

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-76651; File No. SR-NASDAQ-2015-149)

December 15, 2015

Self-Regulatory Organizations; The NASDAQ Stock Market LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Amend NASDAQ Options Market – Fees and Rebates

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”),¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on December 2, 2015, The NASDAQ Stock Market LLC (“Nasdaq” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC” or “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III below, which Items have been prepared by the Exchange. 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 amend Chapter XV, entitled “Options Pricing,” at Section 2, which governs pricing for NASDAQ members using the NASDAQ Options Market (“NOM”), NASDAQ’s facility for executing and routing standardized equity and index options, to amend the Customer³ and Professional⁴ Penny Pilot⁵ Options Rebates to Add Liquidity. The proposed amendments apply to volume from December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

³ The term “Customer” applies to any transaction that is identified by a Participant for clearing in the Customer range at The Options Clearing Corporation (“OCC”) which is not for the account of broker or dealer or for the account of a “Professional” (as that term is defined in Chapter I, Section 1(a)(48)).

⁴ The term “Professional” means any person or entity that (i) is not a broker or dealer in securities, and (ii) places more than 390 orders in listed options per day on average during a calendar month for its own beneficial account(s) pursuant to Chapter I, Section 1(a)(48). All Professional orders shall be appropriately marked by Participants.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange's Website at <http://nasdaq.cchwallstreet.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 Exchange 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

⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release Nos. 57579 (March 28, 2008), 73 FR 18587 (April 4, 2008) (SR-NASDAQ-2008-026) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness establishing Penny Pilot); 60874 (October 23, 2009), 74 FR 56682 (November 2, 2009)(SR-NASDAQ-2009-091) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness expanding and extending Penny Pilot); 60965 (November 9, 2009), 74 FR 59292 (November 17, 2009)(SR-NASDAQ-2009-097) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness adding seventy-five classes to Penny Pilot); 61455 (February 1, 2010), 75 FR 6239 (February 8, 2010) (SR-NASDAQ-2010-013) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness adding seventy-five classes to Penny Pilot); 62029 (May 4, 2010), 75 FR 25895 (May 10, 2010) (SR-NASDAQ-2010-053) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness adding seventy-five classes to Penny Pilot); 65969 (December 15, 2011), 76 FR 79268 (December 21, 2011) (SR-NASDAQ-2011-169) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness [sic] extension and replacement of Penny Pilot); 67325 (June 29, 2012), 77 FR 40127 (July 6, 2012) (SR-NASDAQ-2012-075) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through December 31, 2012); 68519 (December 21, 2012), 78 FR 136 (January 2, 2013) (SR-NASDAQ-2012-143) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through June 30, 2013); 69787 (June 18, 2013), 78 FR 37858 (June 24, 2013) (SR-NASDAQ-2013-082) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through December 31, 2013); 71105 (December 17, 2013), 78 FR 77530 (December 23, 2013) (SR-NASDAQ-2013-154) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through June 30, 2014); 79 FR 31151 [sic] (May 23, 2014), 79 FR 31151 (May 30, 2014) (SR-NASDAQ-2014-056) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through December 31, 2014); 73686 (December 2, 2014) [sic], 79 FR 71477 (November 25, 2014) [sic] (SR-NASDAQ-2014-115) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot through June 30, 2015) and 75283 (June 24, 2015), 80 FR 37347 (June 30, 2015) (SR-NASDAQ-2015-063) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness and extension and replacement of Penny Pilot) See also NOM Rules, Chapter VI, Section 5.

Item IV below. The Exchange has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

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

1. Purpose

The Exchange proposes to amend Chapter XV, Section 2, entitled “NASDAQ Options Market – Fees and Rebates” to amend the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity. The proposed rule change is detailed below.

Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

Today, the Exchange offers tiered Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity to Customers and Professionals based on various criteria with rebates ranging from \$0.20 to \$0.48 per contract.⁶ Participants may qualify for Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity by adding a certain amount of liquidity as specified by each tier.⁷

Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

The Exchange proposes to amend Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity to remove a requirement to qualify for this tier. Currently, Tier 8 provides, “Participant adds Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options above 0.75% or

⁶ See also infra note 10.

⁷ Tiers 6 and 7 are calculated based on Total Volume. Total Volume is defined as Customer, Professional, Firm, Broker-Dealer, Non-NOM Market Maker and NOM Market Maker volume in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options which either adds or removes liquidity on NOM. See note “b” in Section 2(1) of Chapter XV. The Exchange utilizes data from The Options Clearing Corporation (“OCC”) to determine the total industry customer equity and ETF options ADV figure. OCC classifies equity and ETF options volume under the equity options category. Also, both customer and professional orders that are transacted on options exchanges clear in the customer range at OCC and therefore both customer and professional volume would be included in the total industry figure to calculate rebate tiers.

more of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month or Participant adds (1) Customer and/or Professional liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 30,000 or more contracts per day in a month, (2) the Participant has certified for the Investor Support Program⁸ set forth in Rule 7014, and (3) the Participant qualifies for rebates under the Qualified Market Maker (“QMM”) Program set forth in Rule 7014.” The Exchange is proposing to eliminate the third requirement which requires the Participant to qualify for rebates under the QMM Program. A QMM is a NASDAQ member that makes a significant contribution to market quality by providing liquidity at the national best bid and offer (“NBBO”) in a large number of stocks for a significant portion of the day.⁹ The QMM Program is an equity program. With this proposal, the Exchange proposes to continue to pay a \$0.48 per contract¹⁰ Tier 8 Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add

⁸ For a detailed description of the Investor Support Program or ISP, see Securities Exchange Act Release No. 63270 (November 8, 2010), 75 FR 69489 (November 12, 2010) (NASDAQ-2010-141) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness) (the “ISP Filing”). See also Securities Exchange Act Release Nos. 63414 (December 2, 2010), 75 FR 76505 (December 8, 2010) (NASDAQ-2010-153) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness); and 63628 (January 3, 2011), 76 FR 1201 (January 7, 2011) (NASDAQ-2010-154) (notice of filing and immediate effectiveness).

⁹ In addition, the NASDAQ equity member must avoid imposing the burdens on NASDAQ and its market participants that may be associated with excessive rates of entry of orders away from the inside and/or order cancellation. The designation “QMM” reflects the QMM’s commitment to provide meaningful and consistent support to market quality and price discovery by extensive quoting at the NBBO in a large number of securities. In return for its contributions, certain financial benefits are provided to a QMM with respect to a particular MPID (a “QMM MPID”), as described under Rule 7014(e).

¹⁰ The Exchange offers Participants an opportunity to increase the Tier 8 Customer and Professional Rebate to Add Liquidity Tiers in note c, which states, “Participants that: (1) add Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 1.15% or more of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month will receive an additional \$0.02 per contract Penny Pilot Options Customer Rebate to Add Liquidity for each transaction which adds liquidity in Penny Pilot Options in that month; or (2) add Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 1.40% or more of

Liquidity if the Participant adds Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options above 0.75% or more of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month¹¹ or Participant adds (1) Customer and/or Professional liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 30,000 or more contracts per day in a month and (2) the Participant has certified for the Investor Support Program set forth in Rule 7014 from December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015.¹²

The Exchange believes that removing the requirement to qualify for the QMM Program to earn the Tier 8 Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Option Rebate to Add Liquidity will encourage Participants to add even more liquidity on NOM to specifically qualify for the Tier 8 rebate.

total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month will receive an additional \$0.05 per contract Penny Pilot Options Customer Rebate to Add Liquidity for each transaction which adds liquidity in Penny Pilot Options in that month; or (3) (a) add Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options above 0.75% of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month and (b) has added liquidity in all securities through one or more of its Nasdaq Market Center MPIDs that represent 1.10% or more of Consolidated Volume in a month will receive an additional \$0.03 per contract Penny Pilot Options Customer Rebate to Add Liquidity for each transaction which adds liquidity in Penny Pilot Options in a month. Consolidated Volume shall mean the total consolidated volume reported to all consolidated transaction reporting plans by all exchanges and trade reporting facilities during a month in equity securities, excluding executed orders with a size of less than one round lot. For purposes of calculating Consolidated Volume and the extent of an equity member's trading activity, expressed as a percentage of or ratio to Consolidated Volume, the date of the annual reconstitution of the Russell Investments Indexes shall be excluded from both total Consolidated Volume and the member's trading activity."

¹¹ Participants have two ways to qualify for the Tier 8 Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity.

¹² Monthly volume from December 1, 2015 will not count toward the calculation of the Tier 8 rebate with respect to the December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015 time period. The month will be calculated in two time periods.

2. Statutory Basis

Nasdaq believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions of Section 6 of the Act,¹³ in general, and with Section 6(b)(4) and 6(b)(5) of the Act,¹⁴ in particular, in that it provides for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees and other charges among members and issuers and other persons using any facility or system which NASDAQ operates or controls, and is not designed to permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers. Customer volume is important because it continues to attract liquidity to the Exchange, which benefits all market participants. Further, with respect to Professional liquidity, the Exchange initially established Professional pricing in order to “...bring additional revenue to the Exchange.”¹⁵ The Exchange noted in the Professional Filing that it believes “...that the increased revenue from the proposal would assist the Exchange to recoup fixed costs.”¹⁶ Further, the Exchange noted in that filing that it believes that establishing separate pricing for a Professional, which ranges between that of a Customer and market maker, accomplishes this objective.¹⁷

Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

¹³ 15 U.S.C. 78f.

¹⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

¹⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 64494 (May 13, 2011), 76 FR 29014 (May 19, 2011) (SR-NASDAQ-2011-066) (“Professional Filing”). In this filing, the Exchange addressed the perceived favorable pricing of Professionals who were assessed fees and paid rebates like a Customer prior to the filing. The Exchange noted in that filing that a Professional, unlike a retail Customer, has access to sophisticated trading systems that contain functionality not available to retail Customers.

¹⁶ See Professional Filing.

¹⁷ See Professional Filing. The Exchange also [sic] in the Professional Filing that it believes the role of the retail Customer in the marketplace is distinct from that of the Professional and the Exchange’s fee proposal at that time accounted for this distinction by pricing each market participant according to their roles and obligations.

Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

The Exchange's proposal to amend Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity to remove the requirement to qualify for the QMM Program to earn the Tier 8 rebate is reasonable, because removing the requirement to qualify for the QMM Program should encourage Participants to add even more liquidity on NOM to specifically qualify for the Tier 8 rebate. The Exchange currently requires Participants to add Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options above 0.75% or more of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month to qualify for the Tier 8 rebate. Also, a Participant could qualify for a Tier 8 rebate, today, by that [sic] adding (1) [sic] Customer and/or Professional liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 30,000 or more contracts per day in a month *and* certifies for the Investor Support Program set forth in Rule 7014 may also qualify for the rebate. The Exchange's proposal would eliminate the necessity to qualify for two equity programs, the Investor Support and QMM Program. The Exchange believes that heightened volume requirement already present in the requirements to qualify for Tier 8, as compared with other tier volume requirements, combined with the requirement to continue to certify for the Investor Support Program will continue to incentivize Participants to transact an even greater number of qualifying Customer and/or Professional volume, which liquidity will benefit other market participants by providing them the opportunity to interact with that liquidity. Moreover, the incentive has the potential to make the applicable higher rebate available to a wider range of market participants with the removal of the QMM Program as a means of qualification.

The Exchange's proposal to permit Participants to qualify for the highest Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity Tier of \$0.48 per contract, by adding volume from December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015,¹⁸ which criteria continue to include the addition of options and equity volume, is reasonable because the Exchange is encouraging market participants to send order flow to both the options and equity markets to receive the rebate. Incentivizing Participants to add options liquidity through the payment of an additional rebate is not novel as, today, Tier 8 permits the additional [sic] of equity volume to qualify for this rebate. The concept of participating in the equities market as a means to qualify for an options rebate exists today. This participation benefits the Nasdaq Market Center as well as the NOM market by incentivizing order flow to these markets. This rebate recognizes the prevalence of trading in which members simultaneously trade different asset classes within the same strategy. Participants will continue to be required to add liquidity to both the options and equities requirement if they qualify for the Tier 8 rebate utilizing the second method.¹⁹ Because cash equities and options markets are linked, with liquidity and trading patterns on one market affecting those on the other, the Exchange believes that pricing incentives that encourage market participant activity in NOM also support price discovery and liquidity provision in the Nasdaq Market Center. Further, because the requirements to qualify for Tier 8 requires significant levels

¹⁸ Monthly volume from December 1, 2015 will not count toward the calculation of the Tier 8 rebate with respect to the December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2105 time period. The month will be calculated in two time periods.

¹⁹ There are two ways to qualify for the Tier 8 rebate, as amended by this proposal, either: (1) Participant adds Customer, Professional, Firm, Non-NOM Market Maker and/or Broker-Dealer liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options above 0.75% or more of total industry customer equity and ETF option ADV contracts per day in a month; or (2) Participant adds Customer and/or Professional liquidity in Penny Pilot Options and/or Non-Penny Pilot Options of 30,000 or more contracts per day in a month and the Participant has certified for the Investor Support Program set forth in Rule 7014 from December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

of liquidity provision, which benefits all market participants, and because activity in NOM also supports price discovery and liquidity provision in the Nasdaq Market Center due to the increasing propensity of market participants to be active in both markets and the influence of each market on the pricing of securities in the other, the remaining requirements to qualify for the Tier 8 rebate continue to be reasonable, notwithstanding the elimination of the QMM Program requirement. Finally, other options exchanges today pay rebates to participants that add order [sic] both options and equity order flow.²⁰

The Exchange's proposal to amend Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity to remove the requirement to qualify for the QMM Program to earn the Tier 8 rebate is equitable and not unfairly discriminatory because all Participants may qualify for Tier 8. Qualifying Participants will be uniformly paid a \$0.48 per contract rebate, provided the requirements are met for the time period from December 2, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

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

NASDAQ does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebates to Add Liquidity

The Exchange's proposal to amend Tier 8 of the Customer and Professional Penny Pilot Options Rebate to Add Liquidity to remove the requirement to qualify for the QMM Program to earn the Tier 8 rebate does not impose an undue burden on intra-market competition because all

²⁰ BATS Exchange Inc. ("BATS") and NYSE Arca, Inc. ([sic] NYSE Arca") offer Cross-Asset Step-Up Tiers on its equity market. See BATS BZX Exchange Fee Schedule. See also NYSE Arca Equities Schedule of Fees and Charges for Exchange Services and NYSE Arca Options Fees and Charges.

Participants are eligible to qualify for the Tier 8 Customer or Professional Rebate to Add Liquidity, provided they meet the qualifications. Further, the Tier 8 rebate will be uniformly paid to those Participants that are eligible for the rebate. Moreover, the changes have the potential to make the applicable incentives available to a wider range of market participants with the removal of the QMM Program.

Furthermore, continuing to incentivize Participants to add not only options, but equities volume does not impose an undue burden on intra-market competition because cash equities and options markets are linked, with liquidity and trading patterns on one market affecting those on the other, the Exchange believes that pricing incentives that encourage market participant activity in NOM also support price discovery and liquidity provision in the Nasdaq Market Center. Further, the pricing incentives require significant levels of liquidity provision, which benefits all market participants on NOM and the Nasdaq Market Center.

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

No written comments were either solicited or received.

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

The foregoing rule change has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)(ii) of the Act.²¹

At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission summarily may temporarily suspend such rule change if it appears to the Commission that such action is: (i) necessary or appropriate in the public interest; (ii) for the protection of investors; or (iii) otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. If the Commission takes such action,

²¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(ii).

the Commission shall institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule 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-NASDAQ-2015-149 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-NASDAQ-2015-149. 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 offices of the Exchange. All comments received will be posted without change; the Commission does not edit personal identifying information from submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly. All submissions should refer to File Number SR-NASDAQ-2015-149, 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.²²

Robert W. Errett
Deputy Secretary

²² 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).