

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

In re)
)
EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION RESOURCES, INC.) Case No.: 09 B 39937
)
Debtor.) Hon. Timothy A. Barnes
)
) Date: September 24, 2012
) Time: 1:30 p.m.

NOTICE OF MOTION

To: See Attached Service List

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on **September 24, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.**, the undersigned shall present to the Honorable Timothy A. Barnes, or any judge sitting in his stead, in Courtroom 642, in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, at 219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois, the **PLAN ADMINISTRATOR’S MOTION TO APPROVE SETTLEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 9019 OF THE FEDERAL RULES OF BANKRUPTCY PROCEDURE WITH FIA CARD SERVICES, N.A. F/K/A MBNA AMERICA BANK, N.A., DISCOVER BANK, DFS SERVICES, LLC, INDUSTRIAL ASSET RECYCLING LLC, MILL IRON RANCH, LLC, KIM WHEELDON, AND CHANCY WHEELDON**, a copy of which is attached and served upon you.

Respectfully Submitted,
William A. Brandt, Jr., acting solely in his capacity
as the Plan Administrator for Equipment
Acquisition Resources, Inc.

By: /s/ George P. Apostolides
One of his attorneys

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, George P. Apostolides, certify that on September 10, 2012, I caused a copy of the **PLAN ADMINISTRATOR'S MOTION TO APPROVE SETTLEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 9019 OF THE FEDERAL RULES OF BANKRUPTCY PROCEDURE WITH FIA CARD SERVICES, N.A. F/K/A MBNA AMERICA BANK, N.A., DISCOVER BANK, DFS SERVICES, LLC, INDUSTRIAL ASSET RECYCLING LLC, MILL IRON RANCH, LLC, KIM WHEELDON, AND CHANCY WHEELDON**, to be served on the parties identified on the attached Service List as receiving notice via CM/ECF or by regular United States Mail at the addresses listed.

/s/ George P. Apostolides _____

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**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

In re)	
)	
EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION RESOURCES, INC.)	Case No.: 09 B 39937
)	
Debtor.)	Hon. Timothy A. Barnes
)	
)	Date: September 24, 2012
)	Time: 1:30 p.m.

PLAN ADMINISTRATOR’S MOTION TO APPROVE SETTLEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 9019 OF THE FEDERAL RULES OF BANKRUPTCY PROCEDURE WITH FIA CARD SERVICES, N.A. F/K/A MBNA AMERICA BANK, N.A., DISCOVER BANK, DFS SERVICES LLC, INDUSTRIAL ASSET RECYCLING LLC, MILL IRON RANCH, LLC, KIM WHEELDON, AND CHANCY WHEELDON AND FOR SHORTENED NOTICE

William A. Brandt, Jr. (“**Brandt**”), acting solely in his capacity as the Plan Administrator for Equipment Acquisition Resources, Inc. (“**EAR**” or “**Debtor**”), by his attorneys, George P. Apostolides and Kevin H. Morse of Arnstein & Lehr LLP, hereby moves this Court pursuant to Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9019 for an order approving the Settlement Agreements (the “**Settlement Agreements**”) between Brandt on the one hand and FIA Card Services, N.A. f/k/a MBNA America Bank, N.A. (“**FIA**”), Discover Bank and DFS Services, LLC (collectively, “**Discover**”), Industrial Asset Recycling LLC (“**IARLLC**”), and Mill Iron Ranch, LLC (“**MIR**”), Kim Wheeldon (“**Kim**”), and Chancy Wheeldon (“**Chancy**”) (collectively, MIR, Kim, and Chancy are “**Wheeldon**”) on the other hand (FIA, Discover, IARLLC, and Wheeldon are collectively the “**Defendants**”), which resolves the adversary proceedings filed against those parties, on shortened notice.¹ In support of this motion (the “**Motion**”), Brandt states as follows.

¹ Chancy was not named as a defendant in the action filed against MIR and Kim (11 A 2183), however, he has been included as part of the settlement and mutual releases between Brandt, MIR and Kim.

I. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 157 and 1334. This is a core proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 157(b). Venue is proper in this Court under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1408 and 1409. Relief can be granted to Brandt under 11 U.S.C. § 105 and Rule 9019.

II. BACKGROUND

A. The Debtor and Brandt

2. On October 23, 2009, the Debtor filed a voluntary petition for relief under chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in this Court (the "**Petition Date**"). This Court approved the Debtor's Second Amended Plan of Liquidation (the "**Plan**") by Order dated July 15, 2010 [ECF No. 322]. Pursuant to the terms of the Plan, the Debtor executed the Plan Administrator Agreement, naming Brandt as Plan Administrator of the Debtor.

3. The Plan expressly retained the Debtor's Litigation Claims, as defined in Plan ¶1.43. Under the terms of the Plan and the Plan Administrator Agreement, Brandt has the responsibility and right to pursue litigation claims on behalf of the Debtor, including the claims against the Defendants.

4. On multiple occasions between October, 2005 and October, 2009, EAR made transfers to the Defendants which formed the basis of lawsuits against them.

B. FIA Card Services, N.A. f/k/a MBNA America Bank, N.A.

5. On October 21, 2011, Brandt filed an adversary proceeding, Case No. 11 A 2176, which named FIA as a defendant. The Complaint sought the recovery of thirty (30) payments totaling \$606,328.21 which EAR made to FIA in the four year period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 544. These transfers were to pay

charges to both EAR credit cards and credit cards which were held by individuals, some of whom were associated with EAR management and others of whom were not. Brandt has agreed to settle with FIA for \$364,253.38. A copy of the draft settlement agreement is attached as **Exhibit A**.

C. Discover Bank and DFS Services LLC

6. On October 21, 2011, Brandt filed an adversary proceeding, Case No. 11 A 2177, which named Discover as a defendant. The Complaint sought the recovery of forty-nine (49) payments totaling \$106,863.61 which EAR made to Discover in the four year period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 544, 547, and 548. These transfers were to pay charges to a credit card which was held by Sheldon Player individually, and two other cards whose holders are unidentified. Brandt has agreed to settle with Discover for \$59,500.00. A copy of the draft settlement agreement is attached as **Exhibit B**.

D. Industrial Asset Recycling LLC

7. On October 17, 2011, Brandt filed adversary proceeding 11 A 2100, against IARLLC. That case initially sought the recovery of preferential payments totaling \$192,000.00 which EAR made to IARLLC in the ninety (90) day period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 547. The adversary complaint was later amended to include a count for the recovery of two (2) payments pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 548. IARLLC has provided documentation which demonstrates that it had what may have been a complete defense to the preference claims, and has also provided documentation which demonstrates that it has a defense to the fraudulent transfer claims. Brandt has agreed to settle with IARLLC for \$8,000.00. A copy of the draft settlement agreement is attached as **Exhibit C**.

E. Mill Iron Ranch, LLC, Kim Wheeldon, and Chancy Wheeldon

8. On October 21, 2011, Brandt filed an adversary proceeding, Case No. 11 A 2183, which identified MIR and Kim as defendants. Chancy is married to Kim and part of the proposed settlement agreement and release. The Complaint sought the recovery of two payments for \$4,600.00 which EAR made to MIR in the two year period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 548 and the recovery of that payment plus ten (10) payments totaling \$132,050.00 which EAR made to MIR in the four year period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 544. The Complaint also sought the recovery of one payment totaling \$12,000.00 which EAR made to Kim in the four year period prior to the bankruptcy petition date of October 23, 2009 pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 544. Counsel for MIR, Kim, and Chancy have provided information and documentation which indicates that they have defenses to the claim, and have additionally provided information regarding the ability of Brandt to collect a judgment against them in Wyoming, where they are all located. Brandt has agreed to settle with MIR, Kim, and Chancy for a total of \$5,000.00. A copy of the draft settlement agreement is attached as **Exhibit D**.

III. TERMS OF SETTLEMENT

9. With a view toward maximizing the recoverable value of Brandt's claims, in furtherance of broader efforts to facilitate the estate's distribution of funds, and to otherwise avoid the time, expense, and uncertainty of litigation, based upon his business judgment, Brandt seeks the approval of the Settlement Agreements.

IV. ARGUMENT

A. The 9019 Order

i. *The Standard for Approval of Settlement Agreements*

10. Compromise and settlement have long been an inherent component of the bankruptcy process. *See Protective Comm. for Indep. Stockholders of TMT Trailer Ferry, Inc. v. Anderson*, 390 U.S. 414, 424 (1958) (citing *Case v. Los Angeles Lumber Prods. Co.*, 308 U.S. 106, 130 (1939)). Rule 9019 provides:

(a) COMPROMISE. On motion by the trustee and after notice and a hearing, the court may approve a compromise or settlement. Notice shall be given to creditors, the United States Trustee, the debtor, and indenture trustees as provided in Rule 2002 and to any other entity as the Court may direct.

11. Compromises are favored in bankruptcy and public policy favors compromise because litigation “can occupy a court’s docket for years on end, depleting resources of the parties and the taxpayers while rendering meaningful relief elusive.” *In re Grau*, 267 B.R. 896, 899 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 2001) (quoting *Matter of Munford, Inc.*, 97 F.3d 449, 455 (11th Cir. 1996)). “Approval of a settlement is committed to the court’s sound discretion.” *In re Commercial Loan Corp.*, 316 B.R. 690, 697 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2004). Brandt asks the Court to exercise its authority and discretion and, based on the standards for the approval of compromises under Rule 9019, approve the Settlement Agreements.

12. The paramount question in approving a bankruptcy settlement is whether the compromise is in the best interests of the estate. *E.g.*, *In re Andreuccetti*, 975 F.2d 413, 421 (7th Cir. 1992). The “linchpin” of this examination is “a comparison of the value of the settlement with the probable costs and benefits of litigating. *In re Doctors Hosp. of Hyde Park, Inc.*, 474 F.3d 421, 426 (7th Cir. 2007). Factors that the Court should consider include “the litigation’s

probability of success, complexity, expense, inconvenience, and delay, including the possibility that disapproving the settlement will cause wasting of assets.” *Id.* (internal quotations omitted).

13. In conducting such an analysis, “a precise determination of likely outcomes is not required, since ‘an exact judicial determination of the values in issue would defeat the purpose of compromising the claim.’” *In re Telesphere Communications, Inc.*, 179 B.R. 544, 553 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 1994) (quoting *In re Energy Coop, Inc.*, 886 F.2d 921, 927 (7th Cir. 1989)). Instead, the court must determine if the “settlement falls within the reasonable range of possible litigation outcomes.” *In re Doctors Hosp. of Hyde Park, Inc.*, 474 F.3d at 426. The standard is not met “only if a settlement falls below the low end of possible litigation outcomes.” *Id.*

ii. The Settlement Agreements are Fair and Equitable

14. Brandt has analyzed the claims against the Defendants and believes that the Settlement Agreements are reasonable and equitable in light of all of the relevant factors. In reaching the terms of the proposed settlement, Brandt compared the value of the settlement with the costs and benefits of litigating, and based on this analysis, Brandt believes that the Settlement Agreements are in the best interest of the Estate.

1. Probability of Success in the Litigation

15. The Defendants have asserted a number of affirmative defenses to Brandt’s claims. Considering the uncertainty and contingency involved in the litigation against the Defendants, and the payments which the Defendants are willing to make to settle these cases, the Settlement Agreements properly consider the probability of success for EAR in litigation.

16. There is no guarantee that Brandt would succeed if the parties litigated the disputes that are the subject of the Settlement Agreements. Though Brandt is confident that he can prove his prima facie case, he will also have to litigate defenses and introduce evidence

which may create issues for EAR in the prosecution of not only these cases but also other adversary proceedings in this case.

2. *The Complexity of the Litigation Involved and the Expense, Inconvenience, and Delay Necessarily Attending It.*

17. Should these cases proceed through five separate jury trials and the inevitable post-trial briefing, as well as potential appeals, there is no doubt that it would be expensive to litigate as all parties appear intent on vigorously backing their allegations. Therefore, Brandt has concluded that the Settlement Agreements are fair, reasonable, and in the interest of the Estate after weighing all relevant and material factors, including the strengths of the asserted claims and defenses.

18. The Settlement Agreements will also facilitate a prompt and meaningful recovery, which further supports Brandt's belief that they are unquestionably in the best interest of the Estate.

REQUEST FOR SHORTENED NOTICE

19. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9006(c)(1), shortened notice may be ordered at the Court's discretion "for cause shown." As set forth below, Brandt has cause for filing this Motion on ten (10) days' notice and requesting that the Court shorten the notice period. Shortened notice is appropriate because (1) all four of these settlements can be included in this single Motion; (2) this Motion is being filed and giving the parties ten (10) days notice; (3) having the Motion heard on shortened notice will bring the settlement funds into the Estate expeditiously; and (4) there is no prejudice to the parties receiving notice by shortening the time period.

20. As this Court knows, on August 15, 2012 it entered its Order Approving Case Management and Litigation Procedures for Non-Lessor Adversary Proceedings (the "Procedures

Order”). That order sets omnibus hearings in this case on September 24, 2012, November 14, 2012 and January 16, 2013. The order also indicates that all status hearings and motions, applications and other filings shall be noticed for one of those dates. The Procedures Order is attached as **Exhibit E**.

21. Counsel for Brandt has been working diligently with counsel for the Defendants to finalize the language of their Settlement Agreements. Counsel for Brandt also waited until all four of the agreements were finalized the file this Motion, in order to minimize the costs to the Estate.

22. The four settlements included in this Motion will generate \$436,753.38 in funds for the Estate. The Estate is interested in bringing these funds into the Estate as soon as possible.

23. Finally, there is no prejudice to any party receiving this Motion on shortened notice. The Court should also note that to date, no party has objected to any 9019 motion in this case which involved the settlement of an adversary proceeding for money only.

V. **CONCLUSION**

24. After weighing all relevant and material factors, including the settlement amounts, the strengths of the asserted claims and defenses, the costs and burdens of litigation, and the general uncertainty and risk of litigation, Brandt believes the Settlement Agreements are in the best interests of the Estate.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, William A. Brandt, acting solely in his capacity as the Plan Administrator for Equipment Acquisition Resources, Inc., respectfully requests that this Court approve the Settlement Agreements attached as Exhibits A through D on the terms set forth above, enter the proposed Rule 9019 order, and provide such other and further relief as the Court deems appropriate.

DATED: September 14, 2012

Respectfully Submitted,
William A. Brandt, Jr., acting solely in his
capacity as the Plan Administrator for
Equipment Acquisition Resources, Inc.

By: /s/ George P. Apostolides
One of its attorneys

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