

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-88595; File No. SR-NYSEAMER-2020-25)

April 8, 2020

Self-Regulatory Organizations; NYSE American LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Modify the NYSE American Options Fee Schedule

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1)¹ of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the “Act”)² and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,³ notice is hereby given that, on April 1, 2020, NYSE American LLC (“NYSE American” or the “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III below, which Items have been prepared by the self-regulatory organization. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

The Exchange proposes to modify the NYSE American Options Fee Schedule (“Fee Schedule”) to waive certain Floor-based fixed fees for the month of April 2020. The Exchange proposes to implement the fee change effective April 1, 2020. The proposed change is available on the Exchange’s website at www.nyse.com, at the principal office of the Exchange, and at the Commission’s Public Reference Room.

II. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, the self-regulatory organization included statements concerning the purpose of, and basis for, the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it

¹ 15 U.S.C.78s(b)(1).

² 15 U.S.C. 78a.

³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

received on the proposed rule change. The text of those statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. The Exchange has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant parts of such statements.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

The purpose of this filing is to modify the Fee Schedule to waive certain Floor-based fixed fees for the month of April 2020. The Exchange proposes to implement the fee change effective April 1, 2020.

On March 18, 2020, the Exchange announced that it would temporarily close the Trading Floor, effective Monday, March 23, 2020, as a precautionary measure to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19. Because the Trading Floor is temporarily unavailable, the Exchange proposes to waive for April 2020 certain Floor-based fixed fees.

Specifically, for the month of April 2020, the Exchange proposes to waive fees associated with:

- Floor Access Fee;
- Floor Broker Handheld
- Transport Charges
- Floor Market Maker Podia;
- Booth Premises; and
- Wire Services.⁴

⁴ See proposed Fee Schedule, Section III.B, Monthly Trading Permit, Rights, Floor Access and Premium Product Fees, and IV. Monthly Floor Communication, Connectivity, Equipment and Booth or Podia Fees. The Exchange will re-evaluate the time limitations on this change (i.e., whether it will need to apply to May) depending upon how long the Trading Floor remains temporarily closed and would file a separate proposed rule change if an extension is warranted.

The Exchange notes that these fixed fees, which relate directly to Floor operations, are charged only to Floor participants and do not apply to participants that conduct business off-Floor. These fees are unrelated to trading volume and are charged for use of services made available to Floor participants on the Trading Floor. This proposed change is designed to reduce monthly costs for Floor participants while the Trading Floor is temporarily closed and Floor participants are unable to use the services associated with these fixed fees. The Exchange believes that this fee waiver would ease the financial burden and allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange.⁵

The Exchange believes that all ATP Holders that conduct business on the Trading Floor would benefit from this proposed fee change.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,⁶ in general, and furthers the objectives of Sections 6(b)(4) and (5) of the Act,⁷ in particular, because it provides for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees, and other charges among its members, issuers and other persons using its facilities and does not unfairly discriminate between customers, issuers, brokers or dealers.

The Proposed Rule Change is Reasonable

⁵ The Exchange will refund participants of the Floor Broker Prepayment Program for any prepaid April 2020 fees that are waived. See proposed Fee Schedule, Section III.E (providing that “the Exchange will refund certain of the prepaid Eligible Fixed costs that were waived for April 2020, per Sections III.B and IV”).

⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

The Exchange operates in a highly competitive market. The Commission has repeatedly expressed its preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. In Regulation NMS, the Commission highlighted the importance of market forces in determining prices and SRO revenues and, also, recognized that current regulation of the market system “has been remarkably successful in promoting market competition in its broader forms that are most important to investors and listed companies.”⁸

There are currently 16 registered options exchanges competing for order flow. Based on publicly-available information, and excluding index-based options, no single exchange has more than 16% of the market share of executed volume of multiply-listed equity and ETF options trades.⁹ Therefore, currently no exchange possesses significant pricing power in the execution of multiply-listed equity & ETF options order flow. More specifically, in January 2020, the Exchange had less than 10% market share of executed volume of multiply-listed equity & ETF options trades.¹⁰

This proposed change is designed to reduce monthly costs for Floor participants that are unable to conduct Floor operations, including any open outcry trading, while the Trading Floor is temporarily closed. The Exchange believes that this fee waiver would ease the financial burden and allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations

⁸ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 51808 (June 9, 2005), 70 FR 37496, 37499 (June 29, 2005) (S7-10-04) (“Reg NMS Adopting Release”).

⁹ The OCC publishes options and futures volume in a variety of formats, including daily and monthly volume by exchange, available here: <https://www.theocc.com/market-data/volume/default.jsp>.

¹⁰ Based on OCC data, see id., the Exchange’s market share in equity-based options declined from 9.82% for the month of January 2019 to 8.08% for the month of January 2020.

from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange.

The Exchange believes that all ATP Holders that conduct business on the Trading Floor would benefit from this proposed fee change.

The Proposed Rule Change is an Equitable Allocation of Credits and Fees

The Exchange believes the proposed rule change is an equitable allocation of its fees and credits. The proposal waives certain Floor-based fixed fees for the month of April 2020, during the period that the Trading Floor is temporarily closed. The fees being waived are charged only to Floor participants and do not apply to participants that conduct business off-Floor. These fees are unrelated to trading volume and are charged for use of services made available to Floor participants on the Trading Floor. This proposed change is equitable as it is designed to reduce monthly costs for Floor participants that are unable to conduct Floor operations. The Exchange believes that this fee waiver would allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange.

The Proposed Rule Change is not Unfairly Discriminatory

The Exchange believes that the proposal is not unfairly discriminatory because the proposed modifications would affect all similarly-situated market participants on an equal and non-discriminatory basis. The Exchange is not proposing to waive the Floor-related fixed fees indefinitely, but rather only during the period that the Trading Floor is temporarily closed. The proposed fee change is designed to ease the financial burden and allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent

this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange.

Finally, the Exchange believes that it is subject to significant competitive forces, as described below in the Exchange's statement regarding the burden on competition.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

In accordance with Section 6(b)(8) of the Act, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change would impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The Exchange believes that the proposed changes would encourage the continued participation of affected ATP Holders, thereby promoting market depth, price discovery and transparency and enhancing order execution opportunities for all market participants. As a result, the Exchange believes that the proposed change furthers the Commission's goal in adopting Regulation NMS of fostering integrated competition among orders, which promotes "more efficient pricing of individual stocks for all types of orders, large and small."¹¹

Intramarket Competition. The proposed fee change is designed to ease the financial burden and allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange. The Exchange believes that the proposed waiver of fees would not impose a disparate burden on competition among market participants on the Exchange because off-Floor market participants are not subject to these Floor-based fixed fees.

¹¹ See Reg NMS Adopting Release, supra note 8, at 37499.

Intermarket Competition. The Exchange operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily favor one of the 16 competing option exchanges if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive. In such an environment, the Exchange must continually adjust its fees to remain competitive with other exchanges and to attract order flow to the Exchange. Based on publicly-available information, and excluding index-based options, no single exchange currently has more than 16% of the market share of executed volume of multiply-listed equity and ETF options trades.¹² Therefore, currently no exchange possesses significant pricing power in the execution of multiply-listed equity & ETF options order flow. More specifically, in January 2020, the Exchange had less than 10% market share of executed volume of multiply-listed equity & ETF options trades.¹³

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change reflects this competitive environment because it modifies the Exchange's fees in a manner designed to ease the financial burden and allow affected participants to reallocate funds to assist with the cost of shifting operations from on-Floor to off-Floor. Absent this change, such participants may experience an unintended increase in the cost of doing business on the Exchange, which would make the Exchange a less competitive venue on which to trade as compared to other options exchanges.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received from Members, Participants, or Others

No written comments were solicited or received with respect to the proposed rule change.

¹² See supra note 9.

¹³ Based on OCC data, supra note 10, the Exchange's market share in equity-based options was 9.82% for the month of January 2019 and 8.08% for the month of January, 2020.

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

The foregoing rule change is effective upon filing pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)¹⁴ of the Act and subparagraph (f)(2) of Rule 19b-4¹⁵ thereunder, because it establishes a due, fee, or other charge imposed by the Exchange.

At any time within 60 days of the filing of such proposed rule change, the Commission summarily may temporarily suspend such rule change if it appears to the Commission that such action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest, for the protection of investors, or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. If the Commission takes such action, the Commission shall institute proceedings under Section 19(b)(2)(B)¹⁶ of the Act to determine whether the proposed rule change should be approved or 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-NYSEAMER-2020-25 on the subject line.

¹⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

¹⁵ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(2).

¹⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2)(B).

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-NYSEAMER-2020-25. 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, NE, Washington, DC 20549 on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. 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-NYSEAMER-2020-25 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.¹⁷

J. Matthew DeLesDernier
Assistant Secretary

¹⁷ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).