

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION
www.flsb.uscourts.gov

In re:

CHAPTER 11

PALM BEACH FINANCE PARTNERS, L.P.,
PALM BEACH FINANCE II, L.P.,

Case No. 09-36379-PGH
Case No. 09-36396-PGH
(Jointly Administered)

Debtors.

**LIQUIDATING TRUSTEE’S MOTION
FOR APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT WITH
VINCENT ALLEGRA AND PAYMENT OF CONTINGENCY FEE**

Any interested party who fails to file and serve a written response to this motion within 21 days after the date of service stated in this motion shall, pursuant to Local Rule 9013-1(D), be deemed to have consented to the entry of an order in the form attached to this motion. Any scheduled hearing may then be cancelled.

Barry E. Mukamal, in his capacity as liquidating trustee (“*Liquidating Trustee*”) for the Palm Beach Finance Partners Liquidating Trust (“*Liquidating Trust*”), by and through undersigned counsel, and pursuant to *Fed. R. Bankr. P.* 9019, seeks an Order from this Court approving a settlement of claims asserted against Vincent Allegra (“*Allegra*”). In support of this relief, the Liquidating Trustee states the following:

I. Factual Background

A. *The Pre-Petition Activities of PBF I*

1. The Liquidating Trust is the successor to Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. (“*PBF I*”).
2. PBF I was formed to lend monies in purchase financing transactions supposedly brokered by Thomas Petters and his company, Petters Company, Inc. (“*PCI*”) in the consumer goods business.

The idea was that PBF I and other lenders would supply bridge financing to PCI and then later, once

goods were received by a particular big box retailer, the retailer would remit the payment to the lender or PCI.

3. In reality, PBF I's investments in PCI were worthless - PCI's purchase and financing transactions were fictitious and part of an elaborate, multi-billion dollar *ponzi* scheme perpetrated by Mr. Petters, Deanna Munson a/k/a Deanna Coleman, Robert White and others. No retailer ever made any payment on the purchase and sale of goods because the deals never existed.

4. On September 24, 2008, federal agents raided Mr. Petters' offices. Thereafter, Mr. Petters' companies were placed into federal receivership. Ultimately, Mr. Petters was convicted of his crimes and sentenced to 50 years in prison. Other persons complicit in the fraud were sentenced to prison sentences as well.

5. On November 30, 2009 ("***Petition Date***"), PBF I commenced a Chapter 11 bankruptcy case by filing a voluntary petition for relief under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida ("***Bankruptcy Court***").

6. On October 21, 2010, the Bankruptcy Court entered its Order Confirming Second Amended Plan of Liquidation [ECF No. 444], creating the Liquidating Trust and appointing the Liquidating Trustee as liquidating trustee.

B. *Transfers Made to Allegra*

7. Allegra was a limited partner in PBF I.

8. Based on a cash in, cash out analysis, Allegra received a profit in the amount of \$125,000.00 ("***Profit Distribution***") with respect to his limited partner investment in PBF I.

II. Settlement Terms

9. The key aspects of the stipulation of settlement between the parties (“*Stipulation*”) are the following:¹

- a) Allegra shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$30,000.00 to the Liquidating Trustee over a period of 30 months (“*Settlement Payment*”). The Settlement Payment shall be made in 30 monthly installment payments, with the first payment due on or before April 3, 2014, and each successive payment due on or before the 3rd calendar day of every month (“*Installment Payments*”).
- b) The parties shall exchange mutual, general releases; and
- c) Allegra shall not be entitled to any distribution from the PBF I bankruptcy estate.

III. Relief Requested

10. The Liquidating Trustee seeks an Order from this Court (a) approving the Stipulation and (b) approving the Contingency Fee (as defined below).

11. Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9019 provides in relevant part that [o]n motion . . . and after a hearing on notice to creditors; the debtor . . . and to such other entities as the Court may designate, the Court may approve a compromise or settlement.”

12. Approval of a settlement in a bankruptcy proceeding is within the sole discretion of the Court and will not be disturbed or modified on appeal unless approval or disapproval is an abuse of discretion. *In re Arrow Air*, 85 BR 891 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 1988).

13. The standards for approval are well settled and require the Court to inquire into the reasonableness of the proposed settlement. *See, e.g., Protective Comm. for Indep. Stockholders of TMT Trailer Ferry, Inc. v. Anderson*, 390 U.S. 414, 424 (1968); *In re W.T. Grant Co.*, 699 F.2d 599, 608 (2d Cir. 1983); *Florida Trailer and Equip. Co. v. Deal*, 284 F.2d 567, 571 (5th Cir. 1960). The inquiry need

¹ A copy of the Stipulation is attached as Exhibit 1. To the extent the terms of the agreement differ with the terms set forth in this Motion, the agreement shall control.

only determine whether the settlement falls below the lowest point of the range of reasonableness. *See W.T. Grant Co.*, 699 F.2d at 608; *see also In re Martin*, 91 F.3d 389 (3rd Cir. 1996); *In re Louise's Inc.*, 211 B.R. 798 (D. Del. 1997) (setting forth considerations by the Court for approval of a settlement, including: (i) the probability of success in litigation, (ii) the likely difficulties in collection; (iii) the complexity of the litigation involved, and the expense, inconvenience and delay necessarily attending it; and (iv) the paramount interest of the creditors.

A. *The Stipulation Ought to be Approved*

14. Based upon the above legal principles, the Liquidating Trustee asserts that the Stipulation falls well above the lowest point of the range of reasonableness, and thus, should be approved.

Probability of success in litigation

15. The Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust, could assert that the Profit Distribution to Allegra was a constructively fraudulent transfer under federal or state law, or alternatively, that Allegra was unjustly enriched by the Profit Distribution.

16. The Liquidating Trustee believes that he will likely succeed in prosecuting either of these causes of action.

17. Nonetheless, the Liquidating Trustee acknowledges that there are risks inherent in all litigation and there is the possibility that Allegra, or other similarly situated parties, could raise certain issues or defenses that potentially could impact the Liquidating Trustee's claims.

Collectability

18. Collectability is a significant issue that substantiates approval of the Stipulation. Assuming the Liquidating Trustee was successful in obtaining a judgment against Allegra, he would have to engage in collection efforts.

19. Such efforts would be futile. Allegra has provided the Liquidating Trustee financial documents demonstrating his financial incapacity.

20. Further, due to Allegra's financial incapacity, Allegra has indicated to the Liquidating Trustee that he is unable to pay the Settlement Payment immediately. Allegra's purported inability to pay has been factored in for purposes of making the Settlement Payment over multiple months.

Complexity of litigation and attendant expense, inconvenience and delay

21. This is a meaningful consideration that militates in favor of approval of the Stipulation.

22. In sum, although many of the claims outlined above are typical claims litigated before this Court, they still potentially require retention of experts and extensive fact discovery before a trial could take place. Moreover, assuming the Liquidating Trustee was successful in obtaining a judgment against Allegra, he would then have to engage in collection efforts.

23. Considering the amount in controversy, the result of these efforts will be substantial professional fees that could exceed the actual recovery from any litigation.

24. The Stipulation addresses these concerns. The parties avoid litigating fact specific claims, with the attendant expense and delay of litigation being nullified.

Paramount interest of creditors

25. The Settlement Payment represents a 38% recovery of the Profit Distribution and a waiver of any potential or corresponding claim. This amount conforms with similar claims that have been settled. Moreover, this result gives certainty to the estate and avoids the risk, expense and delay attendant with litigation. As such, the Stipulation is in the paramount interest of PBF I's creditors and should be approved.

B. The Contingency Fee Ought to be Approved

26. Pursuant to the Plan and this Court's Order Approving the Trustee's Motion to Approve Hybrid Form of Compensation [ECF No. 223], Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A. ("**MRB**") is entitled to a contingency fee of 10% for any affirmative recovery it obtains on behalf of the Liquidating Trust without further order of the Court ("**Contingency Fee**").

27. As such, MRB requests that the Contingency Fee be paid from the Settlement Payment upon the Liquidating Trustee's receipt of the final monthly installment of the Settlement Payment without further Order from this Court.

WHEREFORE, the Liquidating Trustee respectfully requests that this Court enter an Order (similar in form to the Order attached as Exhibit 2) (1) approving the Stipulation; (2) approving payment of the Contingency Fee; and (3) granting such other relief this Court deems just and proper.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that, on March 20, 2014, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served via the Court's Notice of Electronic Filing on those parties listed on the attached Exhibit 3; via U.S. Mail to those parties on the service list attached as Exhibit 4; and via electronic mail upon David Wabick, wab27@aol.com.

s/ Joshua A. Marcus
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Telephone: (305) 358-6363
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*Attorneys for Barry E. Mukamal,
Liquidating Trustee*

STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT

This Stipulation of Settlement ("*Stipulation*") is entered into on _____, 2014 by and between (a) Barry E. Mukamal, in his capacity as liquidating trustee (the "*Liquidating Trustee*") of the Palm Beach Finance Partners Liquidating Trust (the "*Liquidating Trust*") and (b) Vincent Allegra ("*Mr. Allegra*") (the Liquidating Trustee and Mr. Allegra are at times individually referred to as a "*Party*" or collectively, the "*Parties*"). The terms of this Stipulation are as follows:

RECITALS

A. On November 30, 2009 (the "*Petition Date*"), Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. ("*PBF I*") commenced a Chapter 11 bankruptcy case by filing a voluntary petition for relief under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida (the "*Bankruptcy Court*");

B. On October 21, 2010, the Bankruptcy Court entered its Order Confirming Second Amended Plan of Liquidation [ECF No. 444], creating the Liquidating Trust and appointing the Liquidating Trustee as liquidating trustee;

C. On November 17, 2011, the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust, filed an adversary proceeding against Mr. Allegra, Adv. Case No. 11-2803-PGH, that seeks to recover certain transfers made by PBF I to or for the benefit of Mr. Allegra (the "*Litigation*");

D. Mr. Allegra expressly denies the claims that are asserted in the Litigation;

E. The Parties have engaged in discussions in an attempt to resolve any and all issues, including the claims asserted in the Litigation; and

F. To avoid the continued expense and risk of adverse outcome arising from the Litigation, as well as incurring costs and expenses associated therewith, among other reasons, the

Parties have agreed to resolve the Litigation pursuant to the terms and conditions of this Stipulation.

NOW, WHEREFORE, it is stipulated, consented to and agreed, by and among the Parties as follows:

1. **No admission of liability.** The Parties acknowledge that this Stipulation is a compromise and settlement of a controversy. No Party admits, and each expressly denies, any liability on its part.

2. **Entire agreement.** This Stipulation constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between the Parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and there are no other stipulations, agreements, representations, or warranties other than those specifically set forth herein. All prior agreements and understandings between the Parties concerning the subject matter hereof are superseded by the terms of this Stipulation.

3. **Settlement Payment.** In full and final settlement of the Litigation, Mr. Allegra shall pay (or cause to be paid) the aggregate sum of \$30,000.00 (the "**Settlement Payment**") as follows:

- a. Mr. Allegra shall make the Settlement Payment in thirty (30) monthly payments each in the amount of \$1,000.00 ("**Monthly Installment**").
- b. The first Monthly Installment shall be made on or before April 3, 2014, with subsequent Monthly Installments payments being made on or before the 3rd calendar day of each month.
- c. Each Monthly Installment shall be made via (i) wire transfer pursuant to written instructions to be provided by the Liquidating Trustee or his counsel or (ii) check made payable to "Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee" and delivered to Joshua A. Marcus, Esq., Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A., 200

South Biscayne Blvd., Suite 3200, Miami, Florida 33131.

4. **Default.** In the event Mr. Allegra fails to timely pay any Monthly Installment, the Liquidating Trustee may file a Certificate of Default with the Bankruptcy Court and move for the entry of a final judgment against Mr. Allegra for the amount of funds still owed under the terms of this Stipulation ("**Deficiency**") and the Court shall enter a final judgment against Mr. Allegra in the amount of the Deficiency ("**Judgment**"). The Judgment shall provide for (a) interest at the then current statutory rates of interest under Fla. Stat. § 55.03, but no greater than the rate of 8% compounded annually from the date of entry of a final order approving this Agreement and (b) award payment of reasonable attorney's fees incurred to collect any such Deficiency.

5. **No entitlement to distribution.** Mr. Allegra agrees that he shall not be entitled to any monetary distribution whatsoever from the Liquidating Trust or PBF I. To the extent Mr. Allegra has scheduled or filed any proof of claim or proof of interest in the PBF I bankruptcy case, such claim or interest shall be deemed disallowed in its entirety and be stricken.

6. **General releases between the Parties.**

A. For purposes of this Stipulation, the term "**Claims**" shall mean any obligations, causes of action, demands of any type that a party may presently have, may have or have had in the past, upon or by reason of any matter, cause or thing whatsoever, including without limitation any and all obligations, causes of actions and demands of any kind whatsoever, at law or in equity, indirect, derivative, or direct, known or unknown, discovered or undiscovered.

B. Upon approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the Settlement Payment, the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust and PBF I, waives, releases and holds harmless, now and forever, Mr. Allegra from any and all Claims that the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust or PBF I may have

against Mr. Allegra; provided that nothing herein shall be deemed to release, waive or otherwise limit any rights or obligations arising out of this Stipulation. The scope of this release shall not impact, impair or alter in any manner any Claims whatsoever that the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust or PBF I, may have against any parties other than Mr. Allegra, including but not limited to Claims against any alleged concurrent or consecutive tortfeasors, if any.

C. Upon approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the entire Settlement Payment, Mr. Allegra waives, releases and holds harmless, now and forever, the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust and PBF I from any and all Claims that Mr. Allegra may have against the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust or PBF I; provided that this provision does not release, waive or otherwise limit any rights or obligations arising out of this Stipulation.

7. **Authorization to bind.** The individuals signing below represent and warrant that they have the authority to execute this Stipulation on behalf of the applicable Party and bind them to its terms.

8. **Review/No Duress.** Each of the Parties acknowledges that he, she or it has read all of the terms of this Stipulation, has had an opportunity to consult with counsel of his, her or its own choosing or voluntarily waived such right, and enters into those terms voluntarily and without duress.

9. **Attorneys' fees and costs.** Each Party shall bear its own attorneys' fees and costs in connection with the negotiation of this Stipulation and motions and orders as may be necessary to obtain the approval of this Stipulation by the Bankruptcy Court; provided that that in the event of any litigation between the Parties under this Stipulation or arising as a result of a default under this Stipulation, the prevailing Party shall be entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees

and costs related thereto, including, but not limited to, those incurred at all trial and appellate levels.

10. **No waiver of modification.** This Stipulation and any of the specific items, covenants, and conditions contained herein, may not be waived, changed, altered or modified except by an instrument in writing signed by the Party against whom enforcement of such change is sought.

11. **Effective date.** This Stipulation shall be effective upon execution by all of the Parties hereto, subject only to approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the Settlement Payment. Upon it becoming effective, this Stipulation shall be binding on all of the Parties' successors or assigns.

12. **No effect.** If the Bankruptcy Court does not approve this Stipulation, then the Stipulation shall be of no further force or effect, and the Parties shall be restored to their rights as they existed prior to the execution of this Stipulation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Bankruptcy Court does not approve this Stipulation because any of the Parties have failed to provide the Bankruptcy Court with adequate information to rule on the merits of the Stipulation, the Parties will use their best efforts to seek reconsideration of any order declining to approve the Stipulation, or to file an amended motion to approve the Stipulation.

13. **Controlling law.** This Stipulation shall in all respects be construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Florida applicable to contracts made and to be performed wholly within the State of Florida and by federal law to the extent the same has preempted the laws of the State of Florida.

14. **Counterparts.** This Stipulation may be executed in any number of counterparts and by different parties hereto in separate counterparts, each of which when so executed shall be deemed to be an original and all of which taken together shall constitute one and the same

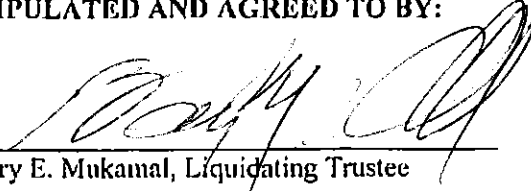
Stipulation. Delivery of an executed counterpart of a signature page to this Stipulation by facsimile shall be effective as delivery of a manually executed counterpart of this Stipulation.

15. **Construction.** This Stipulation shall be deemed to have been jointly drafted by the Parties, and in construing and interpreting this Stipulation, no provision shall be construed and interpreted for or against any of the Parties because such provision or any other provision of the Stipulation as a whole is purportedly prepared or requested by such Party.

16. **Jurisdiction.** The Bankruptcy Court shall retain exclusive jurisdiction to enforce the terms of this Stipulation.

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STIPULATED AND AGREED TO BY:



Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee

Date: 3/19/14



Vincent Allegra

Date: 3/17/14

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION
www.flsb.uscourts.gov

In re:

CHAPTER 11

PALM BEACH FINANCE PARTNERS, L.P.,
PALM BEACH FINANCE II, L.P.,

Case No. 09-36379-PGH
Case No. 09-36396-PGH
(Jointly Administered)

Debtors.

**ORDER GRANTING LIQUIDATING TRUSTEE'S
MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT WITH
VINCENT ALLEGRA AND PAYMENT OF CONTINGENCY FEE**

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Liquidating Trustee's *Motion for Approval of Settlement with Vincent Allegra and Payment of Contingency Fee* [ECF No. ____] ("**Motion**"). The Court, having reviewed the Motion and noting that a Certificate of No Response and Request for Entry of Order has been filed, finds that the notice of the proposed compromise and settlement is sufficient to comply with Bankruptcy Rules 9019 and 2002(a)(3), Local Rule 9013-1(D) and any other applicable notice requirement, and accordingly, it is:

EXHIBIT 2

ORDERED as follows:

1. The Motion is **GRANTED**.

2. The Settlement is **APPROVED**.

3. Mr. Allegra shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$30,000.00 (the “*Settlement Payment*”) as follows:

A. Mr. Allegra shall make the Settlement Payment in 30 monthly installment payments each in the amount of \$1,000.00 (“*Monthly Installment*”).

B. The first Monthly Installment shall be made on or before April 3, 2014. Thereafter, each Monthly Installment shall be made on or before the third day of each calendar month.

4. The Settlement Payment may be made via (i) wire transfer pursuant to written instructions to be provided by the Liquidating Trustee or his counsel or (ii) check made payable to “Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee” and delivered to Joshua A. Marcus, Esq., Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A., 200 South Biscayne Blvd., Suite 3200, Miami, Florida 33131.

5. To the extent Mr. Allegra has any scheduled claim or proof of interest or have filed a proof of claim or proof of interest in the PBF I bankruptcy case, such claim or interest is deemed disallowed in its entirety.

6. The Court retains jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Settlement.

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7. MRB's Contingency Fee is approved and the Liquidating Trustee is authorized to pay the amount of \$3,000.00 to MRB upon the Liquidating Trustee's receipt of the final Monthly Installment.

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Submitted By:

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Copies Furnished To:

Joshua A. Marcus, Esquire, is directed to serve copies of this Order on all parties in interest and to file a Certificate of Service.

Mailing Information for Case 09-36379-PGH

Electronic Mail Notice List

The following is the list of **parties** who are currently on the list to receive email notice/service for this case.

- **Geoffrey S. Aaronson** gaaronson@aspalaw.com, jevans@aspalaw.com
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