

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-92910; File No. SR-NYSEAMER-2021-37)

September 9, 2021

Self-Regulatory Organizations; NYSE American LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change Extending the Expiration Date of the Temporary Amendments to Rules 9261 and 9830

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 August 27, 2021, 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 and II 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 extending the expiration date of the temporary amendments to Rules 9261 and 9830 as set forth in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 from August 31, 2021, to December 31, 2021, in conformity with recent changes by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. (“FINRA”). The proposed rule change would not make any changes to the text of NYSE American Rules 9261 and 9830. The proposed rule 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.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 15 U.S.C. 78a.

³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

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 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 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 extending the expiration date of the temporary amendments as set forth in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69⁴ to Rules 9261 (Evidence and Procedure in Hearing) and 9830 (Hearing) from August 31, 2021, to December 31, 2021 to harmonize with recent changes by FINRA to extend the expiration date of the temporary amendments to its Rules 9261 and 9830. SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 temporarily granted to the Chief or Deputy Chief Hearing Officer the authority to order that hearings be conducted by video conference if warranted by public health risks posed by in-person hearings during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed rule change would not make any changes to the text of Exchange Rules 9261 and 9830.⁵

⁴ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 90085 (October 2, 2020), 85 FR 63603 (October 8, 2020) (SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69) (“SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69”).

⁵ The Exchange may submit a separate rule filing to extend the expiration date of the proposed extension beyond December 31, 2021 if the Exchange requires additional temporary relief from the rule requirements identified in NYSEAMER-SR-2020-69. The amended NYSE American rules will revert back to their original state at the conclusion of the temporary relief period and any extension thereof.

Background

In 2016, NYSE American (then known as NYSE MKT LLC) adopted disciplinary rules that are, with certain exceptions, substantially the same as the Rule 8000 Series and Rule 9000 Series of FINRA and its affiliate the New York Stock Exchange LLC (“NYSE”), and which set forth rules for conducting investigations and enforcement actions.⁶ The NYSE American disciplinary rules⁷ were implemented on April 15, 2016.⁷

In adopting disciplinary rules modeled on FINRA’s rules, NYSE American adopted the hearing and evidentiary processes set forth in Rule 9261 and in Rule 9830 for hearings in matters involving temporary and permanent cease and desist orders under the Rule 9800 Series. As adopted, the text of Rule 9261 and Rule 9830 are substantially the same as the FINRA rules with certain modifications.⁸

In response to the COVID-19 global health crisis and the corresponding need to restrict in-person activities, on August 31, 2020, FINRA filed with the Commission a proposed rule change for immediate effectiveness, SR-FINRA-2020-027, which allowed FINRA’s Office of Hearing Officers (“OHO”) to conduct hearings, on a temporary basis, by video conference, if warranted by the current COVID-19-related public health risks posed by an in-person hearing. Among the rules FINRA amended were Rules 9261 and 9830.⁹

Given that FINRA and OHO administers disciplinary hearings on the Exchange’s behalf, and that the public health concerns addressed by FINRA’s amendments apply equally to

⁶ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 77241 (February 26, 2016), 81 FR 11311 (March 3, 2016) (SR-NYSEMKT-2016-30) (“2016 Notice”).

⁷ See NYSE MKT Information Memorandum 16-02 (March 14, 2016).

⁸ See 2016 Notice, 18 FR at 11327 & 11332.

⁹ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 89737 (September 2, 2020), 85 FR 55712 (September 9, 2020) (SR-FINRA-2020-027) (“SR-FINRA-2020-027”).

Exchange disciplinary hearings, on September 15, 2020, the Exchange filed to temporarily amend Rule 9261 and Rule 9830 to permit FINRA to conduct virtual hearings on its behalf.¹⁰ In December 2020, FINRA filed a proposed rule change, SR-FINRA-2020-042, to extend the expiration date of the temporary amendments in SR-FINRA-2020-027 from December 31, 2020, to April 30, 2021.¹¹ On December 22, 2020, the Exchange similarly filed to extend the temporary amendments to Rule 9261 and Rule 9830 to April 30, 2021.¹² On April 1, 2021, FINRA filed a proposed rule change, SR-FINRA-2021-006, to extend the expiration date of the temporary rule amendments to, among other rules, FINRA Rule 9261 and 9830 from April 30, 2021, to August 31, 2021.¹³ On April 20, 2021, the Exchange filed to extend the temporary amendments to Rule 9261 and Rule 9830 to August 31, 2021, after which the temporary amendments will expire absent another proposed rule change filing by the Exchange.¹⁴

As outlined in detail below, while there are signs of improvement, based on FINRA's assessment of current COVID-19 conditions and the lack of a clear timeframe for a sustained and widespread abatement of COVID-19-related health concerns and corresponding restrictions, FINRA determined that there is a continued need for temporary relief for several months beyond August 31, 2021. On August 13, 2021, FINRA accordingly filed to extend the expiration date of the temporary rule amendments to, among other rules, FINRA Rule 9261 and 9830 from August

¹⁰ See note 4, *supra*.

¹¹ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 90619 (December 9, 2020), 85 FR 81250 (December 15, 2020) (SR-FINRA-2020-042).

¹² See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 90823 (December 30, 2020), 86 FR 650 (January 6, 2021) (SR-NYSEAMER-2020-88).

¹³ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 91495 (April 7, 2021), 86 FR 19306 (April 13, 2021) (SR-FINRA-2021-006).

¹⁴ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 91631 (April 22, 2021), 86 FR 22471 (April 28, 2021) (SR-NYSEAMER-2021-23).

31, 2021, to December 31, 2021.¹⁵

Proposed Rule Change

Consistent with FINRA’s recent proposal, the Exchange proposes to extend the expiration date of the temporary rule amendments to NYSE American Rules 9261 and 9830 as set forth in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 from August 31, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

As set forth in SR-FINRA 2021-019, while there are signs of improvement, much uncertainty remains for the coming months. The emergence of the Delta variant, dissimilar vaccination rates throughout the United States, and the uptick in transmissions in many locations indicate that COVID-19 remains an active and real public health concern. Based on FINRA’s assessment of current COVID-19 conditions and the lack of a clear timeframe for a sustained and widespread abatement of COVID-19-related health concerns and corresponding restrictions, FINRA has determined that there is a continued need for this temporary relief for several months beyond August 31, 2021.¹⁶ FINRA accordingly proposed to extend the expiration date of the temporary rule amendments from August 31, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

The Exchange proposes to similarly extend the expiration date of the temporary rule amendments to NYSE American Rules 9261 and 9830 as set forth in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 from August 31, 2021, to December 31, 2021. The Exchange agrees with FINRA that much uncertainty remains for the coming months and that, based on the lack of a clear timeframe for a sustained and widespread abatement of COVID-19-related health concerns and corresponding restrictions as set forth in SR-FINRA-2021-019, there is a continued need for temporary relief for several months beyond August 31, 2021. The proposed change would permit OHO to

¹⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 92685 (August 17, 2021), 86 FR 47169 (August 23, 2021) (SR-FINRA-2021-019) (“SR-FINRA-2021-019”).

¹⁶ See id.

continue to assess, based on critical COVID-19 data and criteria and the guidance of health and security consultants, whether an in-person hearing would compromise the health and safety of the hearing participants such that the hearing should proceed by video conference. As noted in SR-FINRA-2021-019, in deciding whether to schedule a hearing by video conference, OHO may consider a variety of other factors in addition to COVID-19 trends. In SR-FINRA-2020-027, FINRA provided a non-exhaustive list of other factors OHO may take into consideration, including a hearing participant's individual health concerns and access to the connectivity and technology necessary to participate in a video conference hearing.¹⁷ The Exchange believes that this is a reasonable procedure to continue to follow for hearings under Rules 9261 and 9830 chaired by a FINRA employee.

As noted below, the Exchange has filed the proposed rule change for immediate effectiveness and has requested that the SEC waive the requirement that the proposed rule change not become operative for 30 days after the date of the filing, so the Exchange can implement the proposed rule change immediately.

2. Statutory Basis

The proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,¹⁸ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5),¹⁹ in particular, because it is designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in facilitating transactions in securities, to remove impediments to, and perfect the mechanism of, a free and open market and

¹⁷ See SR-FINRA-2020-027, 85 FR at 55715, n. 28; SR-FINRA-2021-019, 86 FR at 47170, n. 13.

¹⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

¹⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

a national market system and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest.

Additionally, the Exchange believes the proposed rule change is designed to provide a fair procedure for the disciplining of members and persons associated with members, consistent with Sections 6(b)(7) and 6(d) of the Act.²⁰

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change supports the objectives of the Act by providing greater harmonization between Exchange rules and FINRA rules of similar purpose, resulting in less burdensome and more efficient regulatory compliance. As such, the proposed rule change will foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in facilitating transactions in securities and will remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system.

The proposed rule change, which extends the expiration date of the temporary amendments to Exchange rules consistent with FINRA's extension to its Rules 9261 and 9830 for four months as set forth in SR-FINRA-2021-019, will permit the Exchange to continue to effectively conduct hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above and in SR-FINRA-2021-019, given the current and frequently changing COVID-19 conditions and the uncertainty around when those conditions will see meaningful, widespread and sustained improvement, without this relief allowing OHO to proceed by video conference, some or all hearings may have to be postponed. The ability to conduct hearings by video conference will permit the adjudicatory functions of the Exchange's disciplinary rules to continue unabated, thereby avoiding protracted delays. The Exchange believes that this is especially important in matters where temporary and permanent cease and desist orders are sought because the proposed rule change would enable those hearings to continue to proceed without delay, thereby enabling

²⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(7) & 78f(d).

the Exchange to continue to take immediate action to stop significant, ongoing customer harm, to the benefit of the investing public.

As set forth in detail in the SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69, the temporary relief to permit hearings to be conducted via video conference maintains fair process and will continue to provide fair process consistent with Sections 6(b)(7) and 6(d) of the Act²¹ while striking an appropriate balance between providing fair process and enabling the Exchange to fulfill its statutory obligations to protect investors and maintain fair and orderly markets while avoiding the COVID-19-related public health risks for hearing participants. The Exchange notes that this proposal, like SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69, provides only temporary relief. As proposed, the changes would be in place through December 31, 2021. As noted in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 and above, the amended rules will revert back to their original state at the conclusion of the temporary relief period and, if applicable, any extension thereof.

Accordingly, the proposed rule change extending this temporary relief is in the public interest and consistent with the Act's purpose.

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

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed temporary rule change will impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The proposed rule change is not intended to address competitive issues but is rather intended solely to provide continued temporary relief given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related health and safety risks of conducting in-person activities. The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change will prevent unnecessary impediments to critical adjudicatory processes and its ability to fulfill its statutory obligations to protect investors

²¹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(7) & 78f(d).

and maintain fair and orderly markets that would otherwise result if the temporary amendments were to expire on August 31, 2021.

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.

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

Because the foregoing proposed rule change does not: (i) significantly affect the protection of investors or the public interest; (ii) impose any significant burden on competition; and (iii) become operative for 30 days from the date on which it was filed, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate, it has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)(iii) of the Act²² and subparagraph (f)(6) of Rule 19b-4 thereunder.²³

A proposed rule change filed under Rule 19b-4(f)(6)²⁴ normally does not become operative prior to 30 days after the date of the filing. However, pursuant to Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii),²⁵ the Commission may designate a shorter time if such action is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest. The Exchange has asked the Commission to waive the 30-day operative delay so that the proposal may become operative immediately upon filing. The Exchange has indicated that the proposed rule change to extend the expiration date will continue to prevent unnecessary impediments to its operations, including its critical adjudicatory processes, and its ability to fulfill its statutory obligations to protect investors and

²² 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(iii).

²³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6). In addition, Rule 19b-4(f)(6) requires a self-regulatory organization to give the Commission written notice of its intent to file the proposed rule change at least five business days prior to the date of filing of the proposed rule change, or such shorter time as designated by the Commission. The Exchange has satisfied this requirement.

²⁴ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

²⁵ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6)(iii).

maintain fair and orderly markets that would otherwise result if the temporary amendments were to expire on August 31, 2021.²⁶ Importantly, extending the relief provided in SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69 immediately upon filing and without a 30-day operative delay will allow the Exchange to continue critical adjudicatory and review processes in a reasonable and fair manner and meet its critical investor protection goals, while also following best practices with respect to the health and safety of hearing participants.²⁷ The Commission also notes that this proposal extends without change the temporary relief previously provided by SR-NYSEAMER-2020-69.²⁸ As proposed, the changes would be in place through December 31, 2021 and the amended rules will revert back to their original state at the conclusion of the temporary relief period and, if applicable, any extension thereof.²⁹ For these reasons, the Commission believes that waiver of the 30-day operative delay for this proposal is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest. Accordingly, the Commission hereby waives the 30-day operative delay and designates the proposal operative upon filing.³⁰

²⁶ See supra Item II.

²⁷ See FINRA Filing, 86 FR at 47171 (noting the same in granting FINRA’s request to waive the 30-day operative delay so that SR-FINRA-2021-019 would become operative immediately upon filing).

²⁸ See supra note 4.

²⁹ See supra note 5. As noted above, the Exchange states that if it requires temporary relief from the rule requirements identified in this proposal beyond December 31, 2021, it may submit a separate rule filing to extend the effectiveness of the temporary relief under these rules.

³⁰ For purposes only of waiving the 30-day operative delay, the Commission has considered the proposed rule change’s impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

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 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 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-NYSEAMER-2021-37 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-NYSEAMER-2021-37. 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 Web site (<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; 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-NYSEAMER-2021-37 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.³¹

J. Matthew DeLesDernier
Assistant Secretary

³¹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).