

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

Honorable Fredrick E. Clement
Sacramento Federal Courthouse
501 I Street, 7th Floor
Courtroom 28, Department A
Sacramento, California

DAY: MONDAY
DATE: MARCH 22, 2021
CALENDAR: 9:00 A.M. CHAPTER 7 CASES

RULINGS

Each matter on this calendar will have one of three possible designations: No Ruling, Tentative Ruling, or Final Ruling.

"No Ruling" means the likely disposition of the matter will not be disclosed in advance of the hearing. The matter will be called; parties wishing to be heard should rise and be heard.

"Tentative Ruling" means the likely disposition, and the reasons therefor, are set forth herein. The matter will be called. Aggrieved parties or parties for whom written opposition was not required should rise and be heard. Parties favored by the tentative ruling need not appear. Non-appearing parties are advised that the court may adopt a ruling other than that set forth herein without further hearing or notice.

"Final Ruling" means that the matter will be resolved in the manner, and for the reasons, indicated below. The matter will not be called; parties and/or counsel need not appear and will not be heard on the matter.

CHANGES TO PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED RULINGS

On occasion, the court will change its intended ruling on some of the matters to be called and will republish its rulings. The parties and counsel are advised to recheck the posted rulings after 3:00 p.m. on the next business day prior to the hearing. Any such changed ruling will be preceded by the following bold face text: "**[Since posting its original rulings, the court has changed its intended ruling on this matter]**".

ERRORS IN RULINGS

Clerical errors of an insignificant nature, e.g. nomenclature ("2017 Honda Accord," rather than "2016 Honda Accord"), amounts, ("\$880," not "\$808"), may be corrected in (1) tentative rulings by appearance at the hearing; or (2) final rulings by appropriate ex parte application. Fed. R. Civ. P. 60(a) *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9024. All other errors, including those occasioned by mistake, inadvertence, surprise or excusable neglect, must be corrected by noticed motion. Fed. R. Bankr. P. 60(b), *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9023.

1. [20-23122](#)-A-7 **IN RE: THE MASTERS OF BEVERAGES, LLC**
[HSM-4](#)

MOTION FOR COMPENSATION BY THE LAW OFFICE OF HEFNER, STARK &
MAROIS, LLP FOR HOWARD S. NEVINS, TRUSTEE'S ATTORNEY(S)
2-19-2021 [[31](#)]

THOMAS WILLOUGHBY/ATTY. FOR DBT.

Final Ruling

Application: Allowance of Final Compensation and Expense
Reimbursement

Notice: LBR 9014-1(f)(1); written opposition required

Disposition: Approved

Order: Civil minute order

Unopposed motions are subject to the rules of default. Fed. R. Civ. P. 55, *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 7055, 9014(c). Written opposition to this application was required not less than 14 days before the hearing on the application. LBR 9014-1(f)(1)(B). None has been filed. The default of the responding party is entered. The court considers the record, accepting well-pleaded facts as true. *TeleVideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal*, 826 F.2d 915, 917-18 (9th Cir. 1987).

COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES

In this Chapter 7 case, Hefner, Stark & Marois, LLP, attorney for the trustee, has applied for an allowance of final compensation and reimbursement of expenses. The applicant requests that the court allow compensation in the amount of \$17,817.00 and reimbursement of expenses in the amount of \$97.90.

Section 330(a) of the Bankruptcy Code authorizes "reasonable compensation for actual, necessary services" rendered by a trustee, examiner or professional person employed under § 327 or § 1103 and "reimbursement for actual, necessary expenses." 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(1). Reasonable compensation is determined by considering all relevant factors. *See id.* § 330(a)(3).

The court finds that the compensation and expenses sought are reasonable, and the court will approve the application on a final basis.

CIVIL MINUTE ORDER

The court shall issue a civil minute order that conforms substantially to the following form:

Findings of fact and conclusions of law are stated in the civil minutes for the hearing.

Hefner, Stark & Marois, LLP's application for allowance of final compensation and reimbursement of expenses has been presented to the court. Having entered the default of respondent for failure to

appear, timely oppose, or otherwise defend in the matter, and having considered the well-pleaded facts of the application,

IT IS ORDERED that the application is approved on a final basis. The court allows final compensation in the amount of \$17,817.00 and reimbursement of expenses in the amount of \$97.90.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the trustee is authorized without further order of this court to pay from the estate the aggregate amount allowed by this order in accordance with the Bankruptcy Code and the distribution priorities of § 726.

2. [19-21225](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ALBERTO BARAJAS RAMIREZ AND CRISTINA BARAJAS**
[MMJ-1](#)

MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY
2-22-2021 [\[31\]](#)

NIKKI FARRIS/ATTY. FOR DBT.
MARJORIE JOHNSON/ATTY. FOR MV.
DEBTORS DISCHARGED: 06/24/2019;
CAPITAL ONE AUTO FINANCE VS.;
TRUSTEE NON-OPPOSITION

Final Ruling

Motion: Stay Relief

Notice: LBR 9014-1(f)(1); trustee's non-opposition filed

Disposition: Granted in part, denied in part as moot

Order: Civil minute order

Subject: 2016 Ford Expedition EL XLT Sport Utility 4D

Value of Collateral: \$21,653.00

Aggregate of Liens: \$30,126.41

Discharge: June 24, 2019

These minutes constitute the court's findings of fact and conclusions of law required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 52(a), *incorporated* by Fed. R. Bankr. P. 7052, 9014(c). The findings of fact are as set forth above; the conclusions of law are as set forth below.

DEFAULT OF RESPONDENT

Unopposed motions are subject to the rules of default. Fed. R. Civ. P. 55, *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 7055, 9014(c). The default of the responding party is entered. The court considers the record, accepting well-pleaded facts as true. *TeleVideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal*, 826 F.2d 915, 917-18 (9th Cir. 1987).

STAY RELIEF

"[A]fter notice and a hearing," the court may terminate, annul, modify or condition the stay: (1) "for cause, including the lack of

adequate protection"; or (2) "with respect to a stay of an act against property [of the estate]" if the debtor lacks "equity" in that property and if that "property is not necessary for an effective reorganization." 11 U.S.C. § 362(d); see also Fed. R. Bankr. P. 4001(a)(1). The party seeking stay relief bears the burden of proof as to "the debtor's equity in the property" and on the validity and perfection of its security interest, as well as the amount of its debt. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(1); *In re Dahlquist*, 34 B.R. 476, 481 (Bankr. S.D. 1983). The party opposing stay relief, e.g., the debtor or Chapter 7 trustee, bears the burden of proof on all other issues. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(2).

As to the Debtor

The motion will be denied in part as moot to the extent it seeks stay relief as to the debtor. The stay that protects the debtor terminates at the entry of discharge. 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(2). In this case, discharge has been entered. As a result, the motion will be denied as moot as to the debtor.

As to the Estate

"[A]fter notice and a hearing," the court may terminate, annual, modify or condition the stay: (1) "for cause, including the lack of adequate protection"; or (2) "with respect to a stay of an act against property [of the estate]" if the debtor lacks "equity" in that property and if that "property is not necessary for an effective reorganization." 11 U.S.C. § 362(d); see also Fed. R. Bankr. P. 4001(a)(1). The party seeking stay relief bears the burden of proof as to "the debtor's equity in the property" and on the validity and perfection of its security interest, as well as the amount of its debt. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(1); *In re Dahlquist*, 34 B.R. 476, 481 (Bankr. S.D. 1983). The party opposing stay relief, e.g., the debtor or Chapter 7 trustee, bears the burden of proof on all other issues. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(2).

Section 362(d)(2) authorizes stay relief if the debtor lacks equity in the property and the property is not necessary to an effective reorganization. 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(2). Chapter 7 is a mechanism for liquidation, not reorganization, and, therefore, property of the estate is never necessary for reorganization. *In re Casgul of Nevada, Inc.*, 22 B.R. 65, 66 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1982). In this case, the aggregate amount due all liens exceeds the value of the collateral and the debtor has no equity in the property. The motion will be granted, and the 14-day stay of Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(a)(3) will be waived. No other relief will be awarded.

CIVIL MINUTE ORDER

The court shall issue a civil minute order that conforms substantially to the following form:

Findings of fact and conclusions of law are stated in the civil minutes for the hearing.

Capital One Auto Finance's motion for relief from the automatic stay has been presented to the court. Having entered the default of respondent for failure to appear, timely oppose, or otherwise defend in the matter, and having considered the well-pleaded facts of the motion,

IT IS ORDERED that the motion is granted in part and denied as moot in part. The automatic stay is vacated with respect to the interest of the trustee in the property described in the motion, commonly known as 2016 Ford Expedition EL XLT Sport Utility 4D. Relief from the automatic stay as to the interest of the debtor in such property is denied as moot given the entry of the discharge in this case. 11 U.S.C. § 362(c)(2)(C).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the 14-day stay of the order under Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(a)(3) is waived. Any party with standing may pursue its rights against the property pursuant to applicable non-bankruptcy law.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that no other relief is awarded. To the extent that the motion includes any request for attorney's fees or other costs for bringing this motion, the request is denied.

3. [20-23543](#)-A-7 **IN RE: 1420 HOWE BUSINESS CENTER**
REHABILITATION LP
[JLS-1](#)

CONTINUED MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY
2-12-2021 [[95](#)]

JAMES BRUNELLO/ATTY. FOR DBT.
JOSHUA SCHEER/ATTY. FOR MV.
MAXVI 1 LLC VS.; RESPONSIVE PLEADING

No Ruling

4. [19-26749](#)-A-7 **IN RE: RONALD/BARBARA HUDSON**
[MPD-2](#)

MOTION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES
3-1-2021 [\[20\]](#)

NIKKI FARRIS/ATTY. FOR DBT.
MICHAEL DACQUISTO/ATTY. FOR MV.
DEBTORS DISCHARGED: 02/24/2020

Tentative Ruling

Motion: Allow Administrative Expense [Estate Taxes]

Notice: LBR 9014-1(f)(2); no written opposition required

Disposition: Granted

Order: Civil minute order

Unopposed motions are subject to the rules of default. Fed. R. Civ. P. 55, *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 7055, 9014(c). The default of the responding party is entered. The court considers the record, accepting well-pleaded facts as true. *TeleVideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal*, 826 F.2d 915, 917-18 (9th Cir. 1987).

ALLOWANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE

"Subject to limited exceptions, a trustee must pay the taxes of the estate on or before the date they come due, 28 U.S.C. § 960(b), even if no request for administrative expenses is filed by the tax authorities, 11 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(D), and the trustee must insure that 'notice and a hearing' have been provided before doing so, see *id.* § 503(b)(1)(B). The hearing requirement insures that interested parties . . . have an opportunity to contest the amount of tax paid before the estate's funds are diminished, perhaps irretrievably." *In re Cloobek*, 788 F.3d 1243, 1246 (9th Cir. 2015). It is error to approve a trustee's final report without first holding a hearing, see 11 U.S.C. § 102(1), to allow creditors and parties in interest an opportunity to object to the allowance or amount of tax before it is paid. *Id.* 1245 n.1, 1246.

Creditors and parties in interest have had an opportunity to contest the allowance and amount of the estate taxes in this case. No objection has been made. Accordingly, the taxes specified in the motion shall be allowed as an administrative expense under 11 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(B).

CIVIL MINUTE ORDER

The court shall issue a civil minute order that conforms substantially to the following form:

Findings of fact and conclusions of law are stated in the civil minutes for the hearing.

The chapter 7 trustee's motion for allowance of administrative expense has been presented to the court. Having entered the default of respondent for failure to appear, timely oppose, or otherwise

defend in the matter, and having considered the well-pleaded facts of the motion,

IT IS ORDERED that the motion is granted. The court allows federal taxes of \$3,607.88 and California state taxes of \$990.68 as an administrative expense under 11 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(B). The court will also allow estimated penalties and interest not to exceed \$200.00.

5. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-29](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH DE LAGE LANDEN FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.
3-1-2021 [[1571](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

6. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-30](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS
OF SANDIA, LLC
3-1-2021 [[1576](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

7. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-31](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH YUSEN LOGISTICS (AMERICAS), INC.
3-1-2021 [[1581](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

8. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-32](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH RYDER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
3-1-2021 [[1590](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

9. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-33](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH UNIFIRST CORPORATION
3-1-2021 [[1595](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

10. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[DMC-34](#)

MOTION TO COMPROMISE CONTROVERSY/APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH FREIGHT LOGISTICS, LLC
3-1-2021 [[1600](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
HOWARD NEVINS/ATTY. FOR MV.

No Ruling

11. [18-22453](#)-A-7 **IN RE: ECS REFINING, INC.**
[MDM-2](#)

MOTION FOR COMPENSATION FOR MICHAEL D. MCGRANAHAN, CHAPTER 7
TRUSTEE
3-1-2021 [[1586](#)]

CHRISTOPHER BAYLEY/ATTY. FOR DBT.
DANIEL EGAN/ATTY. FOR MV.

Tentative Ruling

Application: Allowance of Compensation and Expense Reimbursement

Notice: LBR 9014-1(f)(2); written opposition required

Disposition: Approved

Order: Civil minute order

Unopposed motions are subject to the rules of default. Fed. R. Civ. P. 55, *incorporated by* Fed. R. Bankr. P. 7055, 9014(c). Written opposition to this application was required not less than 14 days before the hearing on the application. LBR 9014-1(f)(1)(B). None has been filed. The default of the responding party is entered. The court considers the record, accepting well-pleaded facts as true. *TeleVideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal*, 826 F.2d 915, 917-18 (9th Cir. 1987).

COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES

11 U.S.C. § 326(a)

A trustee's compensation is considered in accordance with §§ 326(a) and 330(a). In 2005, "Congress removed Chapter 7 trustees from the list of professionals subject to the Section 330(a)(3) factors. . . . [and] introduced a new provision to Section 330 requiring courts to treat the reasonable compensation awarded to trustees as a 'commission, based on Section 326.'" *Matter of JFK Capital Holdings, L.L.C.*, 880 F.3d 747, 752 (5th Cir. 2018) (quoting 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(7)). "[A] trustee's request for compensation should be presumed reasonable as long as the amount requested does not exceed the statutory maximum calculated pursuant to § 326. [A]bsent extraordinary circumstances, bankruptcy courts should approve chapter 7, 12 and 13 trustee fees without any significant additional review. If the court has found that extraordinary circumstances are present, only then does it become appropriate to conduct a further inquiry to determine whether there exists a rational relationship between the compensation requested and the services rendered." *In re Ruiz*, 541 B.R. 892, 896 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2015) (second alteration in original) (citations omitted) (internal quotation marks omitted).

In short, § 330(a)(7) "treats the commission as a fixed percentage, using Section 326 not only as a maximum but as a baseline presumption for reasonableness in each case." *Matter of JFK Capital Holdings*, 880 F.3d at 755. This provision "is best understood as a directive to simply apply the formula of § 362 in every case." *Id.* at 753-54. The "reduction or denial of compensation . . . should be

a rare event" occurring only when truly exceptional circumstances are present. *Id.* at 756.

In this Chapter 7 case, the trustee has applied for an allowance of compensation and reimbursement of expenses. The court finds (1) that the compensation requested by the trustee is consistent with 11 U.S.C. § 326(a); (2) that no extraordinary circumstances are present in this case, see *In re Salgado-Nava*, 473 B.R. 911 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2012); and (3) that expenses for which reimbursement is sought are actual and necessary.

11 U.S.C. § 326(c)

"If more than one person serves as trustee in the case, the aggregate compensation of such persons for such service may not exceed the maximum compensation prescribed for a single trustee by subsection (a) or (b) of this section, as the case may be," 11 U.S.C. § 326(c).

Here the permanent and interim trustee for this case have made \$3,611,421.41 in total disbursements. The aggregate trustee compensation under § 326(a) is \$131,592.64. The court is satisfied with the motion's compliance with § 362(c) and will award the interim trustee the portion of the aggregate compensation as stated in the civil minute order.

CIVIL MINUTE ORDER

The court shall issue a civil minute order that conforms substantially to the following form:

Findings of fact and conclusions of law are stated in the civil minutes for the hearing.

The interim chapter 7 trustee's application for allowance of compensation and reimbursement of expenses has been presented to the court. Having entered the default of respondent for failure to appear, timely oppose, or otherwise defend in the matter, and having considered the well-pleaded facts of the application,

IT IS ORDERED that the application is approved on a final basis. The court allows to the trustee compensation in the amount of \$30,000.00 (total fee amount of \$71,593.37, of which \$41,593.37 has already been paid) and reimbursement of expenses (\$993.90, which has already been paid).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the trustee is authorized without further order of this court to pay from the estate the aggregate amount allowed by this order in accordance with the Bankruptcy Code and the distribution priorities of § 726.