## UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT

Eastern District of California

## Honorable Ronald H. Sargis

Chief Bankruptcy Judge Modesto, California

August 1, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

1. <u>19-90634</u>-E-7 VVF-1 JESUS LOPEZ BELTRAN AND ANTONIETA TREJO Gurjeet Rai MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY 7-18-19 [12]

#### MECHANICS BANK VS.

**Tentative Ruling:** Oral argument may be presented by the parties at the scheduled hearing, where the parties shall address the issues identified in this tentative ruling and such other issues as are necessary and appropriate to the court's resolution of the matter.

Below is the court's tentative ruling, rendered on the assumption that there will be no opposition to the motion. If there is opposition presented, the court will consider the opposition and whether further hearing is proper pursuant to Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(f)(2)(C).

Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) Motion—Hearing Required.

Sufficient Notice Provided. The Proof of Service states that the Motion and supporting pleadings were served on Debtor, Debtor's Attorney, Chapter 7 Trustee, parties requesting special notice, and Office of the United States Trustee on July 18, 2019. By the court's calculation, 14 days' notice was provided. 14 days' notice is required.

# The Motion for Relief from the Automatic Stay is granted.

Mechanics Bank, a California Banking Corporation ("Movant") seeks relief from the automatic stay with respect to an asset identified as a 2017 Nissan Frontier, VIN ending in 9406 ("Vehicle"). The

moving party has provided the Declaration of Kassandra Jaramillo to introduce evidence to authenticate the documents upon which it bases the claim and the obligation owed by the debtors, Jesus Aaron Lopez Beltran and Antonieta Deleon Trejo ("Debtor").

Movant argues Debtor has not made 1 post-petition payment, with a total of \$593.76 in post-petition payments past due. Declaration, Dckt. 14. Movant also provides evidence that there are 3.7 pre-petition payments in default, with a pre-petition arrearage of \$2,195.84. *Id*.

Movant has also provided a copy of the NADA Valuation Report for the Vehicle. The Report has been properly authenticated and is accepted as a market report or commercial publication generally relied on by the public or by persons in the automobile sale business. FED. R. EVID. 803(17).

Debtor did not file an Opposition to this motion.

### **DISCUSSION**

From the evidence provided to the court, and only for purposes of this Motion for Relief, the debt secured by this asset is determined to be \$26,881.08 (Declaration, Dckt. 14), while the value of the Vehicle is determined to be \$14,850.00 as stated by Debtor on Form 107 of the Petition.

Whether there is cause under 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(1) to grant relief from the automatic stay is a matter within the discretion of a bankruptcy court and is decided on a case-by-case basis. See J E Livestock, Inc. v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. (In re J E Livestock, Inc.), 375 B.R. 892 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2007) (quoting In re Busch, 294 B.R. 137, 140 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2003)) (explaining that granting relief is determined on a case-by-case basis because "cause" is not further defined in the Bankruptcy Code); In re Silverling, 179 B.R. 909 (Bankr. E.D. Cal. 1995), aff'd sub nom. Silverling v. United States (In re Silverling), No. CIV. S-95-470 WBS, 1996 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 4332 (E.D. Cal. 1996). While granting relief for cause includes a lack of adequate protection, there are other grounds. See In re J E Livestock, Inc., 375 B.R. at 897 (quoting In re Busch, 294 B.R. at 140). The court maintains the right to grant relief from stay for cause when a debtor has not been diligent in carrying out his or her duties in the bankruptcy case, has not made required payments, or is using bankruptcy as a means to delay payment or foreclosure. W. Equities, Inc. v. Harlan (In re Harlan), 783 F.2d 839 (9th Cir. 1986); Ellis v. Parr (In re Ellis), 60 B.R. 432 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1985). The court determines that cause exists for terminating the automatic stay, including defaults in post-petition payments that have come due. 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(1); In re Ellis, 60 B.R. 432.

A debtor has no equity in property when the liens against the property exceed the property's value. *Stewart v. Gurley*, 745 F.2d 1194, 1195 (9th Cir. 1984). Once a movant under 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(2) establishes that a debtor or estate has no equity in property, it is the burden of the debtor or trustee to establish that the collateral at issue is necessary to an effective reorganization. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(2); *United Sav. Ass'n of Texas v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs. Ltd.*, 484 U.S. 365, 375–76 (1988). Based upon the evidence submitted, the court determines that there is no equity in the Vehicle for either Debtor or the Estate. 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(2). This being a Chapter 7 case, the Vehicle is *per se* not necessary for an effective reorganization. *See Ramco Indus. v. Preuss (In re Preuss)*, 15 B.R. 896 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1981).

The court shall issue an order terminating and vacating the automatic stay to allow Movant, and its agents, representatives and successors, and all other creditors having lien rights against the Vehicle, to repossess, dispose of, or sell the asset pursuant to applicable nonbankruptcy law and their contractual rights, and for any purchaser, or successor to a purchaser, to obtain possession of the asset.

### Request for Waiver of Fourteen-Day Stay of Enforcement

Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(a)(3) stays an order granting a motion for relief from the automatic stay for fourteen days after the order is entered, unless the court orders otherwise. Movant requests that the court grant relief from the Rule as adopted by the United States Supreme Court. Movant argues this relief is warranted because of the following grounds:

- (1) the eroding nature of the collateral due to decline in value of the Vehicle,
- (2) the remaining delinquency on the account,
- (3) there is no equity in the Vehicle,
- (4) the Vehicle is not necessary for an effective reorganization,
- and (5) Movant recovered the Vehicle pre-petition.

Movant has pleaded adequate grounds and presented sufficient evidence to support the court waiving the fourteen-day stay of enforcement required under Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(a)(3), and this part of the requested relief is not granted.

No other or additional relief is granted by the 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 for Relief from the Automatic Stay filed by Mechanics Bank, a California Banking Corporation ("Movant") having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED the automatic stay provisions of 11 U.S.C. § 362(a) are vacated to allow Movant, its agents, representatives, and successors, and all other creditors having lien rights against the Vehicle, under its security agreement, loan documents granting it a lien in the asset identified as a 2017 Nissan Frontier, VIN ending in 9406 ("Vehicle"), and applicable nonbankruptcy law to obtain possession of, nonjudicially sell, and apply proceeds from the sale of the Vehicle to the obligation secured thereby.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the fourteen-day stay of enforcement provided in Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 4001(a)(3) is waived for cause.

No other or additional relief is granted.

2. <u>19-90446</u>-E-7 KR-1 GABRIEL SILVA Randall Walton CONTINUED MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY 6-13-19 [11]

YAMAHA MOTOR FINANCE CORP. VS.

**Tentative Ruling:** Oral argument may be presented by the parties at the scheduled hearing, where the parties shall address the issues identified in this tentative ruling and such other issues as are necessary and appropriate to the court's resolution of the matter.

Below is the court's tentative ruling, rendered on the assumption that there will be no opposition to the motion. If there is opposition presented, the court will consider the opposition and whether further hearing is proper pursuant to Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(f)(2)(C).

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Local Rule 9014-1(f)(2) Motion—Hearing Required.

Sufficient Notice Provided. The Proof of Service states that the Motion and supporting pleadings were served on Debtor, Debtor's Attorney, Chapter 7 Trustee, and Office of the United States Trustee on June 13, 2019. By the court's calculation, 35 days' notice was provided. 14 days' notice is required.

The Motion for Relief from the Automatic Stay was properly set for hearing on the notice required by Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(f)(2). Debtor, creditors, the Chapter 7 Trustee, the U.S. Trustee, and any other parties in interest were not required to file a written response or opposition to the motion. If any of these potential respondents appear at the hearing and offer opposition to the motion, the court will set a briefing schedule and a final hearing, unless there is no need to develop the record further. No opposition was offered at the initial hearing.

# The Motion for Relief from the Automatic Stay is denied without prejudice.

Creditor, Yamaha Motor Finance Corp. ("Movant") seeks relief from the automatic stay with respect to an asset identified as a 2017 Yamaha Raptor 700R, VIN ending in 7728 ("Vehicle"). The moving party has provided the Declaration of Vannessa Stephens to introduce evidence to authenticate the documents upon which it bases the claim and the obligation owed by Gabriel Silva ("Debtor").

The Stephens Declaration provides testimony that Debtor has not made 1 post-petition payments, with a total of \$203.00 in post-petition payments past due. The Declaration also provides evidence that there are 1 pre-petition payments in default, with a pre-petition arrearage of \$332.00.

Movant has also provided a copy of the NADA Valuation Report for the Vehicle. The Report has been properly authenticated and is accepted as a market report or commercial publication generally relied

on by the public or by persons in the automobile sale business. FED. R. EVID. 803(17). According to the NADA value, the vehicle has an estimated value of \$6,080.00.

Debtor did not file an opposition to this Motion.

### **JULY 18, 2019 HEARING**

At the July 18, 2019 hearing the court noted the Motion failed to meet the requirements of Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9011, stating the following:

#### Review of Minimum Pleading Requirements for a Motion

The Supreme Court requires that the motion itself state with particularity the grounds upon which the relief is requested. FED. R. BANKR. P. 9013. The Rule does not allow the motion to merely be a direction to the court to "read every document in the file and glean from that what the grounds should be for the motion." That "state with particularity" requirement is not unique to the Bankruptcy Rules and is also found in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 7(b).

Consistent with this court's repeated interpretation of Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9013, the bankruptcy court in *In re Weatherford*, applied the general pleading requirements enunciated by the United States Supreme Court to the pleading with particularity requirement of Bankruptcy Rule 9013. *See* 434 B.R. 644, 646 (N.D. Ala. 2010) (citing *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 545 (2007)). The *Twombly* pleading standards were restated by the Supreme Court in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal* to apply to all civil actions in considering whether a plaintiff had met the minimum basic pleading requirements in federal court. *See* 556 U.S. 662 (2009).

Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9013 incorporates the "state with particularity" requirement of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 7(b), which is also incorporated into adversary proceedings by Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 7007. Interestingly, in adopting the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and of Bankruptcy Procedure, the Supreme Court endorsed a stricter, state-with-particularity-the-grounds-upon-which-the-relief-is-based standard for motions rather than the "short and plain statement" standard for a complaint.

Law and motion practice in bankruptcy court demonstrates why such particularity is required in motions. Many of the substantive legal proceedings are conducted in the bankruptcy court through the law and motion process. These include sales of real and personal property, valuation of a creditor's secured claim, determination of a debtor's exemptions, confirmation of a plan, objection to a claim (which is a contested matter similar to a motion), abandonment of property from the estate, relief from the automatic stay, motions to avoid liens, objections to plans in Chapter 13 cases (akin to a motion), use of cash collateral, and secured and unsecured borrowing.

The court in *Weatherford* considered the impact to other parties in a bankruptcy case and to the court, holding,

The Court cannot adequately prepare for the docket when a motion simply states conclusions with no supporting factual allegations. The respondents to such motions cannot adequately prepare for the hearing when there are no factual allegations supporting the relief sought. Bankruptcy is a national practice and creditors sometimes do not have the time or economic incentive to be represented at each and every docket to defend against entirely deficient pleadings. Likewise, debtors should not have to defend against facially baseless or conclusory claims.

434 B.R. at 649–50; see also In re White, 409 B.R. 491, 494 (Bankr. N.D. Ind. 2009) (holding that a proper motion must contain factual allegations concerning requirements of the relief sought, not conclusory allegations or mechanical recitations of the elements).

The courts of appeals agree. The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected an objection filed by a party to the form of a proposed order as being a motion. *St. Paul Fire & Marine Ins. Co. v. Continental Casualty Co.*, 684 F.2d 691, 693 (10th Cir. 1982). The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals refused to allow a party to use a memorandum to fulfill the pleading with particularity requirement in a motion, stating:

Rule 7(b)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that all applications to the court for orders shall be by motion, which unless made during a hearing or trial, "shall be made in writing, [and] shall state with particularity the grounds therefor, and shall set forth the relief or order sought." The standard for "particularity" has been determined to mean "reasonable specification."

*Martinez v. Trainor*, 556 F.2d 818, 819–20 (7th Cir. 1977) (citing 2-A JAMES WM. MOORE ET AL., MOORE'S FEDERAL PRACTICE ¶ 7.05 (3d ed. 1975)).

Not stating with particularity the grounds in a motion can be used as a tool to abuse other parties to a proceeding, hiding from those parties grounds upon which a motion is based in densely drafted points and authorities—buried between extensive citations, quotations, legal arguments, and factual arguments. Noncompliance with Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9013 may be a further abusive practice in an attempt to circumvent Bankruptcy Rule 9011 by floating baseless contentions to mislead other parties and the court. By hiding possible grounds in citations, quotations, legal arguments, and factual arguments, a movant bent on mischief could contend that what the court and other parties took to be claims or factual contentions in the points and authorities were "mere academic postulations" not intended to be representations to the court concerning any actual claims and contentions in the specific motion or an assertion that evidentiary support exists for such "postulations."

#### **Grounds Stated in Motion**

The Motion in its entirety states the following with particularity:

- 1. Pursuant to the provisions of 11 U.S.C. Section 362, YAMAHA MOTOR FINANCE CORP. ("Movant"), hereby moves this Court for an order terminating or modifying the automatic stay in regard to personal property commonly described as a 2017 Yamaha Raptor 700R ("Collateral"), VIN: 5Y4AM86Y0HA107728.
  - 2. This motion is supported by the concurrently filed memorandum of points and authorities and the declaration of Vannessa Stephens.
  - 3. Based upon the law and facts presented, Movant respectfully requests that the Court enter an order granting relief from stay concerning the Vehicle.

Motion, Dckt. 11.

Nothing in the above consists of factual or legal grounds for the relief requested.

Movant is reminded that "[f]ailure of counsel or of a party to comply with these [Local Bankruptcy] Rules . . . may be grounds for imposition of any and all sanctions authorized by statute or rule within the inherent power of the Court, including without limitation, **dismissal of any action**, entry of default, finding of contempt, imposition of monetary sanctions or attorneys' fees and costs, and other lesser sanctions." LOCAL BANKR. R. 1001-1(g) (emphasis added).

The Motion states that grounds are found in:

- A. Memorandum of Points and Authorities; and
- B. the declaration of Vannessa Stephens

The court generally declines an opportunity to do associate attorney work and assemble motions for parties. It may be that Movant believes that the Points and Authorities is "really" the motion and should be substituted by the court for the Motion. That belief fails for multiple reasons. One is that under Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(d)(4), a motion and a memorandum of points and authorities are separate documents. *See* Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-(d)(4). The court has not waived that Local Rule for Movant.

Civil Minutes, Dckt. 27.

Rather than deny the Motion without prejudice, the court continued the hearing to August 1, 2019, and required Movant to file a Supplement on or before July 25, 2019. Order, Dckt. 29.

#### **DISCUSSION**

After the prior hearing, the court made the following explicit order:

IT IS ORDERED the hearing on the Motion for Relief from the Automatic Stay is continued to 10:00 a.m. on August 1, 2019. A Supplement to the Motion stating the grounds with particularity upon which the relief is sought shall be filed and served on or before July 25, 2019.

Order, Dckt. 29(emphasis added).

Notwithstanding the court's order, nothing has been filed.

Nothing further having been provided, though the opportunity had been afforded by the court, the Motion is Denied without prejudice.

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 for Relief from the Automatic Stay filed by Yamaha Motor Finance Corp. ("Movant") having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

**IT IS ORDERED** the Motion is denied without prejudice.

3. <u>19-90263</u>-E-7 RLM-1

GEMA MORTON Pro Se MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY 7-3-19 [21]

USAA GENERAL INDEMNITY COMPANY VS.

Final Ruling: No appearance at the August 1, 2019 hearing is required.

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USAA General Indemnity Company 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 Motion For Relief was dismissed without prejudice, and the matter is removed from the calendar.

No other or additional relief is granted.

4. <u>19-90382</u>-E-7 TRAC ETL-1 Pro S

TRACY SMITH
Pro Se

MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM AUTOMATIC STAY 6-21-19 [21]

HARLEY-DAVIDSON CREDIT CORP. VS.

**Final Ruling:** No appearance at the August 1, 2019 hearing is required.

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Local Rule 9014-1(f)(1) Motion—No Opposition Filed.

Sufficient Notice Provided. The Proof of Service states that the Motion and supporting pleadings were served on Debtor (*pro se*), Chapter 7 Trustee, and Office of the United States Trustee on June 21, 201. By the court's calculation, 41 days' notice was provided. 28 days' notice is required.

The Motion for Relief from the Automatic Stay has been set for hearing on the notice required by Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(f)(1). Failure of the respondent and other parties in interest to file written opposition at least fourteen days prior to the hearing as required by Local Bankruptcy Rule 9014-1(f)(1)(B) is considered to be the equivalent of a statement of nonopposition. *Cf. Ghazali v. Moran*, 46 F.3d 52, 53 (9th Cir. 1995) (upholding a court ruling based upon a local rule construing a party's failure to file opposition as consent to grant a motion). Further, because the court will not materially alter the relief requested by the moving party, an actual hearing is unnecessary. *See Law Offices of David A. Boone v. Derham-Burk (In re Eliapo)*, 468 F.3d 592, 602 (9th Cir. 2006). Therefore, the defaults of the non-responding parties and other parties in interest are entered. Upon review of the record, there are no disputed material factual issues, and the matter will be resolved without oral argument. The court will issue its ruling from the parties' pleadings.

# The Motion For Relief From Automatic Stay is granted.

Harley-Davidson Credit Corp ("Movant") seeks relief from the automatic stay with respect to an asset identified as a 2018 Harley-Davidson FLHXS Street Glide Special, VIN ending in 1393 ("Vehicle"). The moving party has provided the Declaration of Hemlatu Mistry to introduce evidence to authenticate the documents upon which it bases the claim and the obligation owed by the debtor, Tracy Emery Smith ("Debtor").

Movant argues Debtor has not made 2 post-petition payments, with a total of \$1,001.96 in post-petition payments past due. Declaration, Dckt. 23. Movant also provides evidence that there are 4 pre-petition payments in default, with a pre-petition arrearage of \$2,003.92. *Id*.

Movant has also provided a copy of the NADA Valuation Report for the Vehicle. The Report has been properly authenticated and is accepted as a market report or commercial publication generally relied on by the public or by persons in the automobile sale business. FED. R. EVID. 803(17).

#### **DISCUSSION**

From the evidence provided to the court, and only for purposes of this Motion for Relief, the debt secured by this asset is determined to be \$27,180.74 (Declaration, Dckt. 23), while the value of the Vehicle is determined to be \$22,000.00, as stated in Amended Schedules B and D filed by Debtor. Dckt. 17.

Whether there is cause under 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(1) to grant relief from the automatic stay is a matter within the discretion of a bankruptcy court and is decided on a case-by-case basis. See JE Livestock, Inc. v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. (In re JE Livestock, Inc.), 375 B.R. 892 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2007) (quoting In re Busch, 294 B.R. 137, 140 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2003)) (explaining that granting relief is determined on a case-by-case basis because "cause" is not further defined in the Bankruptcy Code); In re Silverling, 179 B.R. 909 (Bankr. E.D. Cal. 1995), aff'd sub nom. Silverling v. United States (In re Silverling), No. CIV. S-95-470 WBS, 1996 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 4332 (E.D. Cal. 1996). While granting relief for cause includes a lack of adequate protection, there are other grounds. See In re JE Livestock, Inc., 375 B.R. at 897 (quoting In re Busch, 294 B.R. at 140). The court maintains the right to grant relief from stay for cause when a debtor has not been diligent in carrying out his or her duties in the bankruptcy case, has not made required payments, or is using bankruptcy as a means to delay payment or foreclosure. W. Equities, Inc. v. Harlan (In re Harlan), 783 F.2d 839 (9th Cir. 1986); Ellis v. Parr (In re Ellis), 60 B.R. 432 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1985). The court determines that cause exists for terminating the automatic stay, including defaults in post-petition payments that have come due. 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(1); In re Ellis, 60 B.R. 432.

A debtor has no equity in property when the liens against the property exceed the property's value. *Stewart v. Gurley*, 745 F.2d 1194, 1195 (9th Cir. 1984). Once a movant under 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(2) establishes that a debtor or estate has no equity in property, it is the burden of the debtor or trustee to establish that the collateral at issue is necessary to an effective reorganization. 11 U.S.C. § 362(g)(2); *United Sav. Ass'n of Texas v. Timbers of Inwood Forest Assocs. Ltd.*, 484 U.S. 365, 375–76 (1988). Based upon the evidence submitted, the court determines that there is no equity in the Vehicle for either Debtor or the Estate. 11 U.S.C. § 362(d)(2). This being a Chapter 7 case, the Vehicle is *per se* not necessary for an effective reorganization. *See Ramco Indus. v. Preuss (In re Preuss)*, 15 B.R. 896 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1981).

The court shall issue an order terminating and vacating the automatic stay to allow Movant, and its agents, representatives and successors, and all other creditors having lien rights against the Vehicle, to repossess, dispose of, or sell the asset pursuant to applicable nonbankruptcy law and their contractual rights, and for any purchaser, or successor to a purchaser, to obtain possession of the asset.

No other or additional relief is granted by the 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 for Relief from the Automatic Stay filed by Harley-Davidson Credit Corp ("Movant") having been presented to the court, and upon review of the pleadings, evidence, arguments of counsel, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED the automatic stay provisions of 11 U.S.C. § 362(a) are vacated to allow Movant, its agents, representatives, and successors, and all other creditors having lien rights against the Vehicle, under its security agreement, loan documents granting it a lien in the asset identified as a 2018 Harley-Davidson FLHXS Street Glide Special, VIN ending in 1393 ("Vehicle"), and applicable nonbankruptcy law to obtain possession of, nonjudicially sell, and apply proceeds from the sale of the Vehicle to the obligation secured thereby.

No other or additional relief is granted.