senate Bill 1108 (2020), members of the public body and members of the public participating electronically were considered present at the remote meeting and could participate as if physically present, as outlined on the Township website and posted per Open Meeting requirements. Member of the Board identified their locations, as required.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Slatin via video/teleconference at 7:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Brian Doren, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan  
Eric Lark, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan  
Joseph LoPiccolo, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan  
Gary Sixt, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan  
Paul Slatin, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan  
Paul Smith, Northville Township, Wayne County, Michigan

**Excused:** None

**Staff:** Jennifer Frey, Township Planner  
Robert Belair, Director of Public Services

Township Planner Frey confirmed that all property owners within 300 feet of tonight's petitions had been notified.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Zoning Board of Appeals – November 18, 2020

**MOTION by LoPiccolo, support by Sixt, to approve the minutes from the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting of November 18, 2020.**

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Doren, Lark, LoPiccolo, Sixt, Slatin, Smith  
Nays: None

**Motion approved 6-0.**

Chair Slatin made standard introductory remarks explaining the role of the ZBA and the formal procedures of the meeting. Chair Slatin noted that four votes would be required to pass any motion. He also noted that all variance requests approved would be valid for one year.

**Public Hearing**

**Petitions:**

- 1. PZON20-0015** NC Park, LLC, property owner at 15603 Centennial Drive.  
Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America, Inc., property owner at 15489 Centennial Drive.
- Location: 15603 Centennial Drive  
15489 Centennial Drive
- Request: A variance request to Chapter 170, Article 15.2 C, to allow a component of the use to be operated outside of the buildings located at 15603 & 15489 Centennial Drive. Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America Inc (MEAA) will be testing autonomous vehicle technologies within the parking lot and installing temporary tripod poles with mounted sensing devices for real-time environment detection and analysis.
- Action: Approve, Approve with Conditions, Postpone, Deny

Engineer Andy Wakeland, Giffels Webster, Birmingham MI, was present on behalf of this application, as was Scott Fiskars, Mitsubishi Electric, 15603 Centennial Drive.

Mr. Wakeland explained that Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America Inc. was requesting that a component of the use be operated outside the buildings located at 15603 and 15489 Centennial Drive, in order to test autonomous vehicle technologies within the parking lot, including installing temporary tripod poles with mounted sensing devices for real-time environment detection and analysis, as stated. Mitsubishi owned 15489 Centennial Drive, and leased 15603 Centennial Drive. The sheet labeled *Conduit Sketch* showed the proposed location of the tripod poles. Cut sheets regarding the poles were included in the application materials.

Responding to comments in Township Planner Frey's November 10, 2020 review letter, the applicants gave the following information:

- Mitsubishi understood that the variances were valid for one year from the date of approval, and Mitsubishi would need to ask for a one-year extension if necessary.
- The duration of the poles would be for the 12 months they were requesting, and the height would be 6 meters. Again, they might need to request a 2nd 12-month time period.
- They would seek the appropriate building and electrical permits.

Chair Slatin opened the meeting for Board discussion.

In response to questions from the Board, Township Planner Frey gave the following information:

- Documentation from both property owners had been provided with the application materials, authorizing the application to go forward.
- No ordinances prohibited the type of testing being described.
- The applicants were before the board because 1) the requested use was temporary, and 2) the testing was being done outside the building, and the Ordinance required that all operations take place in a fully-enclosed building.

In response to questions from the Board, the applicants gave the following information:

- The conduit would be underground, and would go through normal Township permitting processes.
- The 6-meter height was necessary for the testing and data collection being done, in order to simulate traffic light responses as well as power poles on the side of the road, etc.
- The parking lot would not be closed off during the testing period, and would remain open to visitors and others. Vehicles being tested would have safety drivers at all times, and the vehicle testing would be done at low speeds.
- The sensors being deployed would be fully visible and not hidden, except when shielded by trees. Mitsubishi did want the testing on their own grounds and not at commercially available test tracks.

Chair Slatin opened the public hearing at 7:19 p.m. Seeing that no public indicated they wished to speak, Chair Slatin closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m. Noting that no correspondence had been received regarding this petition, Chair Slatin brought the matter back to the Board for further discussion and/or a motion.

In response to questions from Member Doren, Mr. Fiskars said his assumption was that the requested use would be needed for no more than two years, when it would move from the research stage to actual deployment. The 6-meter poles would be permanently up during the testing period (not removed at night or on weekends).

**MOTION by Smith, support by LoPiccolo**, that the Zoning Board of Appeals approve Petition PZON20-0015, submitted by Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America Inc., for a variance request to Chapter 170, Article 15.2 C, to allow a component of the use to be operated outside of the buildings located at 15603 and 15489 Centennial Drive, in order to allow Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America Inc. to test autonomous vehicle technologies within the parking lot and install temporary tripod poles with mounted sensing devices for real-time environment detection and analysis, with the following conditions, as listed in the November 10, 2020 Township Planner's review letter:

1. Variances are valid for one year from the date of approval. Permits must be approved prior to the expiration of the variance approval.
2. The variance granted this evening is for one year, with the possibility of the applicant returning for an additional year at the end of the one year period.
3. The tripod poles will be no higher than 6 meters.
4. Building and electrical permits are required. The installations shall comply with applicable Township requirements.

Roll Call Vote:           Ayes: Doren, Lark, LoPiccolo, Sixt, Slatin, Smith  
                                  Nays: None

**Motion approved 6-0.**

**Other Business:**

None.

## Department Reports

### Jennifer Frey, Township Planner

- Welcomed Chris Roosen, who will be appointed as BOT Liaison
- Gave project updates on:
  - Chick-Fil-A
  - Maybury Meadows
  - Northville Glades
  - Starbuck drive-thru
  - Art & Jake's restaurant (withdrawing application)

### Eric Lark, Planning Commission

Member Lark gave a summary of the December 8, 2020 Planning Commission meeting. Art & Jake's restaurant was the only agenda item at that meeting. The Commission had postponed action after requesting further information from the applicant.

## Public Comments and Questions:

None

## Adjournment:

**MOTION by Smith, support by LoPiccolo**, to adjourn the December 16, 2020 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting at 7:33 P.M.

Roll Call Vote:       Ayes: Doren, Lark, LoPiccolo, Sixt, Slatin, Smith  
                              Nays: None

**Motion approved 6-0.**