

statements required to be filed pursuant to section 30 of the Act [15 U.S.C. 80a-29] and of the auditor's certificates relating thereto. The rule lists specific records to be maintained by funds. The rule also requires certain underwriters, brokers, dealers, depositors, and investment advisers to maintain the records that they are required to maintain under federal securities laws.

There are approximately 4300 investment companies registered with the Commission, all of which are required to comply with rule 31a-1. For purposes of determining the burden imposed by rule 31a-1, the Commission staff estimates that each fund is divided into approximately four series, on average, and that each series is required to comply with the recordkeeping requirements of rule 31a-1. Based on conversations with fund representatives, it is estimated that rule 31a-1 imposes an average burden of approximately 1500 hours annually per series for a total of 6000 annual hours per fund. The estimated total annual burden for all 4300 funds subject to the rule therefore is approximately 25,800,000 hours. Based on conversations with fund representatives, however, the Commission staff estimates that even absent the requirements of rule 31a-1, 90 percent of the records created pursuant to the rule are the type that generally would be created as a matter of normal business custom and to prepare financial statements.

The estimate of average burden hours is made solely for the purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act, and is not derived from a comprehensive or even a representative survey or study. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Written comments are requested on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Commission, including whether the information has practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Commission's estimate of the burden[s] of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Consideration will be given to comments and suggestions submitted in writing within 60 days of this publication.

Please direct your written comments to R. Corey Booth, Director/Chief

Information Officer, Office of Information Technology, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE., Washington, DC 20549.

Dated: November 30, 2005.

Jonathan G. Katz,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. E5-7115 Filed 12-8-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Investment Company Act Release No. 27177; 812-13173]

Firsthand Funds and Firsthand Capital Management, Inc.; Notice of Application

December 2, 2005.

AGENCY: Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission").

ACTION: Notice of an application under section 6(c) of the Investment Company Act of 1940 (the "Act") for an exemption from section 15(a) of the Act and rule 18f-2 under the Act and certain disclosure requirements.

Summary of the Application: The requested order would permit certain registered open-end management investment companies to enter into and materially amend subadvisory agreements without shareholder approval and would grant relief from certain disclosure requirements.

Applicants: Firsthand Funds (the "Trust") and Firsthand Capital Management, Inc. (the "Adviser").

Filing Date: The application was filed on March 9, 2005 and amended on November 22, 2005.

Hearing or Notification of Hearing: An order granting the application will be issued unless the Commission orders a hearing. Interested persons may request a hearing by writing to the Commission's Secretary and serving applicants with a copy of the request, personally or by mail. Hearing requests should be received by the Commission by 5:30 p.m. on December 27, 2005, and should be accompanied by proof of service on applicants in the form of an affidavit or, for lawyers, a certificate of service. Hearing requests should state the nature of the writer's interest, the reason for the request, and the issues contested. Persons may request notification by writing to the Commission's Secretary.

ADDRESSES: Secretary, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-9303. Applicants, c/o Wendell M. Faria, Esq., Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker

LLP, 875 15th Street, Washington, DC 20005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Emerson S. Davis, Sr., Senior Counsel, at (202) 551-6868, or Nadya B. Roytblat, Assistant Director, at (202) 551-6821 (Division of Investment Management, Office of Investment Company Regulation).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The following is a summary of the application. The complete application may be obtained for a fee from the Commission's Public Reference Branch, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-0102 (telephone (202) 551-5850).

Applicants' Representations

1. The Trust, a Delaware statutory trust, is registered under the Act as an open-end management investment company. The Trust currently offers five series (each a "Fund," and collectively, the "Funds"), each of which has its own investment objectives, policies and restrictions.¹ The Adviser, registered under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 ("Advisers Act"), serves as investment adviser to each Fund pursuant to an investment advisory agreement with the Trust ("Advisory Agreement"), that was approved by the board of trustees of the Trust (the "Board"), including a majority of the trustees who are not "interested persons," as defined in section 2(a)(19) of the Act or the Adviser ("Independent Trustees"), and the shareholders of each applicable Fund.

2. Under the terms of the Advisory Agreement, the Adviser provides investment advisory services to each Fund, supervises the investment program for each Fund, and has the authority, subject to Board approval, to enter into investment subadvisory agreements ("Subadvisory Agreements") with one or more subadvisers ("Subadvisers"). Currently, the Funds do not have any Subadvisers. Each Subadviser will be registered under the Advisers Act. The Adviser will monitor

¹ Applicants also request relief with respect to future Funds of the Trust and any other existing or future registered open-end management investment company or series thereof that: (a) Is advised by the Adviser or a person controlling, controlled by or under common control with the Adviser; (b) uses the management structure described in this application; and (c) complies with the terms and conditions of this application (included in the term "Funds"). The only existing registered open-end management investment company that currently intends to rely on the requested order is named as an applicant. If the name of any Fund contains the name of a Subadviser (as defined below), the name of the Adviser or the name of the entity controlling, controlled by, or under common control with the Adviser that serves as the primary adviser to the Fund will precede the name of the Subadviser.

and evaluate the Subadvisers and recommend to the Board their hiring, retention or termination. Subadvisers recommended to the Board by the Adviser will be selected and approved by the Board, including a majority of the Independent Directors. Each Subadviser will have discretionary authority to invest the assets or a portion of the assets of a particular Fund. The Adviser will compensate each Subadviser out of the fees paid to the Adviser under the Advisory Agreement.

3. Applicants request relief to permit the Adviser, subject to Board approval, to enter into and materially amend Subadvisory Agreements without shareholder approval. The requested relief will not extend to a Subadviser that is an affiliated person, as defined in section 2(a)(3) of the Act, of the Trust or the Adviser, other than by reason of serving as a Subadviser to one or more of the Funds (an "Affiliated Subadviser").

4. Applicants also request an exemption from the various disclosure provisions described below that may require a Fund to disclose fees paid by the Adviser to each Subadviser. An exemption is requested to permit the Trust to disclose for each Fund (as both a dollar amount and as a percentage of each Fund's net assets): (a) The aggregate fees paid to the Adviser and any Affiliated Subadvisers; and (b) the aggregate fees paid to Subadvisers other than Affiliated Subadvisers ("Aggregate Fee Disclosure"). For any Fund that employs an Affiliated Subadviser, the Fund will provide separate disclosure of any fees paid to the Affiliated Subadviser.

Applicants' Legal Analysis

1. Section 15(a) of the Act provides, in relevant part, that it is unlawful for any person to act as an investment adviser to a registered investment company except pursuant to a written contract that has been approved by the vote of a majority of the company's outstanding voting securities. Rule 18f-2 under the Act provides that each series or class of stock in a series company affected by a matter must approve such matter if the Act requires shareholder approval.

2. Form N-1A is the registration statement used by open-end investment companies. Item 14(a)(3) of Form N-1A requires disclosure of the method and amount of the investment adviser's compensation.

3. Rule 20a-1 under the Act requires proxies solicited with respect to an investment company to comply with Schedule 14A under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("1934 Act").

Items 22(c)(1)(ii), 22(c)(1)(iii), 22(c)(8) and 22(c)(9) of Schedule 14A, taken together, require a proxy statement for a shareholder meeting at which the advisory contract will be voted upon to include the "rate of compensation of the investment adviser," the "aggregate amount of the investment adviser's fees," a description of the "terms of the contract to be acted upon," and, if a change in the advisory fee is proposed, the existing and proposed fees and the difference between the two fees.

4. Form N-SAR is the semi-annual report filed with the Commission by registered investment companies. Item 48 of Form N-SAR requires investment companies to disclose the rate schedule for fees paid to their investment advisers, including the Subadvisers.

5. Regulation S-X sets forth the requirements for financial statements required to be included as part of investment company registration statements and shareholder reports filed with the Commission. Sections 6-07(2)(a), (b), and (c) of Regulation S-X require that investment companies include in their financial statements information about investment advisory fees.

6. Section 6(c) of the Act provides that the Commission may exempt any person, security, or transaction or any class or classes of persons, securities, or transactions from any provision of the Act, or from any rule thereunder, if and to the extent that such exemption is necessary or appropriate in the public interest and consistent with the protection of investors and the purposes fairly intended by the policies and provisions of the Act. Applicants believe that their requested relief meets this standard for the reasons discussed below.

7. Applicants state that the Funds' shareholders will rely on the Adviser and the Board to select the Subadvisers best suited to achieve a Fund's investment objectives. Applicants assert that, from the perspective of the investor, the role of the Subadvisers is comparable to that of individual portfolio managers employed by traditional investment advisory firms. Applicants contend that requiring shareholder approval of Subadvisory Agreements would impose unnecessary costs and delays on the Funds and may preclude the prompt replacement of a Subadviser when considered advisable by the Board and the Adviser.

Applicants also note that the Advisory Agreement will remain subject to the shareholder approval requirements in section 15(a) of the Act and rule 18f-2 under the Act.

8. Applicants assert that some Subadvisers use a "posted" rate schedule to set their fees. Applicants state that while Subadvisers are willing to negotiate fees that are lower than those posted on the schedule, they are reluctant to do so where the fees are disclosed to other prospective and existing customers. Applicants submit that the requested relief will benefit Fund shareholders because it would improve the Adviser's ability to negotiate the fees paid to the Subadvisers.

Applicants' Conditions

Applicants agree that any order granting the requested relief will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Before a Fund may rely on the order requested in the application, the operation of the Fund in the manner described in the application will be approved by a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities, as defined in the Act, or, in the case of a Fund whose public shareholders purchase shares on the basis of a prospectus containing the disclosure contemplated by condition 2 below, by the sole initial shareholder before offering the Fund's shares to the public.

2. The prospectus for each Fund will disclose the existence, substance, and effect of any order granted pursuant to the application. Each Fund will hold itself out to the public as employing the management structure described in the application. The prospectus will prominently disclose that the Adviser has ultimate responsibility (subject to oversight by the Board) to oversee the Subadvisers and recommend their hiring, termination, and replacement.

3. Within 90 days of the hiring of a new Subadviser, the affected Fund shareholders will be furnished all information about the new Subadviser that would be included in a proxy statement, except as modified to permit Aggregate Fee Disclosure. This information will include Aggregate Fee Disclosure and any change in such disclosure caused by the addition of the new Subadviser. To meet this obligation, the Fund will provide shareholders within 90 days of the hiring of a new Subadviser with an information statement meeting the requirements of Regulation 14C, Schedule 14C and Item 22 of Schedule 14A under the 1934 Act, except as modified by the order to permit Aggregate Fee Disclosure.

4. The Adviser will not enter into a Subadvisory Agreement with any Affiliated Subadviser without that agreement, including the compensation to be paid thereunder, being approved

by the shareholders of the applicable Fund.

5. Each Fund will comply with the fund governance standards set forth in rule 0-1(a)(7) under the Act by the compliance date for the rule ("Compliance Date"). Prior to the Compliance Date, a majority of the Board will be Independent Trustees, and the nomination of new or additional Independent Trustees will be at the discretion of the then existing Independent Trustees.

6. When a Subadviser change is proposed for a Fund with an Affiliated Subadviser, the Board, including a majority of the Independent Trustees, will make a separate finding, reflected in the applicable Board minutes, that such change is in the best interests of the Fund and its shareholders and does not involve a conflict of interest from which the Adviser or the Affiliated Subadviser derives an inappropriate advantage.

7. Independent counsel, as defined in rule 0-1(a)(6) under the Act, will be engaged to represent the Independent Trustees. The selection of such counsel will be within the discretion of the then existing Independent Trustees.

8. The Adviser will provide the Board, no less frequently than quarterly, with information about the profitability of the Adviser on a per-Fund basis. The information will reflect the impact on profitability of the hiring or termination of any Subadviser during the applicable quarter.

9. Whenever a Subadviser is hired or terminated, the Adviser will provide the Board with information showing the expected impact on the profitability of the Adviser.

10. The Adviser will provide general management services to each Fund, including overall supervisory responsibility for the general management and investment of the Fund's assets, and, subject to review and approval of the Board, will: (a) Set each Fund's overall investment strategies, (b) evaluate, select and recommend Subadvisers to manage all or a part of a Fund's assets, (c) when appropriate, allocate and reallocate a Fund's assets among multiple Subadvisers; (d) monitor and evaluate the performance of Subadvisers, and (e) implement procedures reasonably designed to ensure that the Subadvisers comply with each Fund's investment objective, policies and restrictions.

11. No trustee or officer of the Trust, or director or officer of the Adviser, will own directly or indirectly (other than through a pooled investment vehicle that is not controlled by such person) any interest in a Subadviser, except for:

(a) Ownership of interests in the Adviser or any entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with the Adviser, or (b) ownership of less than 1% of the outstanding securities of any class of equity or debt of a publicly traded company that is either a Subadviser or an entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with a Subadviser.

12. Each Fund will disclose in its registration statement the Aggregate Fee Disclosure.

13. The requested order will expire on the effective date of rule 15a-5 under the Act, if adopted.

For the Commission, by the Division of Investment Management, under delegated authority.

Jonathan G. Katz,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 05-23844 Filed 12-8-05; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-52874; File No. SR-Amex-2005-097]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; American Stock Exchange LLC; Order Approving Proposed Rule Change Relating to the Amex Listing Agreement

December 1, 2005.

I. Introduction

On September 29, 2005, the American Stock Exchange LLC ("Amex" or "Exchange") filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") a proposed rule change, pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act")¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² to adopt a modified Amex Listing Agreement. The proposed rule change was published for comment in the **Federal Register** on October 25, 2005.³ The Commission received no comments on the proposal. This order approves the proposed rule change.

II. Description of the Proposal

The Exchange proposes to adopt a modified Amex Listing Agreement for the purpose of (i) combining the two forms of Amex Listing Agreements presently available into one form of Amex Listing Agreement to be submitted to the Exchange by all issuers

in connection with a listing application; (ii) eliminating a representation by issuers of structured products, exchange-traded funds, trust issued receipts and other novel securities products regarding third party claims; and (iii) making certain minor, non-substantive changes to the Amex Listing Agreement.

III. Discussion

After careful consideration, the Commission finds that the proposed rule change, as amended, is consistent with the requirements of the Act and the rules and regulations thereunder applicable to a national securities exchange.⁴ In particular, the Commission believes that the proposal is consistent with Section 6(b)(5)⁵ in particular, in that it is designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade and is not designed to permit unfair discrimination between issuers or to regulate by virtue of any authority conferred by the Act matters not related to the purposes of the Act or the administration of the Exchange.

IV. Conclusion

It is therefore ordered, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,⁶ that the proposed rule change (SR-Amex-2005-097) be, and it hereby is, approved.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.⁷

Jonathan G. Katz,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. E5-7102 Filed 12-8-05; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-52855; File No. SR-CBOE-2005-96]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Chicago Board Options Exchange, Incorporated; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Extend a Pilot Program Relating to the Retail Automatic Execution System

November 30, 2005.

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the

⁴ In approving the proposed rule change, the Commission has considered its impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

⁵ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

⁷ 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. 52630 (October 18, 2005), 70 FR 61670.