

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34–89166; File No. SR–PEARL–2020–07]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; MIAx PEARL, LLC.; Notice of Filing and Order Granting Accelerated Approval of a Proposed Rule Change, As Modified by Amendment No. 1, To Add the Consolidated Audit Trail Industry Member Compliance Rules to Exchange Rule 1014, Imposition of Fines for Minor Rule Violations

June 26, 2020.

On June 18, 2020, MIAx PEARL, LLC (“MIAx PEARL” or the “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”), pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”)¹ and Rule 19b–4 thereunder,² a proposed rule change to add the Consolidated Audit Trail Industry Member Compliance Rules to Exchange Rule 1014. On June 23, 2020, the Exchange filed Amendment No. 1 to the proposed rule change, which partially amended the proposed rule change. The proposed rule change, as modified by Amendment No. 1, is described in Items I and II below, which Items have been prepared by the self-regulatory organization. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change, as modified by Amendment No. 1, from interested persons, and is approving the proposed rule change, as modified by Amendment No. 1, on an accelerated basis.

I. The Exchange’s Description of the Proposed Rule Change, as Modified by Amendment No. 1

The Exchange is filing a proposal to add the Consolidated Audit Trail (“CAT”) industry member compliance rules to the list of minor rule violations in Rule 1014.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s website at <http://www.miaxoptions.com/rule-filings/pearl> at MIAx PEARL’s principal office, 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 add its CAT industry member compliance rules (the “CAT Compliance Rules”) to the list of minor rule violations in Rule 1014. This proposal is based upon the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. (“FINRA”) filing to amend FINRA Rule 9217 in order to add FINRA’s corresponding CAT Compliance Rules to FINRA’s list of rules that are eligible for minor rule violation plan treatment.³ This proposal is also based upon the New York Stock Exchange, Inc. (“NYSE”) filing to amend NYSE Rule 9217 in order to add NYSE’s corresponding CAT Compliance Rules to NYSE’s list of rules that are eligible for minor rule violation plan treatment.⁴

Proposed Rule Change

The Exchange recently adopted the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII in order to implement the National Market System Plan Governing the Consolidated Audit Trail (the “CAT NMS Plan” or “Plan”).⁵ The CAT NMS Plan was filed by the Plan Participants to comply with Rule 613 of Regulation NMS under the Exchange Act,⁶ and each Plan Participant accordingly has adopted the same compliance rules in the Exchange’s Chapter XVII. The common compliance rules adopted by each Plan Participant are designed to require industry members to comply with the provisions of the CAT NMS Plan, which broadly calls for industry members to record and report timely and accurately customer, order, and trade information relating to activity in NMS Securities and OTC Equity Securities.

Rule 1014 sets forth the list of rules under which a member may be subject to a fine. Rule 1014 permits the Exchange to impose a fine of up to

\$5,000 on any member or a person associated with or employed by a member for a minor violation of an eligible rule. The Exchange proposes to amend Rule 1014 to add the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII to the list of rules eligible for disposition pursuant to a minor fine under Rule 1014.⁷

The Exchange is coordinating with FINRA and other Plan Participants to promote harmonized and consistent enforcement of all the Plan Participants’ CAT Compliance Rules. The Commission recently approved a Rule 17d–2 Plan under which the regulation of CAT Compliance Rules will be allocated among Plan Participants to reduce regulatory duplication for industry members that are members of more than one Participant (“common members”).⁸ Under the Rule 17d–2 Plan, the regulation of CAT Compliance Rules with respect to common members that are members of FINRA is allocated to FINRA. Similarly, under the Rule 17d–2 Plan, responsibility for common members of multiple other Plan Participants and not a member of FINRA will be allocated among those other Plan Participants, including to the Exchange. For those non-common members who are allocated to the Exchange pursuant to the Rule 17d–2 Plan, the Exchange and FINRA entered into a Regulatory Services Agreement (“RSA”) pursuant to which FINRA will conduct surveillance, investigation, examination, and enforcement activity in connection with the CAT Compliance Rules on the Exchange’s behalf. We expect that the other exchanges would be entering into a similar RSA.

In order to achieve consistency with FINRA and the other Plan Participants, the Exchange proposes to adopt fines up to \$2,500 in connection with minor rule fines for violations of the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII

⁷ FINRA’s maximum fine for minor rule violations under FINRA Rule 9216(b) is \$2,500. The Exchange will apply an identical maximum fine amount for eligible violations of Chapter XVII to achieve consistency with FINRA and also to amend its minor rule violation plan (“MRVP”) to include such fines. Like FINRA, the Exchange would be able to pursue a fine greater than \$2,500 for violations of Chapter XVII in a regular disciplinary proceeding or Letter of Consent under Rule 1003 as appropriate. Any fine imposed in excess of \$2,500 or not otherwise covered by Rule 19d–1(c)(2) of the Act would be subject to prompt notice to the Commission pursuant to Rule 19d–1 under the Act. As noted below, in assessing the appropriateness of a minor rule fine with respect to CAT Compliance Rules, the Exchange will be guided by the same factors that FINRA utilizes. See text accompanying notes 9–10, *infra*.

⁸ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 88366 (March 12, 2020), 85 FR 15238 (March 17, 2020) (File No. 4–618).

³ See Securities Exchange Act Release Nos. 88870 (May 14, 2020), 85 FR 30768 (May 20, 2020) (SR–FINRA–2020–013).

⁴ See SR–NYSE–2020–51.

⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 80256 (March 15, 2017), 82 FR 14526 (March 21, 2017) (SR–PEARL–2017–04).

⁶ 17 CFR 242.613.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b–4.

under Rule 1014 and the Exchange's MRVP.

FINRA, in connection with its proposed amendment to FINRA Rule 9217 to make FINRA's CAT Compliance Rules MRVP eligible, has represented that it will apply the minor fines for CAT Compliance Rules in the same manner that FINRA has for its similar existing audit trail-related rules.⁹ Accordingly, in order to promote regulatory consistency, the Exchange plans to do the same. Specifically, application of a minor rule fine with respect to CAT Compliance Rules will be guided by the same factors that FINRA referenced in its filing. However, more formal disciplinary proceedings may be warranted instead of minor rule dispositions in certain circumstances such as where violations prevent regulatory users of the CAT from performing their regulatory functions. Where minor rule dispositions are appropriate, the following factors help guide the determination of fine amounts:

- Total number of reports that are not submitted or submitted late;
- The timeframe over which the violations occur;
- Whether violations are batched;
- Whether the violations are the result of the actions of one individual or the result of faulty systems or procedures;
- Whether the firm has taken remedial measures to correct the violations;
- Prior minor rule violations within the past 24 months;
- Collateral effects that the failure has on customers; and
- Collateral effects that the failure has on the Exchange's ability to perform its regulatory function.¹⁰

Upon effectiveness of this rule change, the Exchange will publish a regulatory bulletin notifying its member organizations of the rule change and the specific factors that will be considered in connection with assessing minor rule fines described above.

For the foregoing reasons, the Exchange believes that the proposed rule change will result in a coordinated, harmonized approach to CAT compliance rule enforcement across Plan Participants that will be consistent with the approach FINRA has taken with the CAT rules.

2. Statutory Basis

The proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,¹¹ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5),¹² in particular, because it is designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in facilitating transactions in securities, to remove impediments to, and perfect the mechanism of, a free and open market and a national market system and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest.

Minor rule fines provide a meaningful sanction for minor or technical violations of rules when the conduct at issue does not warrant stronger, immediately reportable disciplinary sanctions. The inclusion of a rule in the Exchange's MRVP does not minimize the importance of compliance with the rule, nor does it preclude the Exchange from choosing to pursue violations of eligible rules through a Letter of Consent if the nature of the violations or prior disciplinary history warrants more significant sanctions. Rather, the Exchange believes that the proposed rule change will strengthen the Exchange's ability to carry out its oversight and enforcement responsibilities in cases where full disciplinary proceedings are unwarranted in view of the minor nature of the particular violation. Rather, the option to impose a minor rule sanction gives the Exchange additional flexibility to administer its enforcement program in the most effective and efficient manner while still fully meeting the Exchange's remedial objectives in addressing violative conduct. Specifically, the proposed rule change is designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices because it will provide the Exchange the ability to issue a minor rule fine for violations of the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII where a more formal disciplinary action may not be warranted or appropriate consistent with the approach of other Plan Participants for the same conduct.

In connection with the fine level specified in the proposed rule change, adding language that minor rule fines for violations of the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII shall not exceed \$2,500 would further the goal of transparency and add clarity to the Exchange's rules. Adopting the same

cap as FINRA for minor rule fines in connection with the CAT Compliance Rules would also promote regulatory consistency across self-regulatory organizations.

The Exchange further believes that the proposed amendments to Rule 1014 are consistent with Section 6(b)(6) of the Act,¹³ which provides that members and persons associated with members shall be appropriately disciplined for violation of the provisions of the rules of the exchange, by expulsion, suspension, limitation of activities, functions, and operations, fine, censure, being suspended or barred from being associated with a member, or any other fitting sanction. As noted, the proposed rule change would provide the Exchange ability to sanction minor or technical violations of Chapter XVII pursuant to the Exchange's rules.

Finally, the Exchange also believes that the proposed changes are designed to provide a fair procedure for the disciplining of members and persons associated with members, consistent with Sections 6(b)(7) and 6(d) of the Act.¹⁴ Rule 1014 does not preclude a member or a person associated with or employed by a member from contesting an alleged violation and receiving a hearing on the matter with the same procedural rights through a litigated disciplinary proceeding.

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 proposed rule change is not intended to address competitive issues but rather is concerned solely with making the CAT Compliance Rules under Chapter XVII eligible for a minor rule fine disposition, thereby strengthening the Exchange's ability to carry out its oversight and enforcement functions and deter potential violative conduct.

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

Written comments were neither solicited nor received.

III. Solicitation of Comments on the Proposed Rule Change, as Modified by Amendment No. 1

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing,

⁹ See SR-FINRA-2020-013; see also FINRA Notice to Members 04-19 (March 2004) (providing specific factors used to inform dispositions for violations of OATS reporting rules).

¹⁰ See *id.*

¹¹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

¹² 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

¹³ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(6).

¹⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(7) and 78f(d).

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-PEARL-2020-07 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-PEARL-2020-07. 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-PEARL-2020-07 and should be submitted on or before July 23, 2020.

IV. Commission's Findings and Order Granting Accelerated Approval of Proposed Rule Change, as Modified by Amendment No. 1¹⁵

The Commission finds that the proposed rule change, as modified by

Amendment No. 1, is consistent with the requirements of the Act and the rules and regulations thereunder applicable to a national securities exchange.¹⁶ In particular, the Commission finds that the proposed rule change, as modified by Amendment No. 1, is consistent with Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,¹⁷ which requires that the rules of an exchange be designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to remove impediments and to perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. The Commission also believes that the proposal, as modified by Amendment No. 1, is consistent with Sections 6(b)(1) and 6(b)(6) of the Act¹⁸ which require that the rules of an exchange enforce compliance with, and provide appropriate discipline for, violations of Commission and Exchange rules. Finally, the Commission finds that the proposal, as modified by Amendment No. 1, is consistent with the public interest, the protection of investors, or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act, as required by Rule 19d-1(c)(2) under the Act,¹⁹ which governs minor rule violation plans.

As stated above, the Exchange proposes to add the CAT Compliance Rules to the list of minor rule violations in Rule 1014 to be consistent with the approach FINRA has taken for minor violations of its corresponding CAT Compliance Rules.²⁰ The Commission has already approved FINRA's treatment of CAT Compliance Rules violations when it approved the addition of CAT Compliance Rules to FINRA's MRVP.²¹ As noted in that order, and similarly herein, the Commission believes that Exchange's treatment of CAT Compliance Rules violations as part of its MRVP provides a reasonable means

of addressing violations that do not rise to the level of requiring formal disciplinary proceedings, while providing greater flexibility in handling certain violations. However, the Commission expects that, as with FINRA, the Exchange will continue to conduct surveillance with due diligence and make determinations based on its findings, on a case-by-case basis, regarding whether a sanction under the rule is appropriate, or whether a violation requires formal disciplinary action. Accordingly, the Commission believes the proposal, as modified by Amendment No. 1, raises no novel or significant issues.

For the same reasons discussed above, the Commission finds good cause, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,²² for approving the proposed rule change, as modified by Amendment No. 1, prior to the thirtieth day after the date of publication of the notice of the filing thereof in the **Federal Register**. The proposal merely adds the CAT Compliance Rules to the Exchange's MRVP and harmonizes its application with FINRA's application of CAT Compliance Rules under its own MRVP. Accordingly, the Commission believes that a full notice-and-comment period is not necessary before approving the proposal, as modified by Amendment No. 1.

V. Conclusion

It is therefore ordered, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act²³ and Rule 19d-1(c)(2) thereunder,²⁴ that the proposed rule change (SR-PEARL-2020-07), as modified by Amendment No. 1, be, and hereby is, approved on an accelerated basis.

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.²⁵

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,
Assistant Secretary.

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¹⁶ In approving this proposed rule change, the Commission has considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

¹⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

¹⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(1) and 78f(b)(6).

¹⁹ 17 CFR 240.19d-1(c)(2).

²⁰ As discussed above, the Exchange has entered into a Rule 17d-2 Plan and an RSA with FINRA with respect to the CAT Compliance Rules. The Commission notes that, unless relieved by the Commission of its responsibility, as may be the case under the Rule 17d-2 Plan, the Exchange continues to bear the responsibility for self-regulatory conduct and liability for self-regulatory failures, not the self-regulatory organization retained to perform regulatory functions on the Exchange's behalf pursuant to an RSA. See Securities Exchange Release No. 61419 (January 26, 2010), 75 FR 5157 (February 1, 2010) (SR-BATS-2009-031), note 93 and accompanying text.

²¹ See *supra* note 3.

²² 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

²³ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

²⁴ 17 CFR 240.19d-1(c)(2).

²⁵ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

²⁵ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).