

#### UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT

Eastern District of California

Honorable Christopher M. Klein Bankruptcy Judge Sacramento, California

March 18, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.

Unless otherwise ordered, all matters before the Honorable Christopher M. Klein shall be simultaneously: (1) In Person, at Sacramento Courtroom #35, (2) via ZoomGov Video, (3) via ZoomGov Telephone, and (4) via CourtCall.

You may choose any of these options unless otherwise ordered or stated below.

All parties who wish to appear at a hearing remotely must sign up by 4:00 p.m. one business day prior to the hearing. Information regarding how to sign up can be found on the Remote Appearances page of our website at <a href="https://www.caeb.uscourts.gov/Calendar/RemoteAppearances">https://www.caeb.uscourts.gov/Calendar/RemoteAppearances</a>. Each party who has signed up will receive a Zoom link or phone number, meeting I.D., and password via e-mail.

If the deadline to sign up has passed, parties who wish to appear remotely must contact the Courtroom Deputy for the Department holding the hearing.

Please also note the following:

- Parties in interest may connect to the video or audio feed free of charge and should select which method they will use to appear when signing up.
- Members of the public and the press appearing by ZoomGov may only listen in to the hearing using the zoom telephone number. Video appearances are not permitted.
- Members of the public and the press may not listen in to trials or evidentiary hearings, though they may appear in person in most instances.

To appear remotely for law and motion or status conference proceedings, you must comply with the following guidelines and procedures:

- 1. Review the <u>Pre-Hearing Dispositions</u> prior to appearing at the hearing.
- 2. Parties appearing via CourtCall are encouraged to review the CourtCall Appearance Information.

If you are appearing by ZoomGov phone or video, please join at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the calendar and wait with your microphone muted until the matter is called.

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#### UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT

Eastern District of California

Honorable Christopher M. Klein Bankruptcy Judge Sacramento, California

## March 18, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.

24-25806-C-13 CHARLES ROGERS AND EMY
LGT-1 CASTANEDA
Julius Cherry

CONTINUED OBJECTION TO
CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY TRUSTEE
LILIAN G. TSANG
2-11-25 [13]

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 21 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 15.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

The Chapter 13 Trustee, Lilian Tsang ("Trustee"), opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

- 1. Debtors' schedules list business expenses higher than the profit and loss statements submitted to Trustee; and
- 2. Debtors' plan relies on speculative income that may not allow debtors to make all plan payments.

#### DISCUSSION

The debtors have provided profit and loss statements that are inconsistent with the amounts listed in their schedules.

Regardless whether the plan relies on speculative income as Trustee argues, debtors have not carried their burden to show the plan is adequately funded. That is reason to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C. \$ 1325(a)(6).

That is reason to deny confirmation. Hence, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by the Chapter 13 Trustee, Lilian Tsang, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Motion has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(1) procedure which requires 28 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that only 26 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 11.

## The Motion to Extend the Automatic Stay is granted.

Debtor, Pamela Richardson ("Debtor") seeks to have the provisions of the automatic stay provided by 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  362(a) extended beyond thirty days in this case. This is Debtor's second bankruptcy petition pending in the past year. Debtor's prior bankruptcy case was dismissed on October 24, 2024, after Debtor was delinquent in plan payments under the confirmed plan. Order, Bankr. E.D. Cal. No. 21-23015, Dkt. 25. Therefore, pursuant to 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  362(c)(3)(A), the provisions of the automatic stay end as to Debtor thirty days after filing of the petition.

Here, Debtor states that the instant case was filed in good faith and explains that the previous case was dismissed because debtor's accounts and phone were comprised by hackers and she was unable to communicate with her attorney.

Upon motion of a party in interest and after notice and hearing, the court may order the provisions extended beyond thirty days if the filing of the subsequent petition was filed in good faith. 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(B). As this court has noted in other cases, Congress expressly provides in 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(A) that the automatic stay terminates as to Debtor, and nothing more. In 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(4), Congress expressly provides that the automatic stay never goes into effect in the bankruptcy case when the conditions of that section are met. Congress clearly knows the difference between a debtor, the bankruptcy estate (for which there are separate express provisions under 11 U.S.C. § 362(a) to protect property of the bankruptcy estate) and the bankruptcy case. While terminated as to Debtor, the plain language of 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3) is limited to the automatic stay as to only Debtor. The subsequently filed case is presumed to be filed in bad faith if one or more of Debtor's cases was pending within the year preceding filing of the instant case. Id. § 362(c)(3)(C)(i)(I). The presumption of bad faith may be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence. Id. § 362(c)(3)(C).

In determining if good faith exists, the court considers the totality of the circumstances. In re Elliot-Cook, 357 B.R. 811, 814 (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2006); see also Laura B. Bartell, Staying the Serial Filer - Interpreting the New Exploding Stay Provisions of § 362(c)(3) of the Bankruptcy Code, 82 Am. Bankr. L.J. 201, 209-10 (2008). An important indicator of good faith is a realistic prospect of success in the second case, contrary to the failure of the first case. See, e.g., In re Jackola,

No. 11-01278, 2011 Bankr. LEXIS 2443, at \*6 (Bankr. D. Haw. June 22, 2011) (citing In re Elliott-Cook, 357 B.R. 811, 815-16 (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2006)). Courts consider many factors—including those used to determine good faith under \$\$ 1307(c) and 1325(a)—but the two basic issues to determine good faith under \$ 362(c)(3) are:

- A. Why was the previous plan filed?
- B. What has changed so that the present plan is likely to succeed?

In re Elliot-Cook, 357 B.R. at 814-15.

Debtor has sufficiently rebutted the presumption of bad faith under the facts of this case and the prior case for the court to extend the automatic stay.

The Motion is granted, and the automatic stay is extended for all purposes and parties, unless terminated by operation of law or further order of this court.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Motion to Extend the Automatic Stay filed by Pamela Christensen having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED that the Motion is granted, and the automatic stay is extended pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(B) for all purposes and parties, unless terminated by operation of law or further order of this court.

3. <u>25-20111</u>-C-13 AARON/JENNIFER BALLESTEROS

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY LILIAN G. TSANG 2-24-25 [15]

WITHDRAWN BY M.P.

Final Ruling: No appearance at the March 18, 2025 hearing is required.

The trustee having filed a Notice of Dismissal, pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(a)(1)(A)(i) and Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure 9014 and 7041, the Objection to Confirmation was dismissed without prejudice, the matter is removed from the calendar, and the Chapter 13 Plan filed on January 13, 2025, is confirmed.

The Chapter 13 Trustee shall prepare an appropriate order confirming the Chapter 13 plan and submit the proposed order to the court.

4. <u>25-20024</u>-C-13 RHOEL COLOMA AND MAUREEN FLORES-COLOMA Candace Brooks

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY AMERICAN HONDA FINANCE CORPORATION 2-7-25 [14]

#### Thru #6

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 39 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 17.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

Creditor, American Honda Finance Corporation ("Creditor") opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

1. The plan fails to pay creditor's claim with an interest rate that ensures creditor receives the present value of its secured claim.

#### DISCUSSION

Creditor opposes confirmation on the basis that the plan proposes paying its claim at 2 percent interest. Creditor argues that this interest rate is outside the limits authorized by the Supreme Court in Till v. SCS Credit Corp., 541 U.S. 465 (2004). In Till, a plurality of the Court supported the "formula approach" for fixing post-petition interest rates. Id. Courts in this district have interpreted Till to require the use of the formula approach. See In re Cachu, 321 B.R. 716 (Bankr. E.D. Cal. 2005); see also Bank of Montreal v. Official Comm. of Unsecured Creditors (In re American Homepatient, Inc.), 420 F.3d 559, 566 (6th Cir. 2005) (Till treated as a decision of the Court). Even before Till, the Ninth Circuit had a preference for the formula approach. See Cachu, 321 B.R. at 719 (citing In re Fowler, 903 F.2d 694 (9th Cir. 1990)).

The court agrees with the court in *Cachu* that the correct valuation of the interest rate is the prime rate in effect at the commencement of this case plus a risk adjustment. Because the creditor has only identified risk factors common to every bankruptcy case, the court fixes the interest rate as the prime rate in effect at the commencement of the case, 7.50%, plus a 1.25% risk adjustment, for a 8.75% interest rate.

That is reason to deny confirmation. Therefore, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by American Honda Finance Corporation, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON 2-28-25 [24]

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 19 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 28.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

Creditor, The Bank of New York Mellon ("Creditor") opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

- The plan fails to cure the default on Creditor's claim; and
- 2. The plan is not feasible.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The plan at Section 3.02 provides that Creditor's Proof of Claim, and not the plan, determines the amount and classification of a claim.

Notwithstanding whether the plan provides for the prepetition arrearage as Creditor argues, the debtor has not carried his burden to show the plan is adequately funded. That is reason to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  1325(a)(6).

That is reason to deny confirmation. Therefore, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by The Bank of New York Mellon, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

6. <u>25-20024</u>-C-13 RHOEL COLOMA AND MAUREEN FLORES-COLOMA Candace Brooks

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY REAL TIME RESOLUTIONS, INC. 2-26-25 [18]

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 20 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 22.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

Creditor, Real Time Resolutions, Inc. ("Creditor") opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

- 1. The plan does not provide for prepetition arrears on Creditor's claim;
- 2. The plan is not feasible; and
- 3. Creditor is not adequately protected.

#### DISCUSSION

The plan at Section 3.02 provides that Creditor's Proof of Claim, and not the plan, determines the amount and classification of a claim.

Notwithstanding whether the plan provides for the prepetition arrearage as Creditor argues, the debtor has not carried his burden to show the plan is adequately funded. That is reason to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  1325(a)(6).

That is reason to deny confirmation. Therefore, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by Real Time Resolutions, Inc., having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

MOTION TO CONFIRM PLAN 1-24-25 [21]

Final Ruling: No appearance at the March 18, 2025 hearing is required.

The trustee having filed a Notice of Dismissal, pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(a)(1)(A)(i) and Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure 9014 and 7041, the Objection to Confirmation was dismissed without prejudice, the matter is removed from the calendar, and the Chapter 13 Plan filed on January 13, 2025, is confirmed.

The Chapter 13 Trustee shall prepare an appropriate order confirming the Chapter 13 plan and submit the proposed order to the court.

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 19 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 24.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

The Chapter 13 Trustee, Lilian Tsang ("Trustee"), opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

1. The plan misclassifies the claim of SafeAmerica Federal Credit Union as a class 4 claim instead of a Class 2 Claim.

#### DISCUSSION

The plan at Section 3.08 states that Class 2 includes all secured claims that have matured or will mature before the plan is completed. Additionally, the plan at Section 3.02 provides that Creditor's Proof of Claim, and not the plan, determines the amount and classification of a claim.

Notwithstanding whether the claim is properly a Class 2 claim, the debtor has not carried his burden to show the plan is adequately funded. That is reason to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C. \$ 1325(a)(6).

That is reason to deny confirmation. Therefore, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by Lilian Tsang, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

9. <u>25-20035</u>-C-13 PETER/KALEEN ELLIS <u>LGT</u>-1 Steven Alpert

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY LILIAN G. TSANG 2-25-25 [15]

Final Ruling: No appearance at the March 18, 2025 hearing is required.

The trustee having filed a Notice of Dismissal, pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(a)(1)(A)(i) and Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure 9014 and 7041, the Objection to Confirmation was dismissed without prejudice, the matter is removed from the calendar, and the Chapter 13 Plan filed on January 6, 2025, is confirmed.

The Chapter 13 Trustee shall prepare an appropriate order confirming the Chapter 13 plan and submit the proposed order to the court.

Final Ruling: No appearance at the March 18, 2025 hearing is required.

The Motion has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(1) procedure which requires 35 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 43 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 42.

No opposition has been filed. Therefore, the court enters the defaults of the non-responding parties in interest, finds there are no disputed material factual issues, and determines the matter will be resolved without oral argument. *Cf. Ghazali v. Moran*, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995); *Law Offices of David A. Boone v. Derham-Burk (In re Eliapo)*, 468 F.3d 592, 602 (9th Cir. 2006).

## The Motion to Modify is granted.

10.

The debtors filed this Motion seeking to modify the terms of the confirmed plan pursuant to 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  1329.

No opposition to the Motion has been filed.

Upon review of the record, the court finds the plan complies with 11 U.S.C.  $\S\S$  1322, 1325(a), and 1329. The Motion is granted, and the plan is confirmed.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Motion to Confirm filed by the debtors, Eric and Danielle Elledge, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED that the Motion is granted, the Modified Chapter 13 Plan (Dkt. 39) meets the requirements of 11 U.S.C. §§ 1322, 1325(a), and 1329, and the plan is confirmed. The Chapter 13 Trustee shall prepare an appropriate order confirming the Chapter 13 plan and submit the proposed order to the court.

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 21 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 17.

## The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is sustained.

The Chapter 13 Trustee, Lilian Tsang ("Trustee"), opposes confirmation of the Chapter 13 plan on the basis that:

- 1. Debtors failed to appear at the Meeting of Creditors;
- 2. Debtors have failed to provided pay stubs; and
- 3. Debtor has failed to file the standardized Disclosure of Compensation of Attorney for Debtor form.

#### DISCUSSION

Debtor did not appear at the Meeting of Creditors held pursuant to 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  341. Appearance is mandatory. See 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  343. Attempting to confirm a plan while failing to appear and be questioned by the Chapter 13 Trustee and any creditors who appear represents a failure to cooperate. See 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  521(a)(3). That is cause to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  1325(a)(1).

The debtor has not provided the trustee with all required pay stubs. 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  521(a)(1)(B)(iv); FED. R. BANKR. P. 4002(b)(2)(A). That is cause to deny confirmation. 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  1325(a)(1).

That is reason to deny confirmation. Therefore, the Objection is sustained.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by the Chapter 13 Trustee, Lilian Tsang, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

OBJECTION TO CONFIRMATION OF PLAN BY LILIAN G. TSANG 2-27-25 [14]

Final Ruling: No appearance at the March 18, 2025 hearing is required.

The Objection has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 19 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 16.

Upon review of the Motion and supporting pleadings, and the files in this case, the court has determined that oral argument will not be of assistance in ruling on the Motion.

# The Objection to Confirmation of Plan is overruled as moot.

The Chapter 13 trustee filed this Objection To Confirmation on February 27, 2025. Thereafter, the debtor filed an amended plan and corresponding Motion To Confirm, making this Objection moot. Dkt. 19, 20.

Therefore, the Objection is overruled.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Objection to the Chapter 13 Plan filed by the Chapter 13 trustee, Russell Greer, having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

 $\ensuremath{\mathbf{IT}}$   $\ensuremath{\mathbf{IS}}$   $\ensuremath{\mathbf{ORDERED}}$  that the Objection is overruled as moot.

## 13. <u>25-20690</u>-C-13 SCOTT BALLARDO PGM-1 Peter Macalsuo

#### Tentative Ruling:

The Motion has been set on Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) notice which requires 14 days' notice. The Proof of Service shows that 15 days' notice was provided. Dkt. 19.

## The Motion to Extend the Automatic Stay is granted.

Debtor, Scott Ballardo ("Debtor") seeks to have the provisions of the automatic stay provided by 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  362(a) extended beyond thirty days in this case. This is Debtor's second bankruptcy petition pending in the past year. Debtor's prior bankruptcy case was dismissed on November 4, 2025, after Debtor failed to timely file all documents. Order, Bankr. E.D. Cal. No. 24-24766, Dkt. 11. Therefore, pursuant to 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  362(c)(3)(A), the provisions of the automatic stay end as to Debtor thirty days after filing of the petition.

Here, Debtor states that the instant case was filed in good faith and explains that the previous case was dismissed because the prior case was filed pro se and the debtor has retained counsel in this case.

Upon motion of a party in interest and after notice and hearing, the court may order the provisions extended beyond thirty days if the filing of the subsequent petition was filed in good faith. 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(B). As this court has noted in other cases, Congress expressly provides in 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(A) that the automatic stay terminates as to Debtor, and nothing more. In 11 U.S.C.  $\S$  362(c)(4), Congress expressly provides that the automatic stay never goes into effect in the bankruptcy case when the conditions of that section are met. Congress clearly knows the difference between a debtor, the bankruptcy estate (for which there are separate express provisions under 11 U.S.C. § 362(a) to protect property of the bankruptcy estate) and the bankruptcy case. While terminated as to Debtor, the plain language of 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3) is limited to the automatic stay as to only Debtor. The subsequently filed case is presumed to be filed in bad faith if one or more of Debtor's cases was pending within the year preceding filing of the instant case. Id. § 362(c)(3)(C)(i)(I). The presumption of bad faith may be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence. *Id.* § 362(c)(3)(C).

In determining if good faith exists, the court considers the totality of the circumstances. In re Elliot-Cook, 357 B.R. 811, 814 (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2006); see also Laura B. Bartell, Staying the Serial Filer - Interpreting the New Exploding Stay Provisions of § 362(c)(3) of the Bankruptcy Code, 82 Am. Bankr. L.J. 201, 209-10 (2008). An important indicator of good faith is a realistic prospect of success in the second case, contrary to the failure of the first case. See, e.g., In re Jackola, No. 11-01278, 2011 Bankr. LEXIS 2443, at \*6 (Bankr. D. Haw. June 22, 2011) (citing In re Elliott-Cook, 357 B.R. 811, 815-16 (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2006)).

Courts consider many factors—including those used to determine good faith under \$\$ 1307(c) and 1325(a)—but the two basic issues to determine good faith under \$ 362(c)(3) are:

- A. Why was the previous plan filed?
- B. What has changed so that the present plan is likely to succeed?

In re Elliot-Cook, 357 B.R. at 814-15.

Debtor has sufficiently rebutted the presumption of bad faith under the facts of this case and the prior case for the court to extend the automatic stay.

The Motion is denied.

The court shall issue a minute order substantially in the following form holding that:

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are stated in the Civil Minutes for the hearing.

The Motion to Extend the Automatic Stay filed by Scott Ballardo having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED that the Motion is granted, and the automatic stay is extended pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(3)(B) for all purposes and parties, unless terminated by operation of law or further order of this court.