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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-88669; File No. SR-MRX-2020-10]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq MRX, LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Adopt a New Rule Titled Transfer of Positions within Options 6, Section 5

April 16, 2020.

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 April 7, 2020, Nasdaq MRX, LLC (“MRX” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I and II, 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 adopt a new rule titled “Transfer of Positions” within Options 6, Section 5.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s Website at <http://nasdaqmrxcchwallstreet.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

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

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 adopt a new rule titled, "Transfer of Positions" within Options 6, Section 5, which is currently reserved. Today, MRX does not permit transfers. This proposed rule specifies the specific limited circumstances under which a Member may effect transfers of positions. This rule would permit market participants to move positions from one account to another without first exposure of the transaction on the MRX. This rule would permit transfers upon the occurrence of significant, non-recurring events. The proposed rule change is similar to Cboe Rule 6.7.³

Permissible Transfers

The Exchange proposes to adopt new Options 6, Section 5 titled "Transfer of Positions" to provide for the circumstances pursuant to which Members may transfer their options positions without first exposing the order. This rule states that a Member must be on at least one side of the transfer. This rule is similar to CBOE Rule 6.7. Currently, MRX has no rule that specifically addresses transfers.

The Exchange proposes to provide at proposed Options 6, Section 5(a), "*Permissible Transfers*". Existing positions in options listed on the Exchange of a Member or non-Member

³ See Securities and Exchange Act Release No. 88424 (March 19, 2020), 85 FR 16981 (March 25, 2020) (SR-Cboe-2019-035) (Notice of Filing of Amendment Nos. 1 and 2 and Order Granting Accelerated Approval of a Proposed Rule Change, as Modified by Amendment Nos. 1 and 2, Regarding Off-Floor Position Transfers).

that are to be transferred on, from, or to the books of a Clearing Member may be transferred off the Exchange if the transfer involves one or more of the following events:

- (1) pursuant to Options 9, Section 5, an adjustment or transfer in connection with the correction of a bona fide error in the recording of a transaction or the transferring of a position to another account, provided that the original trade documentation confirms the error;
- (2) the transfer of positions from one account to another account where no change in ownership is involved (i.e., accounts of the same Person, provided the accounts are not in separate aggregation units or otherwise subject to information barrier or account segregation requirements;
- (3) the consolidation of accounts where no change in ownership is involved;
- (4) a merger, acquisition, consolidation, or similar non-recurring transaction for a Person;
- (5) the dissolution of a joint account in which the remaining Member assumes the positions of the joint account;
- (6) the dissolution of a corporation or partnership in which a former nominee of the corporation or partnership assumes the positions;
- (7) positions transferred as part of a Member's capital contribution to a new joint account, partnership, or corporation;
- (8) the donation of positions to a not-for-profit corporation;
- (9) the transfer of positions to a minor under the Uniform Gifts to Minors Act; or

(10) the transfer of positions through operation of law from death, bankruptcy, or otherwise.⁴

The Exchange proposes to define “Person” as “an individual, partnership (general or limited), joint stock company, corporation, limited liability company, trust or unincorporated organization, or any governmental entity or agency or political subdivision thereof.”⁵ The proposed rule change makes clear that the transferred positions must be on, from, or to the books of a Clearing Member. The proposed rule change states that existing positions of a Member or a non-Member may be subject to an transfer, except under specified circumstances in which a transfer may only be effected for positions of a Member.⁶ The Exchange notes transfers of positions in Exchange-listed options may also be subject to applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including rules of other self-regulatory organizations.⁷ Except as explicitly provided in the proposed rule text, the proposed rule change is not intended to exempt position transfers from any other applicable rules or regulations, and proposed paragraph (h) makes this clear in the rule.

Proposed Options 6, Section (b) codifies Exchange guidance regarding certain restrictions on permissible transfers related to netting of open positions and to margin and haircut treatment, unless otherwise permitted by proposed paragraph (f). No position may net against another position (“netting”), and no position transfer may result in preferential margin or haircut treatment.⁸ Netting occurs when long positions and short positions in the same series “offset”

⁴ See Cboe Rule 6.7(a).

⁵ See Cboe Rule 1.1.

⁶ See proposed Options 6, Section 5(a)(5) and (7).

⁷ See proposed Options 6, Section 5(h).

⁸ For example, positions may not transfer from a customer, joint back office, or firm account to a Market Maker account. However, positions may transfer from a Market Maker account to a customer, joint back office, or firm account (assuming no netting of positions occurs).

against each other, leaving no or a reduced position. For example, if a Member wanted to transfer 100 long calls to another account that contained short calls of the same options series as well as other positions, even if the transfer is permitted pursuant to one of the 10 permissible events listed in the proposed Rule, the Member could not transfer the offsetting series, as they would net against each other and close the positions.⁹

However, netting is permitted for transfers on behalf of a Market Maker account for transactions in multiply listed options series on different options exchanges, but only if the Market Maker nominees are trading for the same Member, and the options transactions on the different options exchanges clear into separate exchange-specific accounts because they cannot easily clear into the same Market Maker account at the Clearing Corporation. In such instances, all Market Maker positions in the exchange-specific accounts for the multiply listed class would be automatically transferred on their trade date into one central Market Maker account (commonly referred to as a “universal account”) at the Clearing Corporation. Positions cleared into a universal account would automatically net against each other. Options exchanges permit different naming conventions with respect to Market Maker account acronyms (for example, lettering versus numbering and number of characters), which are used for accounts at the Clearing Corporation. A Market Maker may have a nominee with an appointment in class XYZ on Phlx, and have another nominee with an appointment in class XYZ on MRX, but due to account acronym naming conventions, those nominees may need to clear their transactions into separate accounts (one for Phlx Options transactions and another for MRX transactions) at the Clearing Corporation rather than into a universal account (in which account the positions may net).

⁹ See Cboe Rule 6.7(b).

The proposed rule change permits transfers from these separate exchange-specific accounts into the Market Maker's universal account in this circumstance to achieve this purpose.

Transfer Price

Proposed Options 6, Section 5(c) states the transfer price, to the extent it is consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including rules of other self-regulatory organizations, and tax and accounting rules and regulations, at which an transfer is effected may be: (1) the original trade prices of the positions that appear on the books of the trading Clearing Member, in which case the records of the transfer must indicate the original trade dates for the positions; provided, transfers to correct bona fide errors pursuant to proposed subparagraph (a)(1) must be transferred at the correct original trade prices; (2) mark-to-market prices of the positions at the close of trading on the transfer date; (3) mark-to-market prices of the positions at the close of trading on the trade date prior to the transfer date¹⁰; or (4) the then-current market price of the positions at the time the transfer is effected.¹¹

This proposed rule change provides market participants that effect transactions with flexibility to select a transfer price based on circumstances of the transfer and their business. However, for corrections of bona fide errors, because those transfers are necessary to correct processing errors that occurred at the time of transaction, those transfers would occur at the original transaction price, as the purpose of the transfer is to create the originally intended result of the transaction.

¹⁰ For example, for a transfer that occurs on a Tuesday, the transfer price may be based on the closing market price on Monday.

¹¹ See Cboe Rule 6.7(c).

Prior Written Notice

Proposed Options 6, Section 5(d) requires a Member and its Clearing Member (to the extent that the Member is not self-clearing) to submit to the Exchange, in a manner determined by the Exchange, written notice prior to effecting an transfer from or to the account of a Member(s).¹² The notice must indicate: the Exchange-listed options positions to be transferred; the nature of the transaction; the enumerated provision(s) under proposed paragraph (a) pursuant to which the positions are being transferred; the name of the counterparty(ies); the anticipated transfer date; the method for determining the transfer price; and any other information requested by the Exchange.¹³ The proposed notice will ensure the Exchange is aware of all transfers so that it can monitor and review them (including the records that must be retained pursuant to proposed paragraph (e)) to determine whether they are effected in accordance with the Rules.

Additionally, requiring notice from the Member(s) and its Clearing Member(s) will ensure both parties are in agreement with respect to the terms of the transfer. As noted in proposed subparagraph (d)(2), receipt of notice of an transfer does not constitute a determination by the Exchange that the transfer was effected or reported in conformity with the requirements of proposed Section 10(b). Notwithstanding submission of written notice to the Exchange, Members and Clearing Members that effect transfers that do not conform to the requirements of proposed Section 10(b) will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Rules.

¹² This notice provision applies only to transfers involving a Member's positions and not to positions of non-Member parties, as they are not subject to the Rules. In addition, no notice would be required to effect transfers to correct bona fide errors pursuant to proposed subparagraph (a)(1).

¹³ See Cboe Rule 6.7(d).

Records

Similarly, proposed Options 6, Section 5(e) requires each Member and each Clearing Member that is a party to a transfer must make and retain records of the information provided in the written notice to the Exchange pursuant to proposed subparagraph (e)(1), as well as information on the actual Exchange-listed options that are ultimately transferred, the actual transfer date, and the actual transfer price (and the original trade dates, if applicable), and any other information the Exchange may request the Member or Clearing Member provide.¹⁴

Presidential Exemption

Proposed paragraph (f) provides exemptions approved by the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee). Specifically, this provision is in addition to the exemptions set forth in proposed paragraph (a). The Exchange proposes that the Exchange Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) may grant an exemption from the requirement of this proposed Rule, on his or her own motion or upon application of the Member (with respect to the Member's positions) or a Clearing Member (with respect to positions carried and cleared by the Clearing Members). The Chief Executive Officer, the President or his or her designee, may permit a transfer if necessary or appropriate for the maintenance of a fair and orderly market and the protection of investors and is in the public interest, including due to unusual or extraordinary circumstances. For example, an exemption may be granted if the market value of the Person's positions would be compromised by having to comply with the requirement to trade on the Exchange pursuant to the normal

¹⁴ See Cboe Rule 6.7(e).

auction process or when, in the judgment of the Chief Executive Officer, President or his or her designee, market conditions make trading on the Exchange impractical.¹⁵

Routine, Recurring Transfers

The Exchange proposes within Options 6, Section 5(g) that the transfer procedure set forth in Options 6, Section 5 is intended to facilitate non-routine, nonrecurring movements of positions.¹⁶ The transfer procedure is not to be used repeatedly or routinely in circumvention of the normal auction market process.

Exchange-Listed Options

The Exchange proposes within Options 6, Section 5(h) notes that the transfer procedure set forth in Options 6, Section 5 is only applicable to positions in options listed on the Exchange. Transfers of positions in Exchange-listed options may also be subject to applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including rules of other self-regulatory organizations. Transfers of non-Exchange listed options and other financial instruments are not governed by this Rule.¹⁷

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,¹⁸ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,¹⁹ in particular, in that it is designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general to protect investors and the public interest.

¹⁵ See Cboe Rule 6.7(f).

¹⁶ See Cboe Rule 6.7(g).

¹⁷ See Cboe Rule 6.7(h).

¹⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

¹⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

Specifically, the Exchange believes the proposed transfer rule is consistent with the Section 6(b)(5)²⁰ requirements that the rules of an exchange be 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 regulating, clearing, settling, processing information with respect to, and facilitating transactions in securities, to remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. Additionally, the Exchange believes the proposed rule change is consistent with the Section 6(b)(5)²¹ requirement that the rules of an exchange not be designed to permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers.

The Exchange believes that permitting transfers under new Options 6, Section 5 in very limited circumstances is reasonable to allow a Member to accomplish certain goals efficiently. The proposed rule permits transfers in situations involving dissolutions of entities or accounts, for purposes of donations, mergers or by operation of law. For example, a Member that is undergoing a structural change and a one-time movement of positions may require a transfer of positions or a Member that is leaving a firm that will no longer be in business may require a transfer of positions to another firm. Also, a Member may require a transfer of positions to make a capital contribution. The above-referenced circumstances are non-recurring situations where the transferor continues to maintain some ownership interest or manage the positions transferred. By contrast, repeated or routine transfers between entities or accounts – even if there is no change in beneficial ownership as a result of the transfer – is inconsistent with the purposes for which the proposed rule was adopted. Accordingly, the Exchange believes that

²⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

²¹ Id.

such activity should not be permitted under the rules and thus, seeks to adopt language in proposed paragraph (f) to proposed Options 6, Section 5 that the transfer of positions procedures set forth the proposed rule are intended to facilitate non-recurring movements of positions.

The proposed rule change will provide market participants that experience these limited, non-recurring events with an efficient and effective means to transfer positions in these situations. The Exchange believes the proposed rule change regarding permissible transfer prices provides market participants with flexibility to determine the price appropriate for their business, which maintain cost bases in accordance with normal accounting practices and removes impediments to a free and open market.

The proposed rule change which requires notice and maintenance of records will ensure the Exchange is able to review transfers for compliance with the Rules, which prevents fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices. The requirement to retain records is consistent with the requirements of Rule 17a-3 and 17a-4 under the Act.

Similar to Cboe Rule 6.7, the Exchange would permit a presidential exemption. The Exchange believes that this exemption is consistent with the Act because the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) would consider an exemption in very limited circumstances. The transfer process is intended to facilitate non-routine, nonrecurring movements of positions and, therefore, is not to be used repeatedly or routinely in circumvention of the normal auction market process. Proposed Options 6, Section 5(f) specifically provides within the rule text that the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) may in his or her judgment allow a transfer if it is necessary or appropriate for the maintenance of a fair and orderly market and the protection of investors and is in the public

interest, including due to unusual or extraordinary circumstances such as the market value of the Person's positions will be comprised by having to comply with the requirement to trade on the Exchange pursuant to the normal auction process or, when in the judgment of President or his or her designee, market conditions make trading on the Exchange impractical. These standards within proposed Options 6, Section 5(f) are intended to provide guidance concerning the use of this exemption which is intended to provide the Exchange with the ability to utilize the exemption for the maintenance of a fair and orderly market and the protection of investors and is in the public interest. The Exchange believes that the exemption is consistent with the Act because it would allow the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) to act in certain situations which comply with the guidance within Options 6, Section 5(f) which are intended to protect investors and the general public. While Cboe grants an exemption to the President (or senior-level designee),²² the Exchange has elected to grant an exemption to Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee), who are similarly situated with the organization as senior-level individuals.

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 that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

The Exchange does not believe the proposed rule change will impose an undue burden on intra-market competition as the transfer procedure may be utilized by any Member and the rule will apply uniformly to all Members. Use of the transfer procedure is voluntary, and all Members may use the procedure to transfer positions as long as the criteria in the proposed rule are satisfied. With this change, a Member that experiences limited permissible, non-recurring

²² See Cboe Rule 6.7(f).

events would have an efficient and effective means to transfer positions in these situations. The Exchange believes the proposed rule change regarding permissible transfer prices provides market participants with flexibility to determine the price appropriate for their business, which determine prices in accordance with normal accounting practices and removes impediments to a free and open market. The Exchange does not believe the proposed notice and record requirements are unduly burdensome to market participants. The Exchange believes the proposed requirements are reasonable and will ensure the Exchange is aware of transfers and would be able to monitor and review the transfers to ensure the transfer falls within the proposed rule.

Adopting an exemption, similar to Cboe Rule 6.7, to permit the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) to grant an exemption to Options 6, Section 5(a) prohibition if, in his or her judgment, does not impose an undue burden on competition. Circumstances where, due to unusual or extraordinary circumstances such as the market value of the Person's positions would be comprised by having to comply with the requirement to trade on the Exchange pursuant to the normal auction process or, would be taken into consideration in each case where, in the judgment of the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee), market conditions make trading on the Exchange impractical.

The Exchange does not believe the proposed rule change will impose an undue burden on inter-market competition. The proposed position transfer procedure is not intended to be a competitive trading tool. The proposed rule change permits, in limited circumstances, a transfer to facilitate non-routine, nonrecurring movements of positions. As provided for in proposed Options 6, Section 5(g), it would not be used repeatedly or routinely in circumvention of the

normal auction market process. Proposed Options 6, Section 5(a) specifically provides within the rule text that the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) may in his or her judgment allow a transfer for the maintenance of a fair and orderly market and the protection of investors and is in the public interest. The Exchange believes that the exemption does not impose an undue burden on competition as the Exchange's Chief Executive Officer or President (or senior-level designee) would apply the exemption consistent with the guidance within Options 6, Section 5(f). Additionally, as discussed above, the proposed rule change is similar to Cboe Rule 6.7. The Exchange believes having similar rules related to transfer positions to those of other options exchanges will reduce the administrative burden on market participants of determining whether their transfers comply with multiple sets of rules.

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

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 Act²³ and subparagraph (f)(6) of Rule 19b-4 thereunder.²⁴

²³ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(iii).

²⁴ 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.

A proposed rule change filed under Rule 19b-4(f)(6) normally does not become operative for 30 days from the date of filing. However, Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii)²⁵ permits the Commission to 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. The Commission notes that waiver of the operative delay would provide Members with the ability to request a transfer, for limited, non-recurring types of transfers, without the need for exposing those orders on the Exchange, similar to Cboe.²⁶ The Commission believes that waiver of the 30-day operative delay is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest. Accordingly, the Commission waives the 30-day operative delay and designates the proposed rule change operative upon filing.²⁷

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:

²⁵ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6)(iii).

²⁶ See CBOE Rule 6.7.

²⁷ For purposes only of waiving the 30-day operative delay, the Commission has also considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

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-MRX-2020-10 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-MRX-2020-10. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet website (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for website viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549, on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. All comments received will be posted without change. Persons submitting comments are cautioned that we do not redact or edit personal identifying information from comment submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to

make available publicly. All submissions should refer to File Number SR-MRX-2020-10 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.²⁸

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,
Assistant Secretary.

²⁸ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

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