

calendar year 2021 inspections. This proposed supplementary material does not relieve firms from meeting the core regulatory obligation to establish and maintain a system to supervise the activities of each associated person that is reasonably designed to achieve compliance with applicable securities laws and regulations, and with applicable IEX rules that directly serve investor protection. In a time when faced with unique challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, IEX believes that the proposed rule change provides sensibly tailored relief that will afford firms the ability to observe the recommendations of public health officials to provide for the health and safety of their personnel, while continuing to serve and promote the protection of investors and the public interest.

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

IEX does not believe that the proposed rule change will result in any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The proposed rule change is not designed to address any competitive issue but to align the Exchange's rules with those of FINRA, which will assist FINRA in its oversight work done pursuant to a regulatory services agreement with IEX. The proposed rule change will also provide for consistent application of the Exchange's supervision rules with those of FINRA, on which they are based. Consequently, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed change implicates competition at all.

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

Written comments on the proposed rule change were neither solicited nor received.

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

The Exchange has designated this rule filing as non-controversial under Section 19(b)(3)(A) ³¹ of the Act and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) ³² thereunder. Because the 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) of the Act and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.

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 under Section 19(b)(2)(B) ³³ 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 email to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-IEX-2021-09 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-IEX-2021-09. This file number should be included in the subject line if email 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 Section, 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 will also be available for inspection and copying at the IEX's principal office and on its internet website at www.iextrading.com. 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-IEX-2021-09 and should be submitted on or before July 19, 2021.

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.³⁴

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,
Assistant Secretary.

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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-92230; File No. SR-BX-2021-028]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq BX, Inc.; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change To Amend the Exchange's Transaction Fees, at Equity 7, Section 118(e)

June 22, 2021.

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 June 10, 2021, Nasdaq BX, Inc. ("BX" 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 the Exchange's transaction fees, at Equity 7, Section 118(e), as described further below.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange's website at <https://listingcenter.nasdaq.com/rulebook/bx/rules>, at the principal office

³¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

³² 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

³³ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2)(B).

³⁴ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

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 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 operates on the "taker-maker" model, whereby it generally pays credits to members that take liquidity and charges fees to members that provide liquidity. Currently, the Exchange has a schedule, at Equity 7, Section 118(e), which consists of several different credits and fees for Retail Orders³ and Retail Price Improvement Orders⁴ under Rule 4780 (Retail Price Improvement Program).

Currently, the Exchange charges a fee of \$0.0025 per share executed for RPI Orders that provide liquidity. The Exchange proposes to adopt a new fee of \$0.0018 per share executed for RPI Orders entered by a member that (i) quotes Retail Price Improvement Orders in at least 2,500 symbols on average per day and (ii) provides liquidity through Retail Price Improvement Orders equal to or exceeding an average daily volume of 2,500,000 shares. The Exchange will continue to charge a fee of \$0.0025 per

share executed for all other RPI Orders that provide liquidity. The Exchange hopes that the proposed lower fee will encourage member organizations to increase liquidity providing activity on RPI Orders on the Exchange. If the proposal is effective in achieving this purpose, then the quality of the Exchange's market will improve, particularly with respect to RPI and retail orders to the benefit of all participants, especially those who submit RPI and Retail Orders.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,⁵ in general, and furthers the objectives of Sections 6(b)(4) and 6(b)(5) of the Act,⁶ 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, and is not designed to permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers. The proposal is also consistent with Section 11A of the Act relating to the establishment of the national market system for securities.

The Proposal Is Reasonable and Is an Equitable Allocation of Charges

The Exchange's proposed change to its schedule of credits and charges is reasonable in several respects. As a threshold matter, the Exchange is subject to significant competitive forces in the market for equity securities transaction services that constrain its pricing determinations in that market. The fact that this market is competitive has long been recognized by the courts. In *NetCoalition v. Securities and Exchange Commission*, the D.C. Circuit stated as follows: "[n]o one disputes that competition for order flow is 'fierce.' . . . As the SEC explained, '[i]n the U.S. national market system, buyers and sellers of securities, and the broker-dealers that act as their order-routing agents, have a wide range of choices of where to route orders for execution'; [and] 'no exchange can afford to take its market share percentages for granted' because 'no exchange possesses a monopoly, regulatory or otherwise, in the execution of order flow from broker dealers'"⁷

The Commission and the courts have repeatedly expressed their preference for competition over regulatory

intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. In Regulation NMS, while adopting a series of steps to improve the current market model, 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

Numerous indicia demonstrate the competitive nature of this market. For example, clear substitutes to the Exchange exist in the market for equity security transaction services. The Exchange is only one of several equity venues to which market participants may direct their order flow, and it represents a small percentage of the overall market. It is also only one of several taker-maker exchanges. Competing equity exchanges offer similar tiered pricing structures to that of the Exchange, including schedules of rebates and fees that apply based upon members achieving certain volume thresholds.⁹

Within this environment, market participants can freely and often do shift their order flow among the Exchange and competing venues in response to changes in their respective pricing schedules.¹⁰ Within the foregoing context, the proposal represents a reasonable attempt by the Exchange to increase its market share relative to its competitors.

The Exchange believes it is reasonable and equitable to adopt a new \$0.0018 per share executed fee for RPI Orders entered by a member that (i) quotes Retail Price Improvement Orders in at least 2,500 symbols on average per day and (ii) provides liquidity through Retail Price Improvement Orders equal to or exceeding an average daily volume of 2,500,000 shares. As discussed above, the Exchange's goal is to increase liquidity adding activity in RPI Orders on its platform. It is reasonable and equitable to address this need by

⁸ Securities Exchange Act Release No. 51808 (June 9, 2005), 70 FR 37496, 37499 (June 29, 2005) ("Regulation NMS Adopting Release").

⁹ See CBOE BYX Fee Schedule, at http://markets.cboe.com/us/equities/membership/fee_schedule/byx/; NYSE National Fee Schedule, at https://www.nyse.com/publicdocs/nyse/regulation/nyse/NYSE_National_Schedule_of_Fees.pdf.

¹⁰ The Exchange perceives no regulatory, structural, or cost impediments to market participants shifting order flow away from it. In particular, the Exchange notes that these examples of shifts in liquidity and market share, along with many others, have occurred within the context of market participants' existing duties of Best Execution and obligations under the Order Protection Rule under Regulation NMS.

³ Retail Orders shall mean an order type with a Non-Display Order Attribute submitted to the Exchange by a Retail Member Organization (as defined in Rule 4780). A Retail Order must be an agency Order, or riskless principal Order that satisfies the criteria of FINRA Rule 5320.03. The Retail Order must reflect trading interest of a natural person with no change made to the terms of the underlying order of the natural person with respect to price (except in the case of a market order that is changed to a marketable limit order) or side of market and that does not originate from a trading algorithm or any other computerized methodology. See Rule 4702(b)(6).

⁴ Retail Price Improving ("RPI") Orders shall mean an Order Type with a Non-Display Order Attribute that is held on the Exchange Book in order to provide liquidity at a price at least \$0.001 better than the NBBO through a special execution process described in Rule 4780. A Retail Price Improving Order may be entered in price increments of \$0.001. RPI Orders collectively may be referred to as "RPI Interest." See Rule 4702(b)(5).

⁵ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

⁷ *NetCoalition v. SEC*, 615 F.3d 525, 539 (D.C. Cir. 2010) (quoting Securities Exchange Act Release No. 59039 (December 2, 2008), 73 FR 74770, 74782–83 (December 9, 2008) (SR–NYSEArca–2006–21)).

providing a lower fee to member organizations that meet the proposed thresholds as an incentive for them to increase their liquidity activity in RPI Orders on the Exchange. If the proposal is effective in achieving this purpose, then the quality of the Exchange's market will improve, particularly with respect to RPI and Retail orders to the benefit of all participants, especially those who submit RPI and Retail Orders.

The Proposed Fee Is Not Unfairly Discriminatory

The Exchange believes that the proposal is not unfairly discriminatory. As an initial matter, the Exchange believes that nothing about its volume-based tiered pricing model is inherently unfair; instead, it is a rational pricing model that is well-established and ubiquitous in today's economy among firms in various industries—from co-branded credit cards to grocery stores to cellular telephone data plans—that use it to reward the loyalty of their best customers that provide high levels of business activity and incent other customers to increase the extent of their business activity. It is also a pricing model that the Exchange and its competitors have long employed with the assent of the Commission. It is fair because it incentivizes customer activity that increases liquidity, enhances price discovery, and improves the overall quality of the equity markets.

The Exchange intends for its proposal to improve market quality for all members that submit RPI and Retail Orders on the Exchange and by extension attract more liquidity to the market, improving market wide quality and price discovery. Although net adders of liquidity for RPI Orders will benefit most from the proposal, this result is fair insofar as increased liquidity adding activity in RPI Orders will help to improve market quality and the attractiveness of the Nasdaq BX market to all existing and prospective retail participants.

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

The Exchange 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.

Intramarket Competition

The Exchange does not believe that its proposal will place any category of Exchange participant at a competitive disadvantage. As noted above, all member organizations of the Exchange will benefit from any increase in market activity that the proposal effectuates.

Member organizations may modify their businesses so that they can meet the required thresholds and pay lower charges. Moreover, members are free to trade on other venues to the extent they believe that the fees assessed, and credits provided, are not attractive. As one can observe by looking at any market share chart, price competition between exchanges is fierce, with liquidity and market share moving freely between exchanges in reaction to fee and credit changes. The Exchange notes that the tier structure is consistent with broker-dealer fee practices as well as the other industries, as described above.

Intermarket Competition

The Exchange believes that its proposed modifications to its schedule of credits and charges will not impose a burden on competition because the Exchange's execution services are completely voluntary and subject to extensive competition from the other live exchanges and from off-exchange venues, which include alternative trading systems that trade national market system stock. The Exchange notes that it operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily favor competing venues if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive, or rebate opportunities available at other venues to be more favorable. In such an environment, the Exchange must continually adjust its fees to remain competitive with other exchanges and with alternative trading systems that have been exempted from compliance with the statutory standards applicable to exchanges. Because competitors are free to modify their own fees in response, and because market participants may readily adjust their order routing practices, the Exchange believes that the degree to which fee changes in this market may impose any burden on competition is extremely limited.

The proposed charge for adding liquidity is reflective of this competition because, as a threshold issue, the Exchange is a relatively small market so its ability to burden intermarket competition is limited. In this regard, even the largest U.S. equities exchange by volume has less than 17–18% market share, which in most markets could hardly be categorized as having enough market power to burden competition. Moreover, as noted above, price competition between exchanges is fierce, with liquidity and market share moving freely between exchanges in reaction to fee and credit changes. This is in addition to free flow of order flow

to and among off-exchange venues which comprised more than 40% of industry volume in recent months.

In sum, the Exchange intends for the proposed change to its fees for RPI Orders, in the aggregate, to increase member incentives to engage in the addition of liquidity on the Exchange. If the additional fee proposed herein is unattractive to market participants, it is likely that the Exchange will lose market share as a result. Accordingly, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed changes will impair the ability of members or competing order execution venues to maintain their competitive standing in the financial markets.

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.¹¹

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, 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 email to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-BX-2021-028 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.

¹¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(ii).

All submissions should refer to File Number SR–BX–2021–028. This file number should be included on the subject line if email 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–BX–2021–028 and should be submitted on or before July 19, 2021.

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.¹²

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,
Assistant Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2021–13657 Filed 6–25–21; 8:45 am]

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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34–92229; File No. SR–MRX–2021–07]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq MRX, LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Options 2, Section 4 (Obligations of Market Makers)

June 22, 2021.

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 June 15,

2021, Nasdaq MRX, LLC (“MRX” or “Exchange”) 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 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 Options 2, Section 4, Obligations of Market Makers. The Exchange also proposes to add a new Options 4C.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange's website at <https://listingcenter.nasdaq.com/rulebook/MRX/rules>, 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 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 Options 2, Section 4, Obligations of Market Makers. The Exchange also proposes to add a new Options 4C.

Options 2, Section 4(a)

The Exchange proposes to remove the following rule text from Options 2, Section 4(a), which has been in place since MRX's inception:³

... Ordinarily, Market Makers are expected to:

(1) Refrain from purchasing a call option or a put option at a price more than \$0.25 below parity, although a larger amount may be appropriate considering the particular market conditions. In the case of calls, parity is

measured by the bid in the underlying security, and in the case of puts, parity is measured by the offer in the underlying security.

(2) The \$0.25 amount above may be increased, or the provisions of this Rule may be waived, by the Exchange on a series-by-series basis.

This proposed rule text also previously existed on Cboe Exchange, Inc. within prior Rule 8.7⁴ and was removed from Cboe's Rulebook in 2019.⁵ The Exchange likewise desires to remove this restriction on Market Makers which does not exist on Cboe or other Nasdaq affiliated markets.⁶ The proposed rule text is currently waived on MRX pursuant to Options 2, Section 4(a)(2). The Exchange proposes to remove this rule text from Options 2, Section 4 as the Exchange does not desire to enforce this provision in the future. The Exchange believes that this market maker provision is no longer necessary. Today, MRX incentivizes Market Makers through allocation⁷ to quote tightly in their assigned options series. Primary Market Makers and Competitive Market Makers also have other obligations with respect to market making⁸ in addition to other quoting

⁴ Prior Interpretation and Policy .02 to Rule 8.7 provided, “Market-Makers are expected ordinarily to refrain from purchasing a call option or a put option at a price more than \$0.25 below parity, although a larger amount may be appropriate considering the particular market conditions. In the case of calls, parity is measured by the bid in the underlying security, and in the case of puts, parity is measured by the offer in the underlying security. The \$0.25 amount above may be increased, or the provisions of this Interpretation may be waived, by the Exchange on a series-by-series basis.”

⁵ Cboe's rule change merely noted, with respect to the removal of Cboe's parity rule, that the filing makes non-substantive changes to the rule governing a Market-Maker's general obligations (current Rule 8.7, in part), most of which remove redundant provisions that are already covered under the umbrella of a Market-Maker's obligation to engage in dealing to maintain fair and orderly markets. No specific argument is provided with respect to removing this provision. See Securities Exchange Act 87024 (September 19, 2019), 84 FR 50545 (September 25, 2019) (SR–CBOE–2019–059) (Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of a Proposed Rule Change To Amend Certain Rules Relating To Market-Makers Upon Migration to the Trading System Used by Cboe Affiliated Exchanges).

⁶ See Nasdaq Phlx LLC, The Nasdaq Options Market LLC and Nasdaq BX, Inc. at Options 2, Section 4 (Obligations of Market Makers).

⁷ See Options 3, Section 10 (Priority of Quotes and Orders). Primary Market Makers are offered an enhanced allocation provided the Primary Market Maker is quoting at same price as a non-Priority Customer Order or Market Maker quote.

⁸ See Options 2, Section 4. MRX Market Makers must for example: (1) Compete with other Market Makers to improve the market in all series of options classes to which the Market Maker is appointed; (2) make markets that, absent changed market conditions, will be honored for the number of contracts entered into the Exchange's System in all series of options classes to which the Market

Continued

¹² 17 CFR 200.30–3(a)(12).

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b–4.

³ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 70050 (July 26, 2013), 78 FR 46622 (August 1, 2013) (Application of Topaz Exchange, LLC for Registration as a National Securities Exchange; Findings, Opinion, and Order of the Commission).