



**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
Eastern District of California
Honorable Jennifer E. Niemann
Hearing Date: Wednesday, April 12, 2023
Department A – Courtroom #11
Fresno, California**

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRE-HEARING DISPOSITIONS

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

No Ruling: All parties will need to appear at the hearing unless otherwise ordered.

Tentative Ruling: If a matter has been designated as a tentative ruling it will be called, and all parties will need to appear at the hearing unless otherwise ordered. The court may continue the hearing on the matter, set a briefing schedule, or enter other orders appropriate for efficient and proper resolution of the matter. The original moving or objecting party shall give notice of the continued hearing date and the deadlines. The minutes of the hearing will be the court's findings and conclusions.

Final Ruling: Unless otherwise ordered, there will be no hearing on these matters. The final disposition of the matter is set forth in the ruling and it will appear in the minutes. The final ruling may or may not finally adjudicate the matter. If it is finally adjudicated, the minutes constitute the court's findings and conclusions.

Orders: Unless the court specifies in the tentative or final ruling that it will issue an order, the prevailing party shall lodge an order within 14 days of the final hearing on the matter.

THE COURT ENDEAVORS TO PUBLISH ITS RULINGS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, CALENDAR PREPARATION IS ONGOING AND THESE RULINGS MAY BE REVISED OR UPDATED AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO 4:00 P.M. THE DAY BEFORE THE SCHEDULED HEARINGS. PLEASE CHECK AT THAT TIME FOR POSSIBLE UPDATES.

1. [23-10325](#)-A-11 **IN RE: ROBERT CHAMPAGNE**
[FW-2](#)

FINAL HEARING RE: MOTION TO USE CASH COLLATERAL
2-24-2023 [\[6\]](#)

ROBERT CHAMPAGNE/MV
PETER SAUER/ATTY. FOR DBT.

TENTATIVE RULING: This matter will proceed as scheduled.

DISPOSITION: Granted.

ORDER: The minutes of the hearing will be the court's findings
and conclusions. The Moving Party shall submit a proposed
order after the hearing.

This motion was set for final hearing on April 12, 2023 pursuant to the initial motion papers and an interim order authorizing use of cash collateral ("Interim Order"). Doc. #71. Pursuant to the Interim Order, written opposition to the granting of the motion for use of cash collateral on a final basis was to be filed and served by March 29, 2023, with replies, if any, to be filed and served by April 5, 2023. No written opposition was filed. The failure of creditors, the U.S. Trustee, or any other party in interest to file written opposition on or before March 29, 2023 as required by the Interim Order may be deemed a waiver of any opposition to the granting of the motion. Cf. Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995). Therefore, the defaults of the above-mentioned parties in interest are entered.

Robert T. Champagne ("Debtor" or "DIP"), the chapter 11 debtor and debtor-in-possession, moves the court for an order authorizing DIP to use the cash collateral of the Internal Revenue Service (the "IRS") on a monthly basis subject to a budget. Doc. #6. DIP asserts the IRS holds a duly perfected security interest in nearly all of Debtor's assets based on several tax liens. Id. Based on Debtor's list of 20 largest creditors, the IRS is owed \$2,030,788.08 and its collateral, as of the petition date, was \$870,178.02. Doc. #1. Based on Debtor's schedules, the IRS is owed \$2,030,788.08 and its collateral, as of the petition date, was \$1,235,411.35. Schedule D, Doc. #57. Based on the amended proof of claim filed by the IRS on April 6, 2023, the IRS is owed \$1,902,652.10 and the amount of the claim that is secured is \$1,620,870.66. Claim #11. While there are other entities that may assert a security interest in Debtor's cash collateral, all other entities hold a junior security interest to the undersecured IRS and are, thus, unsecured.

Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 363, a debtor in possession can use property of the estate that is cash collateral by obtaining either the consent of each entity that has an interest in such cash collateral or court authorization after notice and a hearing. 11 U.S.C. § 363(c)(2). "The primary concern of the court in determining whether cash collateral may be used is whether the secured creditors are adequately protected." In re Plaza Family P'ship, 95 B.R. 166 (E.D. Cal. 1989) (citing 11 U.S.C. § 363(e)). Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 363(o), DIP carries the burden of proof on the issue of adequate protection.

The court finds DIP has met his burden of showing that the IRS is adequately protected for DIP's use of its cash collateral by the replacement liens

provided in the proposed cash collateral order. Moreover, DIP needs to use the IRS's cash collateral to continue his post-petition operations. Declaration of Robert T. Champagne, Doc. #8.

Accordingly, the court is inclined to GRANT DIP's request to use cash collateral on a final basis on the terms set forth in the motion.

2. [22-11226](#)-A-11 **IN RE: ALVARENGA TRANSPORT, LLC**
[FW-4](#)

MOTION FOR COMPENSATION BY THE LAW OFFICE OF FEAR WADDELL, P.C. FOR
PETER L. FEAR, DEBTORS ATTORNEY(S)
3-9-2023 [\[114\]](#)

PETER FEAR/ATTY. FOR DBT.

FINAL RULING: There will be no hearing on this matter.

DISPOSITION: Granted.

ORDER: The Moving Party shall submit a proposed order in conformance with the ruling below.

This motion was set for hearing on at least 28 days' notice pursuant to Local Rule of Practice ("LBR") 9014-1(f)(1). The failure of creditors, the U.S. Trustee, or any other party in interest to file written opposition at least 14 days prior to the hearing as required by LBR 9014-1(f)(1)(B) may be deemed a waiver of any opposition to the granting of the motion. Cf. Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995). Further, because the court will not materially alter the relief requested by the moving party, an actual hearing is unnecessary. See Boone v. Burk (In re Eliapo), 468 F.3d 592 (9th Cir. 2006). Therefore, the defaults of the above-mentioned parties in interest are entered and the matter will be resolved without oral argument. Upon default, factual allegations will be taken as true (except those relating to amount of damages). Televideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal, 826 F.2d 915, 917 (9th Cir. 1987). Constitutional due process requires a moving party make a *prima facie* showing that they are entitled to the relief sought, which the movant has done here.

Fear Waddell, P.C. ("Movant"), attorney for debtor and debtor in possession Alvarenga Transport ("DIP"), requests allowance of final compensation and reimbursement for expenses for services rendered from July 19, 2022 through February 17, 2023. Doc. #114. Movant provided legal services valued at \$83,106.50, and requests compensation for that amount. Doc. #114. Movant requests reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$691.61. Doc. #114. DIP has no objection to the requested fees and expenses. Doc. #118.

Section 330(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code authorizes "reasonable compensation for actual, necessary services rendered" and "reimbursement for actual, necessary expenses" to a debtor's attorney in a chapter 11 case. 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(1). In determining the amount of reasonable compensation to be awarded to a professional person, the court shall consider the nature, extent, and value of such services, taking into account all relevant factors. 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(3).

Movant's services included, without limitation: (1) providing general case administration; (2) preparing and revising Subchapter V plan; (3) preparing financial and historical disclosures required by the Subchapter V plan;

(4) preparing motion to assume executory contract to maintain insurance; (5) analyzing potential avoidance claims; (6) preparing settlement agreement with DIP's principal regarding potential avoidance claims and motion to approve same; (7) preparing claim objections; and (8) preparing application for employment of state court counsel. Exs. A, B, & C, Doc. #117. The court finds the compensation of \$83,106.50 and reimbursement for expenses of \$691.61 sought for the period July 19, 2022 through February 17, 2023 are reasonable, actual, and necessary and should be allowed on a final basis.

This motion is GRANTED. The court allows on a final basis compensation in the amount of \$83,106.50 and reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$691.61. The court also allows on a final basis all fees and expenses previously allowed to Movant on an interim basis, as set forth in the above chart.

3. [23-10571](#)-A-11 **IN RE: NABIEKIM ENTERPRISES**
[FW-2](#)

FINAL HEARING RE: MOTION TO USE CASH COLLATERAL
3-24-2023 [\[6\]](#)

NABIEKIM ENTERPRISES/MV
PETER FEAR/ATTY. FOR DBT.

TENTATIVE RULING: This matter will proceed as scheduled.

DISPOSITION: Granted on a further interim basis.

ORDER: The minutes of the hearing will be the court's findings and conclusions. The Moving Party shall submit a proposed order after the hearing.

This motion was set for final hearing pursuant to the initial motion papers and order authorizing use of cash collateral ("Order"). Doc. #22. Pursuant to the Order, Nabiekim Enterprises, INC. ("Debtor" or "DIP"), the chapter 11 debtor and debtor-in-possession, was to serve a notice of the final hearing on March 29, 2023. Debtor timely filed and served a notice of the final hearing. The final hearing was set on at least 14 days' notice prior to the hearing date pursuant to Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(b)(2) and Local Rule of Practice ("LBR") 9014-1(f)(2) and will proceed as scheduled. Unless opposition is presented at the hearing, the court intends to enter the respondents' defaults and grant the motion on a final basis. If opposition is presented at the hearing, the court will consider the opposition and whether further hearing is proper pursuant to LBR 9014-1(f)(2). The court will issue an order if a further hearing is necessary.

DIP moves the court for an order authorizing Debtor to use the cash collateral of Small Business Administration (the "SBA") on a monthly basis subject to a budget. Ex. A, Doc. #9. Debtor asserts the SBA holds a duly perfected security interest in nearly all of Debtor's cash collateral, including funds in Debtor's bank accounts at Wells Fargo. Motion, Doc. #6. Based on Debtor's list of 20 largest creditors, the SBA is owed \$312,300.00 and its collateral, as of the petition date, was \$53,414.46. Doc. #1. Based on Debtor's schedules, the SBA is owed \$312,300.00 and its collateral, as of the petition date, was \$49,657.38. Schedule D, Doc. #34. While there are other entities that may assert a security interest in Debtor's cash collateral, all other entities hold a junior security interest to the undersecured SBA and are, thus, unsecured.

The motion was heard initially on March 29, 2023 and was granted on an interim basis by the Interim Order. Doc. #34. A final hearing was set for April 12, 2023, as indicated in the initial motion. Id.

Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 363, a debtor in possession can use property of the estate that is cash collateral by obtaining either the consent of each entity that has an interest in such cash collateral or court authorization after notice and a hearing. 11 U.S.C. § 363(c)(2). "The primary concern of the court in determining whether cash collateral may be used is whether the secured creditors are adequately protected." In re Plaza Family P'ship, 95 B.R. 166 (E.D. Cal. 1989) (citing 11 U.S.C. § 363(e)). Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 363(o), DIP carries the burden of proof on the issue of adequate protection.

Here, DIP seeks court authorization to use cash collateral to pay expenses incurred by DIP in the normal course of its business. Ex. A, Doc. #9. As adequate protection for DIP's use of SBA's cash collateral, to extent cash collateral is actually used, DIP will grant SBA a replacement lien against DIP's post-petition sales and other income as well as granting a replacement lien to any other creditor with a valid security interest in DIP's cash collateral that was served with notice of the motion. Declaration of Kaye Kim, Doc. ##8, 24.

In addition to filing and serving a notice of the final hearing on March 29, 2023, DIP also filed and served a supplemental declaration in support of the Motion for Authority to Use Cash Collateral. Doc. ##24, 25. By the supplemental declaration, DIP requests that three additional expenses be added to Debtor's cash collateral budget. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24.

First, DIP requests that the court authorize Debtor to pay \$6,838.11 in April That Debtor owes on the lease of Debtor's restaurant facility that arises from a percentage rent clause in the lease. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. Debtor has not requested that additional amounts be included in the monthly cash collateral budget going forward with respect to the percentage rent clause in the lease.

Second, DIP requests that a payment totaling \$303.31 for a Dodge Caravan that is exclusively used for the business be added to the cash collateral budget. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. The Dodge Caravan is titled in the name of Debtor's president, Kaye Kim but equitably owned by Debtor. Schedule A/B, Doc. #34. The Dodge Caravan is used primarily by the kitchen manager to purchase restaurant supplies and serves the purpose of additional advertising. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. There is no equity in the Dodge Caravan, and the payment covers the depreciation in the Dodge Caravan. Id.

Third, DIP requests that a payment totaling \$579.45 for a BMW that is used by Ms. Kim be added to the cash collateral budget. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. Like the Dodge Caravan, the BMW is titled in the name of Ms. Kim but equitably owned by Debtor. Schedule A/B, Doc. #34. Ms. Kim uses the BMW almost exclusively for restaurant purposes, including running errands for the restaurant, attending business meetings related to Debtor's restaurant, making bank deposits, and picking up smaller food ingredient items while the kitchen manager uses the Dodge Caravan to make larger purchases. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. Because Ms. Kim has not been paid a regular salary for her over 80 hours per week when working for Debtor's restaurant, it has been reasonable and necessary to have Debtor pay the BMW car payment. Id.

DIP states that, to the extent necessary, Debtor will decrease Ms. Kim's salary by a sufficient amount to allow these additional amounts to be paid. Supplemental Decl. of Kaye Kim, Doc. #24. The cash collateral budget provides

for a salary for Ms. Kim of \$5,500 per month, plus an estimated \$500 in additional payroll taxes and costs for Ms. Kim, for a total payroll cost of \$6,000 per month. Id. Ms. Kim anticipates that she will not be able to take a salary for at least the next month, and possibly the next two months, to allow these additional expenses to be paid and to ensure that Debtor's restaurant is operating with a net positive margin. Pending any opposition at the hearing, the court is inclined to approve these additions to the April and cash collateral budgets for the next two months and hold a further hearing to grant final approval for use of cash collateral after further notice to creditors with a revised monthly budget.

Accordingly, the motion will be GRANTED on a further interim basis.

4. [23-10571](#)-A-11 **IN RE: NABIEKIM ENTERPRISES**
[FW-3](#)

FINAL HEARING RE: MOTION TO PAY
3-24-2023 [\[11\]](#)

NABIEKIM ENTERPRISES/MV
PETER FEAR/ATTY. FOR DBT.

TENTATIVE RULING: This matter will proceed as scheduled.

DISPOSITION: Granted.

ORDER: The minutes of the hearing will be the court's findings and conclusions. The Moving Party shall submit a proposed order after the hearing.

This motion was set for final hearing pursuant to an interim order authorizing the debtor to pay pre-petition priority wage claims owed to non-insider employees for the period of March 19 through March 23, 2023 ("Interim Order"). Doc. #32. The final hearing was set on at least 14 days' notice prior to the hearing date pursuant to Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(b)(2) and Local Rule of Practice ("LBR") 9014-1(f)(2) and will proceed as scheduled. Unless opposition is presented at the hearing, the court intends to enter the respondents' defaults and grant the motion on a final basis. If opposition is presented at the hearing, the court will consider the opposition and whether further hearing is proper pursuant to LBR 9014-1(f)(2). The court will issue an order if a further hearing is necessary.

Nabiekim Enterprises, Inc. ("DIP"), the chapter 11 debtor and debtor-in-possession, moves the court for an order authorizing Debtor to pay pre-petition priority wage claims owed to non-insider employees for the period of March 19 through March 23, 2023. Doc. #11. DIP operates a restaurant and employs approximately 30 employees, all but one of whom are part-time. Declaration of Kaye Kim, Doc. #13. DIP's continued business operations depend upon the continued services of its employees. Id. All pre-petition wages to be paid pursuant to the motion have priority under 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)(4). Id.

The motion was heard initially on March 29, 2023 and was granted on an interim basis by the Interim Order. Doc. #32. A final hearing was set for April 12, 2023 pursuant to the Interim Order. Id. Also pursuant to the Interim Order, DIP was to file a list of the pre-petition wage amounts being paid to each employee no later than April 5, 2023. On April 5, 2023, DIP filed a list of employees who worked from March 19 to March 23, 2023. Ex. A, Doc. #38.

This court interprets the bankruptcy court's equitable powers under 11 U.S.C. § 105(a) to permit pre-petition wage claims not to exceed the priority amount to be paid prior to confirmation of a plan. See In re Adams Apple, 829 F.2d 1484, 1490 (9th Cir. 1987) (in dictum noting the payment of pre-petition wages to key employees prior to confirmation of a plan when necessary for the debtor's rehabilitation). Based on the evidence before the court, the court finds good cause exists under 11 U.S.C. § 105 to authorize Debtor to pay pre-petition priority wage claims owed to employees for the period of March 19 through March 23, 2023 on a final basis.

Accordingly, the motion will be GRANTED on a final basis.

1. [13-15711](#)-A-7 **IN RE: GEORGE SALDATE AND ELISE HERNANDEZ**
[FW-5](#)

MOTION FOR COMPENSATION BY THE LAW OFFICE OF FEAR WADDELL, P.C. FOR
PETER A. SAUER, TRUSTEES ATTORNEY(S)
3-8-2023 [\[68\]](#)

LAYNE HAYDEN/ATTY. FOR DBT.
PETER SAUER/ATTY. FOR MV.

FINAL RULING: There will be no hearing on this matter.

DISPOSITION: Granted.

ORDER: The Moving Party shall submit a proposed order in conformance
with the ruling below.

This motion was set for hearing on at least 28 days' notice pursuant to Local Rule of Practice ("LBR") 9014-1(f)(1). The failure of creditors, the debtors, the U.S. Trustee, or any other party in interest to file written opposition at least 14 days prior to the hearing as required by LBR 9014-1(f)(1)(B) may be deemed a waiver of any opposition to the granting of the motion. Cf. Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995). Further, because the court will not materially alter the relief requested by the moving party, an actual hearing is unnecessary. See Boone v. Burk (In re Eliapo), 468 F.3d 592 (9th Cir. 2006). Therefore, the defaults of the above-mentioned parties in interest are entered and the matter will be resolved without oral argument. Upon default, factual allegations will be taken as true (except those relating to amount of damages). Televideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal, 826 F.2d 915, 917 (9th Cir. 1987). Constitutional due process requires a moving party make a *prima facie* showing that they are entitled to the relief sought, which the movant has done here.

Fear Waddell, P.C. ("Movant"), general counsel for chapter 7 trustee James Salven ("Trustee"), requests allowance of final compensation and reimbursement for expenses for services rendered from May 4, 2021 through March 6, 2023. Doc. #68. Movant provided legal services valued at \$10,130.50, and requests compensation for that amount. Doc. #68. Movant requests reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$186.45. Doc. #68. This is Movant's first and final fee application.

Section 330(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code authorizes "reasonable compensation for actual, necessary services rendered" and "reimbursement for actual, necessary expenses" to a "professional person." 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(1). In determining the amount of reasonable compensation to be awarded to a professional person, the court shall consider the nature, extent, and value of such services, taking into account all relevant factors. 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(3).

Movant's services included, without limitation: (1) providing counsel to Trustee as to the administration of the re-opened chapter 7 case; (2) preparing motion to employ special counsel; (3) preparing 9019 motion to approve settlement; and (4) preparing and filing employment and fee applications. Decl. of Peter A. Sauer, Doc. #71; Ex. A, B, & C, Doc. #72. The court finds the compensation and reimbursement sought are reasonable, actual, and necessary.

This motion is GRANTED on a final basis. The court allows final compensation in the amount of \$10,130.50 and reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$186.45. Trustee is authorized to make a combined payment of \$10,316.95, representing compensation and reimbursement, to Movant. Trustee is authorized to pay the amount allowed by this order from available funds only if the estate is administratively solvent and such payment is consistent with the priorities of the Bankruptcy Code.

2. [18-14546](#)-A-7 **IN RE: LANE ANDERSON**

TRUSTEE'S FINAL REPORT
3-2-2023 [\[134\]](#)

SCOTT LYONS/ATTY. FOR DBT.
LISA HOLDER/ATTY. FOR MV.

FINAL RULING: There will be no hearing on this matter.

DISPOSITION: Granted.

ORDER: The Moving Party shall submit a proposed order in conformance with the ruling below.

This motion was set for hearing on at least 28 days' notice pursuant to Local Rule of Practice ("LBR") 9014-1(f)(1). The failure of creditors, the debtor, the U.S. Trustee, or any other party in interest to file written opposition at least 14 days prior to the hearing as required by LBR 9014-1(f)(1)(B) may be deemed a waiver of any opposition to the granting of the motion. Cf. Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995). Further, because the court will not materially alter the relief requested by the moving party, an actual hearing is unnecessary. See Boone v. Burk (In re Eliapo), 468 F.3d 592 (9th Cir. 2006). Therefore, the defaults of the above-mentioned parties in interest are entered and the matter will be resolved without oral argument. Upon default, factual allegations will be taken as true (except those relating to amount of damages). Televideo Sys., Inc. v. Heidenthal, 826 F.2d 915, 917 (9th Cir. 1987). Constitutional due process requires a moving party make a *prima facie* showing that they are entitled to the relief sought, which the movant has done here.

Peter L. Fear ("Trustee"), the chapter 7 trustee, requests allowance of final compensation and reimbursement for expenses for services rendered as trustee in this case. Doc. #136. Movant provided trustee services valued at \$16,294.37, and requests compensation for that amount. Doc. #136. Movant requests reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$313.15. Doc. #136. Since being appointed to this case on November 8, 2018, Trustee has administered the estate, disposed of estate property, reviewed and reconciled financial records, and prepared final filings. Doc. #136.

Section 330(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code authorizes "reasonable compensation for actual, necessary services rendered" and "reimbursement for actual, necessary expenses" to a chapter 7 trustee. 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(1). In determining the amount of reasonable compensation to be awarded a chapter 7 trustee, the court shall treat such compensation as a commission, based on § 326 of the Bankruptcy Code. 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(7). Here, Trustee demonstrates reasonable compensation in accordance with the statutory framework of § 326. Doc. #136. Further, the court finds Trustee's services and requested expenses were actual and necessary to the administration of this estate.

This motion is GRANTED. The court allows statutory compensation in the amount of \$16,294.37 and reimbursement for expenses in the amount of \$313.15.