

RECOMMENDATION ON THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION APPLICATION OF
Gates - Evolution Sports NJ, LLC - C.O., Alt. (Special Exception)
File #25-181

I. INTRODUCTION

An application for one special exception has been filed with the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA) by Evolution Sports NJ, LLC, for the premises located at 212-216 Gates Road, identified as Block 108.01, Lots 2.01, 2.02, and 2.03 in the Borough of Little Ferry, New Jersey. The subject premises is located within the Hackensack Meadowlands District's Light Industrial B zone. The special exception is sought in connection with the applicant's proposal for a gymnastics training facility on the subject premises.

Specifically, the applicant is requesting special exception approval pursuant to:

1. N.J.A.C. 19:4-5.81(a)3, which states that a commercial recreation, indoor use is a special exception use in the Light Industrial B zone.

Notice was given to the public and all interested parties as required by law. The public notice was published in The Record/Herald News newspapers on October 15, 2025. The public notice was also posted on northjersey.com under Legals, on the New Jersey Press Association's website, njpublicnotices.com, and on the NJSEA's website. A public hearing was held on Tuesday, October 28, 2025. All information submitted to the Division of Land Use Management relative to this application is made part of the record of this recommendation.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Existing and Proposed Use

The property in question is comprised of three individual lots and four

mailing addresses within Block 108.01: Lot 2.01 (218 Gates Road), Lot 2.02 (214 and 216 Gates Road), and Lot 2.03 (212 Gates Road). The property totals approximately 6.87 acres. Lot 2.01 is currently a vacant, paved lot utilized for truck parking. Lots 2.02 and 2.03 are currently improved with a multi-tenanted warehouse and self-storage facility having a footprint of 56,932 square feet per survey. The site is bounded by the Hackensack River to the east, DePeyster Creek to the south, and industrial development to the west and north along Gates Road. The property contains four access driveways along Gates Road serving the paved truck parking lot on Lot 2.01 and the multiple tenant spaces.

The surrounding area is developed primarily with industrial uses, with properties along Gates Road in the vicinity of the project site principally owned by the subject property owner or affiliated entities.

The applicant proposes to convert existing warehouse space to indoor commercial recreation space in two phases. Specifically, the proposed indoor commercial recreation space will be occupied by a gymnastics training facility, including training areas and accessory locker rooms and mezzanine-level office space, party rooms, and viewing areas. Phase I consists of 20,586 square feet of floor area within the 216 Gates Road tenant space, and Phase II consists of 13,788 square feet of floor area within the 214 Gates Road tenant space. Phase II is proposed to be occupied by the gymnastics training facility when the current industrial tenant vacates that space upon expiration of their lease. An indoor commercial recreation use is a special exception use in the Light Industrial B zone in which the property is located.

The applicant proposes minor site improvements in association with the proposed special exception use, including striping an additional 64 parking spaces on the site in Phase I, and an additional nine parking spaces in Phase II. The parking area restriping will occur over existing paved areas, and curbing will be provided to more clearly delineate the edge of pavement on the east side of the parking area along the Hackensack River.

B. Response to the Public Notice

There were no written comments in response to the public notice.

III. PUBLIC HEARING (October 28, 2025)

A public hearing was held at the Office of the NJSEA on Tuesday, October 28, 2025. NJSEA staff in attendance were Sara J. Sundell, P.E., P.P., Senior Director of Land Use Management and Chief Engineer; Sharon A. Mascaró, P.E., Deputy Director of Land Use Management and Deputy Chief Engineer; Mia A. Petrou, P.P., AICP, CFM, Supervising Planner; and John Speer, P.E., Senior Engineer.

A. Exhibits

The following is a list of the exhibits submitted by the applicant at the public hearing and marked for identification as follows:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>
A-1	"Proposed Site Plan - 200 Feet Diagram", drawing A-100, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
A-2	"Proposed Site Plan Scale 1:20", drawing A-101, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
A-3	"Area / Use Group Breakdown", drawing A-102, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.

- A-4 "Area / Use Group Breakdown", drawing A-103, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-5 "Proposed Site Plan - Lots 2.01, 2.02 & 2.03", drawing A-104, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-6 "Proposed Site Plan - Phase II Scale 1:20", drawing A-105, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-7 "Area / Use Group Breakdown - Phase II", drawing A-106, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-8 "Lighting Plan / Photometric Calcs", drawing A-107, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-9 "Photometric Calcs - Specs", drawing A-108, prepared by CPA Architecture, dated May 8, 2025, latest revision date October 22, 2025.
- A-10 "Planning Report prepared for Evolution Sports NJ LLC" prepared by John McDonough Associates, LLC, dated October 28, 2025.

- A-11 “Aerial Satellite Imagery of Subject Site and Surroundings (taken by John McDonough Associates on October 22, 2025)” – looking southeast.
- A-12 “Aerial Satellite Imagery of Subject Site and Surroundings (taken by John McDonough Associates on October 22, 2025)” – looking northeast.
- A-13 “Aerial Satellite Imagery of Subject Site and Surroundings (taken by John McDonough Associates on October 22, 2025)” – looking northwest.

B. Testimony

Thomas J. O’Connor, Esq., of the firm Waters, McPherson, McNeill, PC represented Evolution Sports NJ, LLC at the hearing. The following witnesses testified in support of the application:

1. Christiano Pereira, R.A., CPA Architecture;
2. Craig W. Peregoy, P.E., Dynamic Traffic, LLC;
3. John McDonough, LA, P.P., AICP, John McDonough Associates, LLC;
4. Elizabeth Garcia, Evolution Sports NJ, LLC;
5. Elizabeth Vazquez, Evolution Sports NJ, LLC; and
6. Daniel Gates, Gates Realty.

Staff findings and recommendations are based on the entire record. A transcript of the public hearing was prepared and transcribed by Susan Bischoff, CCR, RPR.

C. Public Comment

No members of the public were present at the public hearing.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

A. Standards for the Granting of a Special Exception from the Provisions of N.J.A.C. 19:4-5.81(a)3, in which a commercial recreation, indoor use is listed as a special exception use in the Light Industrial B zone.

The District Zoning Regulations at N.J.A.C. 19:4-4.13(e) states in part that, *a special exception use shall not be granted unless specific written findings of fact are made based upon the evidence presented that supports the following conclusions:*

- 1. The proposed special exception use at the specified location will contribute to and promote the welfare or convenience of the public;*

The approval of the special exception use request at the subject location will convert existing warehouse space to an indoor commercial recreation facility to be utilized by a gymnastics training facility. The accommodation of the proposed use on the site will result in improvements to parking and circulation on the property. Existing paved areas will be restriped to provide additional parking spaces to accommodate the gymnastics training facility, curbing will be installed to more clearly delineate the edge of pavement along the Hackensack River, and fencing will be installed to better separate passenger vehicle parking areas from the truck parking areas on Lot 2.04.

Furthermore, indoor recreational facilities provide a public health benefit by which participants may engage in sports and recreational activities in a climate-controlled environment, allowing for year-round exercise and training, as well as for providing a supervised environment for social interaction for young people.

Therefore, the granting of the requested special exception to permit an indoor commercial recreation use at the subject premises will contribute to and promote the welfare and convenience of the public.

2. *The proposed special exception use will not cause substantial injury to the value of other property in the neighborhood;*

The proposed special exception use will occur entirely indoors and will not prevent surrounding industrial development from operating as intended, nor prevent future development in the area. The property is located at the terminus of Gates Road, and properties opposite the site along Gates Road are owned by the same property owner or affiliated entities. The peak hours of operation of the proposed gymnastics training facility will occur on weekday evenings and on weekends, when surrounding industrial development is generally not in operation. Parking will be provided on the site to support the parking demand anticipated to be generated by the proposed use, and no overflow parking is anticipated to occur on adjacent streets or properties. Therefore, the proposed special exception use will not cause substantial injury to the value of other property in the neighborhood.

3. *The special exception use will not dominate the immediate neighborhood in a manner that could prevent development and use of neighboring properties in accordance with the applicable regulations, in consideration of the following:*

- i. *The location and size of the special exception use;*

The location and size of the proposed indoor commercial recreation use will not dominate the immediate area or neighborhood as to prevent development in accordance with District zoning regulations. All parking requirements will be met

for the proposed special exception use on the site. The location of the project site is within a predominantly industrial area, with no residences nearby. The proposed gymnastics training facility will be located within an existing building, and its location and size are appropriate for the site, neighborhood, and zone in which it is located. The proposed party rooms will be utilized as accessory to, and not in addition to, the gym space; party functions and training functions will not occur concurrently. During or between training sessions, party rooms may be utilized by patrons of the facility as accessory supervised homework rooms for children.

ii. *The nature and intensity of the operation of the special exception use;*

The nature and intensity of the proposed indoor commercial recreation use will not overwhelm the site or the neighborhood. The total anticipated occupancy of the proposed gymnastics training facility is approximately 50 children in Phase I and 60 children in Phase II, with one coach for every eight gymnasts (T-41-42). The peak period of the facility's usage will occur during weekday evenings and on weekends, off-peak from typical industrial operations. Session start and finish times will occur at staggered intervals to allow the premises adequate time to turn over the use of the gym space and provide for a more evenly distributed availability of parking spaces. The proposed operations, combined with its off-peak usage in relation to the uses in the surrounding industrial neighborhood and the number of parking spaces available on the site, ensure that the nature and intensity of the operations will not overwhelm the site or the neighborhood.

iii. The location of the site with respect to access and circulation;

The proposed site access and circulation patterns will provide a safe and efficient means of accessing the site, with no negative off-site impacts anticipated. The property contains frontage on Gates Road, with one curb cut to serve the paved lot to the south containing truck parking and three curb cuts to service the various building tenants, which contain separate entrances across the front façade of the building. The applicant proposes parking area improvements and fencing to better separate truck traffic from passenger vehicle traffic on the site. No off-site queues are expected and no on-site queues are anticipated that would cause site-generated traffic to back up on Gates Road. The facility will not burden or create a dominating effect with respect to site access or circulation on the surrounding roadway; thusly, neighboring properties will not be impeded in their abilities to function as intended.

*iv. The location, nature, and height of structures, walls and fences on the site;
and*

The location, nature, and height of structures shall remain as existing and no exterior building additions are proposed to accommodate the special exception use. All building alterations will occur internally. The large open floor plan and higher ceiling height typically associated with a warehouse facility makes it easily adaptable for occupancy by an indoor commercial recreation use, and more specifically, for a gymnastics training facility. The proposed fencing on the site will comply with all height and location requirements and will not dominate the neighborhood.

v. The nature and extent of landscaping and screening on the site.

The proposed occupancy of an existing industrial space with an indoor commercial recreation use will result in site improvements to the property. All open space requirements will be met on the site. A proposed fence will act as a barrier to adjacent truck parking areas on the site, which will promote the safety of the general public, including children, who will be patronizing the indoor commercial recreation use on the site. However, to ensure that truck parking occurring on Lot 2.01 does not cause a detriment to the site from both safety and aesthetics perspectives, it is a recommended condition of this report that the proposed chain link fence dividing the passenger vehicle spaces from the truck parking spaces shall contain slats to enhance screening. Landscaping, such as interspersed planters, shall also be provided along this fence line. It is further recommended that, subject to the review and approval of the NJSEA Chief Engineer, a safety barrier shall be installed between the fence and the truck parking in the southerly portion of the site to maintain the integrity of the fence and to protect the public.

4. *Adequate utilities, drainage and other necessary facilities have been or will be provided;*

The requested special exception use on the subject premises will not detrimentally impact the existing utility infrastructure. All utilities, including water, electric, gas, and sewer, are available to the project site. The proposed indoor commercial recreation use will be a less intense use of the land than an industrial tenant in that space, and the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the ability of the utility infrastructure to perform in a safe and efficient manner.

5. *Adequate access roads and drive aisles have been or will be provided and shall be designed to prevent traffic hazards and minimize traffic congestion;*

The proposed special exception use will not result in significant impacts to the neighborhood's existing roadway network. Traffic impacts of the proposal were evaluated by the applicant's traffic engineer, who demonstrated that the proposed indoor commercial recreation use can be accommodated on the site without significant detrimental impacts to area traffic (T-20 through 24, T-44). No off-site queues are anticipated to occur as a result of the traffic generated by the proposed use. There will be a reduction in truck traffic associated with the prior industrial tenant, and sufficient parking to support the proposed gymnastics training facility will be provided on the site.

6. *The special exception use will not have a substantial adverse environmental impact.*

The granting of the requested special exception to permit an indoor commercial recreation use at the subject premises will not result in any

substantial environmental impacts. The applicant does not propose any building additions or expansion of impervious areas to accommodate the proposed use. The proposal will comply with District environmental performance standards for noise, vibration, glare, airborne emissions and hazardous and radioactive materials.

V. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

A. Standards for the Granting of a Special Exception from the Provisions of N.J.A.C. 19:4-5.81(a)3, in which a commercial recreation, indoor use is listed as a special exception use in the Light Industrial B zone.

Based on the record in this matter, the application for one special exception to permit a commercial recreation, indoor use on the subject property is hereby recommended for APPROVAL WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1. The individual lots comprising the subject property, identified as Lots 2.01, 2.02, and 2.03 within Block 108.01 in the Borough of Little Ferry, shall be joined in a zoning lot of record in accordance with N.J.A.C. 19:4-3.22.
2. The proposed chain link fence dividing the proposed passenger vehicle spaces associated with the proposed gymnastics training facility from the truck parking spaces in the southerly portion of the site shall contain slats to enhance screening. Landscaping, such as interspersed planters, shall also be provided along this fence line.
3. Subject to the review and approval of the NJSEA Chief Engineer, a safety barrier shall be installed between the fence and the truck parking in the southerly portion of the site to maintain the integrity of the fence and to protect the public.

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Recommendation on
Special Exception Request

12/9/2025

Date



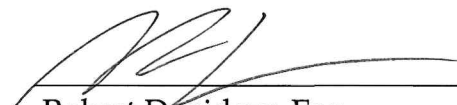
Sara J. Sundell, P.E., P.P.
Senior Director of Land Use Management

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Recommendation on
Special Exception Request

12/9/25

Date



Robert Davidow, Esq.
Senior Vice President
Office of Legal & Regulatory Affairs