

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-81956; File No. SR-OCC-2017-017)

October 26, 2017

Self-Regulatory Organizations; The Options Clearing Corporation; Notice of Filing of Proposed Rule Change Concerning Liquidity for Same Day Settlement

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”)¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder² notice is hereby given that on October 13, 2017, The Options Clearing Corporation (“OCC”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II and III below, which Items have been prepared by OCC. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

I. Clearing Agency’s Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

This proposed rule change by the OCC would revise OCC’s By-Laws to expand upon existing authority to borrow against the Clearing Fund.

II. Clearing Agency’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, OCC included statements concerning the purpose of and basis for the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. OCC has prepared summaries, set forth in sections (A), (B), and (C) below, of the most significant aspects of these statements.

(A) Clearing Agency’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed change is to modify the tools available to OCC in order to provide a mechanism for addressing the risks of liquidity shortfalls, specifically, in the extraordinary situation where OCC faces a liquidity need to meet its same-day settlement obligations as a result of a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization failing to achieve daily settlement.

Proposed Changes

Current Practice

Presently, Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws provides OCC with the authority to borrow against the Clearing Fund in two circumstances. First, Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws provides OCC the authority to borrow where OCC "deems it necessary or advisable to borrow or otherwise obtain funds from third parties in order to meet obligations arising out of the default or suspension of a Clearing Member or any action taken by the Corporation in connection therewith pursuant to Chapter XI of the Rules or otherwise." Second, Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws provides OCC the authority to borrow against the Clearing Fund where OCC "sustains a loss reimbursable out of the Clearing Fund pursuant to [Article VIII, Section 5(b) of OCC's By-Laws] but [OCC] elects to borrow or otherwise obtain funds from third parties in lieu of immediately charging such loss to the Clearing Fund." In order for a loss to be reimbursable out of the Clearing Fund under Article VIII, Section 5(b) of OCC's By-Laws, it must arise from a situation in which any bank or securities or commodities clearing organization has failed "to perform any obligation to [OCC] when due because

of its bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership, suspension of operations, or because of any similar event.”³

Under either of the two aforementioned circumstances, OCC is authorized to borrow against the Clearing Fund for a period not to exceed 30 days, and during such period, the borrowing shall not affect the amount or timing of any charges otherwise required to be made against the Clearing Fund pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5.

However, if any part of the borrowing remains outstanding after 30 days, then at the close of business on the 30th day (or the first Business Day thereafter) such amount must be considered an actual loss to the Clearing Fund, and OCC must immediately allocate such loss in accordance with Article VIII, Section 5.

Proposed Change

While Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC’s By-Laws currently provides for borrowing authority in the more extreme scenarios involving a bank’s or securities or commodities clearing organization’s bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership, suspension of operations or similar event, such authority does not extend to the similar, but less extreme scenarios in which a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization might be temporarily unable to timely make daily settlement with OCC for reasons other than its bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership or suspension of operations or similar events. An example of such a related scenario would be a disruption of the ordinary operations of a settlement bank that temporarily prohibits the bank from timely effecting settlement payments in accordance with OCC’s daily settlement cycle.

³ To the extent that a loss resulting from any of the events referred to in Article VIII, Section 5(b) is recoverable out of the Clearing Fund pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5(a), the provisions of Article VIII, Section 5(a) control and render the provisions of Article VIII, Section 5(b) inapplicable.

The proposed rule change would expand upon the existing borrowing authority in Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws. As expanded, OCC would be authorized to borrow (or otherwise obtain funds through any means determined to be reasonable by the Executive Chairman, COO or CAO) against the Clearing Fund in the extraordinary event that OCC faces a liquidity need in order to complete same-day settlement. As specified in the proposed rule text, the funds obtained from any such transaction can be used only for their stated purpose, namely, to satisfy a need for liquidity for same-day settlement. Consistent with the existing borrowing authority in Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws, OCC would be authorized to borrow against the Clearing Fund for a period not to exceed 30 days, and during such period, the funds obtained would not be deemed to be charges against the Clearing Fund, irrespective of how such funds are applied, and the borrowing shall not affect the amount or timing of any charges otherwise required to be made against the Clearing Fund pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5. However, in the unlikely event that any part of the borrowing were to remain outstanding after 30 days, then at the close of business on the 30th day (or the first Business Day thereafter), such amount would be considered an actual loss to the Clearing Fund, and OCC must immediately allocate such loss in accordance with Article VIII, Section 5.

Like the existing borrowing authority in Article VIII, Section 5(e) of OCC's By-Laws, OCC envisions that the proposed expanded authority only would be relevant in extraordinary circumstances and, even then, only would be used where OCC, exercising its discretion, believes the employment of this particular authority would be appropriate to address OCC's immediate liquidity need.

OCC proposes to amend Sections 1(a), 5(b) and 5(e) of Article VIII of its By-Laws in order to give effect to the expanded borrowing authority discussed herein. Section 5(e) of Article VIII of OCC's By-Laws would be amended to permit OCC to borrow against the Clearing Fund if it reasonably believes such borrowing is necessary to meet its liquidity needs for same-day settlement as a result of the failure of any bank or securities or commodities clearing organization to achieve daily settlement.

Section 1(a) of Article VIII of OCC's By-Laws would be amended to include conforming changes that would reflect that the purpose of the Clearing Fund includes borrowing against the Clearing Fund as permitted under Section 5(e) of Article VIII of the By-Laws.

Section 5(b) of Article VIII of the By-Laws would be amended to include conforming changes that would declare that any borrowing remaining outstanding for less than 30 days may be considered, in OCC's discretion, an actual loss and the amount of any such loss then shall be charged proportionately against all Clearing Members' computed contributions to the Clearing Fund as fixed at the time, and any borrowing remaining outstanding on the 30th day shall be considered an actual loss to the Clearing Fund and the amount of any such loss shall be charged proportionately against all Clearing Members' computed contributions to the Clearing Fund as fixed at the time. The OCC proposes to include discretionary authority to declare any borrowing outstanding for less than 30 days as an actual loss chargeable against the Clearing Fund because the proposed borrowing authority is intended only to address same-day liquidity needs, and intended to be promptly repaid upon the bank's or securities or commodities clearing organization's resolution of the temporary disruption. In the unlikely

circumstance that a disruption of a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization is not timely resolved, OCC may need to exercise its discretion to declare an actual loss, depending on the size of the borrowing, to ensure that OCC replenishes its “Cover 1” financial resources.⁴ The requirement to recognize any borrowing outstanding after 30 days as an actual loss chargeable against the Clearing Fund would be consistent with the requirements of the borrowing authority currently permitted by Section 5(e) of Article VIII of the By-Laws.

2. Statutory Basis

Section 17A(b)(3)(F) of the Act⁵ requires, among other things, that the rules of a clearing agency be designed to perfect the mechanism of a national system for the prompt and accurate clearance and settlement of securities transactions. The proposed rule change is designed to ensure that OCC can continue to promptly settle the securities and derivatives transactions it clears by enhancing the existing tools OCC has to address liquidity shortfalls. Specifically, the proposed rule change would expand the existing borrowing authority in OCC’s By-Laws to also authorize borrowing in the extraordinary event that OCC faces a liquidity need in order to complete same day settlement, independent of whether OCC has suffered a loss resulting from the bankruptcy or similar event of a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization.

It is conceivable, though extremely unlikely, that parties may fail to make timely settlement with OCC as the result of an event that does not result in a loss to OCC from

⁴ “Cover 1” financial resources refers to the requirement that a CCA maintains financial resources sufficient to enable it to cover the “default of the participant family that would potentially cause the largest aggregate credit exposure for the [CCA] in extreme but plausible market conditions.” 17 CFR 240.17Ad-22(e)(7)(viii).

⁵ 15 U.S.C. 78q-1(b)(3)(F).

the bankruptcy, insolvency, resolution, suspension of operations or similar event of a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization. A hypothetical example of one such event might be a temporary disruption to the ordinary operation of a settlement bank resulting from a technology issue. The issue presents no concern about the bank's creditworthiness (or the creditworthiness of any Clearing Member that has selected such institution as its settlement bank) but the bank's technology issue nonetheless temporarily interferes with the ability of the bank to timely move funds in accordance with OCC's daily settlement cycle. In this hypothetical, the most likely alternative for OCC is to exercise its ability under Rule 505 to extend the settlement window to the close of Fedwire. The proposed rule change would provide OCC with an alternative tool with which to address the type of extraordinary circumstance highlighted by OCC's hypothetical. The proposed rule change would improve OCC's ability to address the situation in the hypothetical example because use of the proposed expanded borrowing authority would enable OCC to borrow against the Clearing Fund in order to avoid disrupting its ordinary settlement cycle (and thusly, to avoid imposing the same disruption on Clearing Members), thereby avoiding the need to extend the settlement window and allowing OCC to settle transactions in a more timely fashion. In this regard, OCC believes the proposed rule change is designed to promote the prompt and accurate clearance and settlement of securities transactions, in accordance with the requirements of Section 17A(b)(3)(F) of the Act.⁶

Additionally, Rule 17Ad-22(e)(7)(viii) requires that a covered clearing agency ("CCA") address foreseeable liquidity shortfalls that would not be covered by the CCA's

⁶ Id.

liquid resources and seek to avoid unwinding, revoking, or delaying the same-day settlement of payment obligations.⁷ As stated above, OCC believes that it could be foreseeable, though extremely unlikely, that a bank or securities or commodities clearing organization may fail to make timely settlement with OCC as the result of an event that does not result in a loss to OCC from the bankruptcy, insolvency, resolution, suspension of operations or similar event of such bank or securities or commodities clearing organization. The proposed rule change would improve OCC's ability to address such situations by expanding OCC's borrowing authority to enable OCC to borrow against the Clearing Fund in order to avoid disrupting its ordinary settlement cycle (and thusly, to avoid imposing the same disruption on Clearing Members).

The proposed rule change is not inconsistent with the existing rules of OCC, including any other rules proposed to be amended.

(B) Clearing Agency's Statement on Burden on Competition

Section 17A(b)(3)(I) of the Act⁸ requires that the rules of a clearing agency not impose any burden on competition not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. OCC does not believe the proposed rule change would have any impact or impose any burden on competition. The primary purpose of the proposed rule change is to enhance the existing tools OCC has to address liquidity shortfalls by expanding the existing borrowing authority in OCC's By-Laws to also authorize borrowing in the extraordinary event that OCC faces a liquidity need in order to complete same day settlement. The proposed rule change would apply equally to all Clearing Members and would not affect Clearing Members' access to OCC's services or

⁷ 17 CFR 240.17Ad-22(e)(7)(viii).

⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78q-1(b)(3)(I).

disadvantage or favor any particular user in relationship to another user. As such, OCC believes that the proposed changes would not have any impact or impose any burden on competition.

(C) Clearing Agency's Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received from Members, Participants or Others

Written comments were not and are not intended to be solicited with respect to the proposed rule change, and none have been received.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

Within 45 days of the date of publication of this notice in the Federal Register or within such longer period up to 90 days (i) as the Commission may designate if it finds such longer period to be appropriate and publishes its reasons for so finding or (ii) as to which the self-regulatory organization consents, the Commission will:

(A) by order approve or disapprove the proposed rule change, or

(B) institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be disapproved.

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic Comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-OCC-2017-017 on the subject line.

Paper Comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-1090.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-OCC-2017-017. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet website (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for website viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20549, on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Copies of such filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of OCC and on OCC's website at http://www.theocc.com/components/docs/legal/rules_and_bylaws/sr_occ_17_017.pdf

All comments received will be posted without change. Persons submitting comments are cautioned that we do not redact or edit personal identifying information from comment submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-OCC-2017-017 and should be submitted on or before [insert date 21 days from publication in the Federal Register].

For the Commission by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.⁹

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Assistant Secretary

⁹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).