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7 *Successor Receiver*

8 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
9 **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**  
10 **SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION**

11 SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE  
12 COMMISSION,

13 Plaintiff,

14 v.

15 JOHN V. BIVONA; SADDLE RIVER  
16 ADVISORS, LLC; SRA  
17 MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES,  
18 LLC; FRANK GREGORY  
19 MAZZOLA,

20 Defendants, and

21 SRA I LLC; SRA II LLC; SRA III  
22 LLC; FELIX INVESTMENTS, LLC;  
23 MICHELE J. MAZZOLA; ANNE  
24 BIVONA; CLEAR SAILING GROUP  
25 IV LLC; CLEAR SAILING GROUP V  
26 LLC,

27 Relief Defendants.

Case No. 3:16-cv-01386-EMC

**REPLY TO THE SRA FUNDS INVESTOR  
GROUP'S RESPONSE TO THE  
RECEIVER'S MOTION TO:**

- (1) EMPLOY MILLER KAPLAN AS TAX  
ADVISOR**
- (2) EMPLOY SCHINNER & SHAIN LLP  
AS SECURITIES COUNSEL; AND**
- (3) FOR INSTRUCTIONS**

Hearing Date: October 10, 2019

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: Courtroom 5, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
450 Golden Gate Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94102

Case No. 3:16-cv-01386-EMC

RECEIVER'S REPLY TO SRA INVESTOR GROUP RESPONSE TO MOTION TO: (1) EMPLOY  
MILLER KAPLAN AS TAX ADVISOR; (2) EMPLOY SCHINNER & SHAIN LLP AS SECURITIES  
COUNSEL; AND (3) FOR INSTRUCTIONS

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1 Kathy Bazoian Phelps, the successor receiver herein (the “Receiver”), hereby files this  
2 Reply to The SRA Funds Investor Group’s Response (the “Response”) to the Receiver’s Motion  
3 to (1) Employ Miller Kaplan as Tax Advisors; (2) Employ Schinner & Shain as Securities  
4 Counsel; and (3) for Instructions (the “Motion”) as follows:

5 **I. SUMMARY OF POSITION**

6 1. The SRA Funds Investor Group’s Response does not oppose the retention of the tax  
7 and securities advisors proposed by the Receiver so no further discussion appears necessary on that  
8 request for relief.

9 2. The Response addresses the Investor Group’s desire to mitigate tax liability. The  
10 Receiver shares in that desire from the perspective of estate tax liability, and she is also mindful of  
11 the costs, risks, delays and competing interests of creditors and investors in this case. At its core,  
12 the Investor Group’s argument promotes getting the investors the same deal that they had before  
13 the fraud was discovered – that they would be delivered shares free of any tax consequences.  
14 However, the Response lacks any meaningful analysis or recognition of the changes in reality  
15 following the SEC’s discovery of the fraud - the companies the investors invested in are now in a  
16 receivership commenced by the SEC due to securities violations. The business of the defendants  
17 ceased and the assets were put in the control of the receivership and made subject to a Qualified  
18 Settlement Fund (“QSF”).

19 3. The Response makes no mention of the tax consequences for the significant  
20 unsecured creditors who would potentially pay higher taxes from cash generated from the sale of  
21 securities to fund a tax-free transfer to the investors. The Receiver’s Plan presently seeks to share  
22 the tax liability among the classes of investors and creditors, creating a reserve to pay taxes owed to  
23 the taxing agencies. While a tax-free transfer to the investors is appealing and what they hope for,  
24 the tax consequences are far more complex given the need to liquidate shares to pay unsecured  
25 creditors on account of their cash claims. The Response fails to address this dynamic of the case.

26 4. While everyone – the investors, the creditors, the Receiver, and the Court – all  
27 undoubtedly share the same objective of mitigation of tax liability, the Receiver is a fiduciary

1 charged with administering this estate in both a lawful and fair manner. Accordingly, the  
2 Receiver's analysis necessarily involves more than a desire to get the investors the same deal they  
3 were promised before the companies were shut down due to fraudulent activity; she must also  
4 evaluate the impact of decisions in this regard on all constituents of the estate, including investors,  
5 unsecured creditors, and taxing authorities, and she must comply with the tax laws. According, the  
6 Receiver must balance costs, risks and delays in evaluating the most prudent course of action.

7         5.         The Motion for Instructions was filed with the Court to generate the exact  
8 discussion raised in the Investor Group's Response. How much risk, cost and delay is appropriate,  
9 especially given that no tax opinion has yet been rendered and where it is premature to establish a  
10 factual basis for what any ultimate tax liability might look like?

11         6.         The two Scenarios set forth in the Motion essentially involve either: (1) Scenario 1  
12 of pursuing the most conservative approach with lower administrative costs and unknown tax  
13 consequences; or (2) Scenario 2 of seeking a formal IRS Ruling on a higher risk strategy of trying  
14 to keep pre-IPO shares out of the Qualified Settlement Fund that was established on the first day of  
15 the case. The Response appears to ask that one more scenario be included (referred to hereinafter as  
16 Scenario 3) – that ALL Shares (both pre-IPO Shares as well as IPO Shares already held in the  
17 Receiver's account) be excluded from the QSF or otherwise excluded from tax consequences on an  
18 unarticulated basis. Although the Receiver's preliminary discussions with her tax advisor led her to  
19 conclude that such Scenario 3 is highly unlikely to succeed, she is willing to include such a request  
20 in a formal request for IRS ruling if her tax advisor can construct a legally and factually justifiable  
21 basis to support an IRS ruling for that scenario, and if the Court deems that the expense and delay  
22 of pursuing a formal IRS ruling is appropriate.

23         7.         What the Receiver cannot do as a fiduciary is take a high-risk position of not paying  
24 taxes without the advance consent of the IRS. If there is tax liability that the Receiver tries  
25 unsuccessfully to avoid, not only will the taxes have to be paid, but the estate may also be liable for  
26 interest and penalties on the unpaid taxes. If shares and funds have been distributed in the interim  
27

1 while waiting the 18 months or more for a prompt assessment from the IRS, the Receiver would  
 2 then become personally liable for assessed taxes if the remaining assets in the estate are insufficient  
 3 to pay the tax claim. Both of these outcomes are simply untenable.

4 8. While the Investor Group's Response has not established any legal or factual basis  
 5 to eliminate all tax liability, it has helped crystalize the issues for the Court's consideration. The  
 6 Receiver is willing and prepared to proceed with whichever Scenario the Court deems appropriate,  
 7 so long as the estate and the Receiver are protected from exposure down the road.

8 9. A more detailed reply to specific information contained in the Response and Tax  
 9 Structure Comments by Scott C. Burack attached as Exhibit "1" thereto ("Burack Comments") is as  
 10 follows:

## 11 **II. THE UNREALISTIC POSITION OF THE INVESTOR GROUP RESPONSE**

### 12 **A. No Distribution Plan Has Yet Been Approved**

13 10. The Response states that "the path down which the Receiver wishes to proceed  
 14 deviates significantly from the distribution plan the Court indicated it was prepared to approve."  
 15 Response at p. 2. What the Response does not note, however, is that no Plan has been approved and  
 16 that the Receiver was asked to evaluate the Investor Group's plan upon her appointment. The  
 17 Receiver, at her first hearing in this case,<sup>1</sup> noted the gross deficiencies in all of the plans that had  
 18 been proposed to the Court, including the Investor Group's Plan, which failed to address tax  
 19 consequences in any manner. The Receiver, therefore, takes strong exception to the assertion that  
 20 the Court was prepared to approve any plan, or that the Court's singular focus at any time was  
 21 merely "to protect investors" without consideration of the consequences for other creditors and the  
 22 Receiver.

23 \_\_\_\_\_  
 24 <sup>1</sup> The Response states that, "at the June 27, 2019 hearing in this matter, the Receiver raised for the  
 25 first time her concerns about potential tax issues that might arise upon the implementation of the  
 26 distribution plan then before the Court." Response at p. 3. June 27<sup>th</sup> was the Receiver's *first*  
 27 appearance in the case as Receiver following her appointment on February 27, 2019. The Investor  
 Group and the SEC have been in the case and proposing competing plans for well over a year, but  
 those plans did not address the potential tax consequences of the plans, which is essential before a  
 plan can be approved and implemented. The Receiver did so at her first opportunity.

1           11.     Because of the history in the case prior to her appointment, the Receiver included in  
2 her proposed Plan the Investor Group’s concept that they would receive back shares rather than  
3 cash. Although such concept is not necessarily one that the Receiver would have promoted, and  
4 one that the SEC had expressly disputed, the Receiver’s Plan seeks to balance the Investor Group’s  
5 desires with the interests of the unsecured creditors in the case. Prior to the Receiver’s appointment  
6 and in over a year of litigation in connection with competing plans, no party had yet given  
7 consideration to the tax consequences of such a strategy. The Receiver’s Motion before the Court is  
8 intended to focus all parties and the Court on the significance and complexity of these tax issues, as  
9 well as potential securities issues, which remain unresolved at this time.

10           **B. All Appropriate Tax Liability Must be Paid**

11           12.     The Response concludes that the two Scenarios in the Motion “are extremely  
12 detrimental to the SRA investors.” Yet, neither the balance of the Response nor the Burack  
13 Comments identify a specific avenue, legal decision, or other authority that conclusively  
14 establishes a risk-free, cost-free, or immediate solution to the complex tax issues in this case. The  
15 Conclusion of the Response contains vague language without a specific request – “the Receiver  
16 should be instructed by the Court to explore other alternatives that may be available and that more  
17 closely adhere to the distribution plan envisioned by the Court.” Response at p. 4.<sup>2</sup> The Receiver’s  
18 preliminary consultations with her proposed tax advisors explored the alternatives, which  
19 discussions formed the basis of the Motion. Obviously both the Receiver and her tax advisor wish  
20 to find the most appropriate manner to handle the taxes. Neither the Receiver nor her tax advisor  
21 has limited the possibilities regarding minimizing the tax consequences of the plan that is  
22 ultimately approved; however, the facts of the case have. To the extent the Court deems it  
23 appropriate to incur the expense of additional research and the drafting of a report regarding the tax  
24 advisor’s opinion of Scenario 3, the Receiver has no opposition. The Receiver cannot, however,

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 <sup>2</sup> Again, the Receiver assumes that what is “envisioned” is that the investors receive shares instead  
27 of cash. No one envisioned, or even discussed, the tax consequences of such a vision, which issues  
are now before the Court.

1 guarantee that such an opinion will contain the outcome desired by the Investor Group. To the  
2 extent that an opinion on Scenario 3 suggests a possible avenue to avoiding tax liability, the  
3 Receiver will require an advance ruling from the IRS before distributing any shares or cash to  
4 ensure that the estate is able to pay any and all assessed tax liability.<sup>3</sup>

5 13. The Receiver's number one priority on the tax consequences of the Plan is ensuring  
6 that the estate pays all appropriate tax liability. That priority may come into conflict with the  
7 Investor Group's desire to avoid the reduction in the assets and cash available to be distributed to  
8 the investors as a result of the tax at the QSF level on the liquidation or distribution of securities to  
9 the investors. While maximizing returns to investors is an important and primary objective of the  
10 receivership, such an objective cannot be at the expense of paying taxes properly determined to be  
11 owed to the IRS and the state of California. The two Scenarios set forth in the Motion are safe,  
12 known and conservative approaches to handling the potential tax liability based on the Receiver's  
13 proposed plan. Scenario 1 treats the assets of the receivership as part of the QSF established on the  
14 date of the receivership, which was formed due to the fraudulent conduct of the people and  
15 companies with which the investors did business. Scenario 2 seeks a more aggressive approach to  
16 try to mitigate tax liability, but to do so pursuant to a tax ruling from the IRS on the position that  
17 the pre-IPO Shares are not part of the QSF. Scenario 3 promoted by the Investor Group seeks an  
18 opinion that ALL shares, including those already publicly traded and in the receivership account,  
19 are not part of the QSF. While the Receiver is not opposed to including such a position in a request  
20 for ruling from the IRS, the Receiver is advised that the success of such a position is unlikely.  
21 Fleshing out all positions, even those that appear unlikely to be successful, is certainly possible and  
22 the Receiver is prepared to do so, as long as the Court, investors and creditors are all mindful that  
23 such a process will increase the costs and delay in this case.

24 \_\_\_\_\_  
25 <sup>3</sup> It is important to understand that, while a tax opinion if otherwise consistent with applicable  
26 regulations, will protect the estate and the Receiver from exposure to penalties related to a  
27 successfully challenged tax position, a tax opinion will not protect the estate and the Receiver from  
the actual tax and related interest should the tax position of the Receiver be successfully challenged  
by the IRS or the State of California.



1           14.     The Receiver is unwilling, however, to unilaterally make such a determination (i.e.  
2 that ALL shares are not part of the QSF and can be distributed tax free), file tax returns with zero  
3 tax consequences, distribute shares and funds, and then run the risk that the IRS would not agree  
4 with such a position. Not only is there a risk of personal liability if all appropriate taxes are not paid  
5 (which the Investor Group refers to as the Receiver's "personal problem"), but if such a  
6 determination is incorrect, the Receiver would also have not paid all taxes, interest and penalties  
7 that are due on behalf of the estate, falling well short of her fiduciary duties. The Receiver has no  
8 intention of shirking her duties to pay all appropriate taxes and should not be required to put her  
9 personal assets on the line so that the investors can try to get a larger return.

10           15.     As Scott Burack noted in his Comments, there is published authority directly on  
11 point regarding the proper treatment of distribution of property from a QSF. 26 CFR 1.468B-2(f).<sup>4</sup>  
12 No basis is established to exclude securities from the definition of property. There is published  
13 authority on the inclusion of the Receivership assets in a QSF. *United States v. Brown*, 348 F.3d  
14 1200 (10th Cir. 2003). There is, however, no authority cited or known supporting the somewhat  
15 vague alternatives advanced by the Investor Group. Therefore, the success of the alternatives  
16 proposed by the Investor Group is uncertain. It is the Receiver's view of the prudent path forward  
17 in light of the published authority that any proposal other than Scenario 1 in the Motion must be  
18 subject to the process of obtaining a formal IRS ruling.

19           16.     In summary, it appears from the Response that the Investor Group requests the  
20 Receiver to take a strategy risky to the estate and the Receiver without protection from an IRS  
21 ruling and without having set forth any legal or factual basis justifying such a high-risk strategy.  
22 The Receiver does not believe that such a strategy is appropriate here.

### 23           **C. No Law Has Been Presented in the Investor Response to Support Scenario 3**

24           <sup>4</sup> 26 CFR 1.468B-2(f) provides:

25           Distribution of property. A qualified settlement fund must treat a distribution of property as a  
26 sale or exchange of that property for purposes of section 1001(a). In computing gain or loss, the  
27 amount realized by the qualified settlement fund is the fair market value of the property on the  
date of distribution.

1           17.       The Response cites to only one case, in footnote 2, *United States v. Brown*, 348  
2 F.3d 1200 (10th Cir. 2003), referring to *dicta* in a Tenth Circuit case about why an argument might  
3 be made to exclude ALL Shares from the QSF. *Brown* at 1211-12. While the Receiver is not  
4 opposed to presenting such an argument to the IRS in a formal request for ruling (Scenario 3), it is  
5 noteworthy that speculative *dicta* from another circuit with distinguishable facts is the sole legal  
6 basis for the argument advanced by the Investor Group in its Response.

7           18.       If the Court deems the additional cost appropriate, the Receiver will request that her  
8 tax advisor explore and write an opinion on whether there is a legal basis to exclude ALL shares  
9 from the QSF. If such an argument is legally supportable, then the Receiver is prepared to request  
10 an advance ruling from the IRS, if the Court deems the costs and delay appropriate.

11 **III. THE BURACK COMMENTS DO NOT PROVIDE FACTS OR LAW TO SUPPORT**  
12 **A DIFFERENT APPROACH**

13           19.       Noting that Mr. Burack’s engagement was limited, the Investor Group concludes  
14 that “the Receiver has unduly limited herself, and her tax professional, in a way that prevents  
15 consideration of other potentially viable options.” Response at p. 4. A review of the Burack  
16 Comments, however, reveals that he does not actually present any other “viable options” to deal  
17 with the tax issues. Nevertheless, the Receiver is open to considering every possible avenue of tax  
18 mitigation, provided that any strategy other than a known safe strategy be the subject of an advance  
19 IRS ruling.

20 **A. Burack Has Not Reviewed the Proposed Plan of Distribution**

21           20.       As a preliminary factual matter, the Burack Comments reveal a lack understanding  
22 about the dynamics of this particular receivership case. The Comments identify the primary  
23 documents reviewed by Mr. Burack at page 4, which notably do not include the Receiver’s Plan, or  
24 any version of any other plan proposed by the Investor Group or the SEC. Without an  
25 understanding of the concepts underlying the Plan (i.e., that investors receive shares, creditors  
26 receive cash, and shares are liquidated in advance of distributions to fund any tax liability), the  
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1 Burack Comments do not address the facts of the case. Rather, they reflect a fundamental  
2 misunderstanding of the case that leads to the misanalysis contained in the Comments as described  
3 below.

4 **B. The Pass Through Entity Proposal Has Not Been Evaluated for Lawfulness**

5 21. On page 9, the “Tax Treatment in the QSF” section suggests that the Receiver  
6 should consider “distributing out the shares pre-IPO to a pass-through entity now” (the “Pass  
7 Through Entity Proposal”). The Receiver’s understanding from a review of the record in this case  
8 is that distribution of pre-IPO shares was not subject to discussion and that all parties and the Court  
9 desired that the shares not be distributed until a liquidity event had occurred. In response to the  
10 Pass Through Entity Proposal, the Receiver notes that (1) no specific “pass through entity” has  
11 been suggested; (2) there is no discussion of the legality of such a transaction; (3) there is no  
12 analysis of whether such a transaction would violate securities regulations; and (4) there is no  
13 discussion of whether such a transaction would violate any tax laws. If the Investor Group wishes  
14 for the Receiver to obtain opinions from both her tax and securities advisors on the Pass Through  
15 Entity Proposal, the Receiver can do so, so long as all parties are on notice of the necessarily higher  
16 administrative costs in doing so and the risk that such opinions would conclude that the Pass  
17 Through Entity Proposal is not viable. Assuming that her tax and securities advisors feel that the  
18 Pass Through Entity Proposal is lawful and justifiable, the Receiver would then require an advance  
19 ruling from the IRS approving the Pass Through Entity Proposal.

20 **C. The Receiver is Responsible for Estate Taxes, Not Individual Investor Taxes**

21 22. The Burack Comments do reflect the Receiver’s understanding of the estate tax  
22 liability - that the gain realized upon sale or distribution of shares would be taxed at ordinary rates.  
23 Comments at pp. 9-10. What is unknown, however, is what that gain would be. Since the gain is  
24 calculated from the value at the date of the establishment of the QSF to the value at the date of sale  
25 or distribution, this figure cannot be ascertained at this time. In at least one case (Bloom Energy),  
26 substantial losses have occurred. However, the gain for Palantir Technologies Inc. for example  
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1 cannot be known or even approximated unless and until the company goes public. Accordingly,  
2 any conclusion that the tax treatment in Scenario 1 will be “harmful to investors” is premature at  
3 this time.

4 23. On page 10 of the Response, Burack states that the Receiver should be responsible  
5 for “the tax consequences to the Investor Group, rather than just the QSF.” As support for that  
6 statement, Burack cites a case and statute that confirm the Receiver’s obligations “to file all tax  
7 returns and pay all taxes as they become due under applicable tax law.” Putting those two  
8 statements together, it sounds like Burack expects the Receiver to file each individual investor’s tax  
9 returns. The Receiver assumes that this is not Burack’s intention; however, Burack’s argument in  
10 his Comments is therefore unclear. The discussion that follows in the Comments regarding the  
11 possible tax consequences for the individual investors may be relevant to those investors, but the  
12 Receiver is not responsible for the tax consequences of the individual investors, nor can she change  
13 the facts of the case that she has inherited. If the QSF tax event happened in 2016 upon entry of this  
14 Court’s order, that is not a fact or law that the Receiver can change. Since prior to the filing of her  
15 Distribution Plan in June 2019, the Receiver has encouraged counsel for the Investor Group to  
16 advise its clients to consult their own tax advisors. The Burack Comments are the first indication  
17 that has been done, but unfortunately the advice does not appear directed to the investors who are  
18 responsible for their individual tax liability.

19 **D. The Additional/Alternative Tax Positions for Consideration**

20 24. Alternative No. 1: In the first “alternative” – that not all of the receivership assets  
21 are in the QSF – Burack engages in interpretation of the Order of Appointment and then states that  
22 it makes sense that the QSF only contains cash and not other assets. No law is cited for this  
23 conclusion, but a vague reference to mass tort litigation is cited as support for this conclusion. So  
24 Alternative #1 proposed by Burack is to simply conclude, without any clear legal support, that all  
25 assets did not become part of the QSF, just the cash. The Receiver’s tax advisor has considered  
26 this position and, as set forth in Scenario 2, is prepared to write an opinion regarding such a finding  
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1 as to the pre-IPO shares that are not yet in the Receiver's accounts. The IPO Shares are already  
2 held in the account established by the prior Receiver. Whether the IRS would agree with Burack's  
3 conclusion, either as to the pre-IPO shares, the IPO shares, or both, is speculative, which is why the  
4 Receiver proposed Scenario 2 to obtain an advance IRS ruling.

5 25. Alternative No. 2: Burack next proposes that the pre-IPO shares be transferred in  
6 advance of a liquidity event. As noted above, the securities and other hurdles with such a proposal  
7 have excluded this possibility from discussion long before this Receiver's appointment. Moreover,  
8 Burack himself notes that there are issues with such an approach, not the least of which is a one  
9 year holding period. Burack discusses distributing shares at reduced values, and it is not clear  
10 whether he is proposing that the Receiver try to time the market or how he is proposing the  
11 Receiver would accomplish distributing shares at reduced values. However, it is the Receiver's  
12 position that the market, and not the Receiver, controls the valuations of the securities.

13 26. Alternative No. 3: Burack suggests utilizing deductions to offset income in a given  
14 year. This is an issue outside of the scope of the Motion but certainly the Receiver and her tax  
15 advisors intend to maximize all possible deductions to the extent the timing will allow for such.

16 27. Alternative No. 4: Burack suggests abandoning surplus shares. Such a suggestion  
17 reflects a lack of familiarity with the facts of this case. First, any excess shares are minimal and  
18 only apply to certain stocks and, second, any surplus would be used to fund cash payments to the  
19 unsecured creditors who are very much a part of this case along with the investors. Abandonment  
20 of assets of this estate is not an option that would benefit all interested parties in the estate at this  
21 time.

22 28. Burack's "Other Concerns" set forth on page 12 of the Comments also reveal a lack  
23 of familiarity with the facts of this case. Burack "would think no tax liability would be expected  
24 other than when securities are sold or distributed (other than on potential net income from earnings  
25 on cash held). The entirety of the discussion that preceded that concern, however, correctly notes  
26 the QSF's obligation to pay taxes on the gains at the time of sale and distribution. It is that tax  
27

1 liability – generated from the sale and/or distribution of securities – that must be addressed.

2 29. Burack’s next concern states that the Receiver having cash sufficient to pay taxes  
3 before distributions are made is “backwards.” As was discussed at length at the June 27, 2019  
4 hearing, given the complexities of the case, the need to fund cash payments to unsecured creditors,  
5 and the need to reserve funds to pay taxes (for both the liquidation of shares to make cash payments  
6 and the distribution of shares, which is taxed as a sale out of a QSF), shares must be sold first to  
7 create a pool of cash to pay taxes. If the Receiver were to distribute everything first, there would be  
8 no funds available to pay taxes. A review of the Receiver’s Plan makes this point clear. Burack’s  
9 suggestion is to either somehow distribute assets out of the QSF at reduced values or give  
10 “consideration . . . to a structure outside of the QSF that makes that happen.” No details or legal  
11 support is provided for this suggestion. And no provision is made to safeguard the estate and  
12 provide a pool of cash to fund tax liability that will necessarily arise when securities are sold  
13 pursuant to the terms of the Plan.

14 30. Another concern of Burack relates to valuation of the shares. The Receiver has held  
15 off engaging a valuation expert until the issue of the QSF and the need for valuations has been  
16 established. Following receipt of the tax opinion sought, and assuming that the conclusion is that  
17 all or some of the assets are held in the QSF, then the Receiver believes that engagement of a  
18 valuation expert is appropriate and necessary to fix the tax basis as of the date of the establishment  
19 of the QSF. Burack, however, whose Comments argue against having the shares included in the  
20 QSF, then suggests that the valuation should be done now, before such a determination has been  
21 made. Burack wants the Receiver to have a “better handle on the potential tax exposure for the  
22 QSF.” Of course, everyone would like to know these numbers. However, those familiar with the  
23 case know that the largest holding in the case, the Palantir shares, have not yet had a liquidity event  
24 and there is no way to estimate what the tax consequences might be. There is no way to presently  
25 obtain the type of “handle” Burack is looking for. The Receiver has already obtained proposals  
26 from valuation experts and is prepared to proceed once valuations are known to be required to  
27

1 calculate tax liability, but does not believe that the expenditure of resources is appropriate until it is  
2 determined that the valuations are relevant to the tax work to be done.

3 31. Finally, Burack states that he is unclear on why a formal ruling would be required  
4 when the Receiver could simply disclose her position on tax returns and request prompt  
5 determination of tax liability. As Burack noted on page 7 of the Comments, “prompt  
6 determination” means 18 months, and the Receiver is advised that the wait could extend longer  
7 than that. The Receiver cannot and will not distribute funds or shares prior to an advance ruling  
8 from the IRS or a prompt determination from the IRS following submission of tax returns, unless  
9 Scenario 1 is followed in which all of the shares are deemed part of the QSF. No tax advisor has  
10 offered to indemnify the Receiver for a tax opinion that turns out to be successfully challenged by  
11 the IRS. Although penalties might be abated if proper taxes were not initially paid with the returns  
12 by obtaining a tax opinion, the taxes and interest must still be paid at the end of the day. Without  
13 money or assets in the estate to do so, the Receiver would be personally liable.

14 32. Burack concludes his Comments with a summary of issues that lay bare the exact  
15 reason why a formal IRS ruling is required if the Receiver takes a position other than Scenario 1.  
16 The Receiver has no objection to asking her tax advisor to address those of Burack’s questions in  
17 his Summary on page 13 that relate to the estate tax liability (as opposed to the individuals’ tax  
18 liability for which they must consult their own tax advisor), and she can share such an opinion with  
19 the Investor Group. The services to be provided would exceed the scope of those initially proposed  
20 by Miller Kaplan so will be a greater administrative cost to the estate. Upon receipt of that opinion,  
21 given the uncertainty and dearth of law on the subject, the Receiver would propose to seek an IRS  
22 ruling which will be additional cost for the estate.

23 33. Burack’s final comments again ask that the Receiver “explore alternative tax  
24 treatments to maximize the after-tax returns to the beneficiaries of the Receivership Entities,”  
25 noting that “The Investor Group would prefer to be in the same or close to the same tax position as  
26 was originally intended when the investors made their investments.” Unfortunately, the Receiver  
27



1 cannot reverse the change of circumstances for the investors and must comply with the law. If there  
2 is room in the law to assert a tax position that is accepted by the IRS, the Receiver fully supports  
3 such a position. The Receiver cannot, however, engage in tax planning for the individual investors  
4 and must examine the tax consequences from the perspective of the receivership estate.

5 **IV. CONCLUSION**

6 WHEREFORE, the Receiver respectfully requests that the Court grant the Motion and, after  
7 weighing the costs, risks and different Scenarios, instruct the Receiver whether it is appropriate to  
8 incur the costs and delays inherent in obtaining an advance IRS ruling for any scenario other than  
9 Scenario 1. The Investor Group's Response does not appear to alter anything suggested in the  
10 Motion and, in fact, appears to confirm the necessity to obtain a formal IRS ruling if any proposed  
11 tax position and advice other than Scenario 1 is adopted.

12  
13 DATED: October 3, 2019

By: /s/ Kathy Bazoian Phelps  
Kathy Bazoian Phelps  
Successor Receiver