

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-84955; File No. SR-GEMX-2018-44)

December 26, 2018

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq GEMX, LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate
Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Extend the Penny Pilot Program

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 December 21, 2018, Nasdaq GEMX, LLC (“GEMX” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC” or “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 amend its rules to extend a pilot program to quote and to trade certain options classes in penny increments (“Penny Pilot Program” or “Penny Pilot”).

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s Website at <http://nasdaqgemx.cchwallstreet.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 proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

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

Under the Penny Pilot Program, the minimum price variation for all participating options classes, except for the Nasdaq-100 Index Tracking Stock ("QQQQ"), the SPDR S&P 500 Exchange Traded Fund ("SPY") and the iShares Russell 2000 Index Fund ("IWM"), is \$0.01 for all quotations in options series that are quoted at less than \$3 per contract and \$0.05 for all quotations in options series that are quoted at \$3 per contract or greater. QQQQ, SPY and IWM are quoted in \$0.01 increments for all options series. The Penny Pilot Program is currently scheduled to expire on December 31, 2018.³ The Exchange proposes to extend the Penny Pilot Program through June 30, 2019, and to provide a revised date for adding replacement issues to the Penny Pilot Program. The Exchange proposes that any Penny Pilot Program issues that have been delisted may be replaced on the second trading day following January 1, 2019. The replacement issues will be selected based on trading activity for the most recent six month period excluding the month immediately preceding the replacement (i.e., beginning June 1, 2018, and ending November 30, 2018). This filing does not propose any substantive changes to the Penny Pilot Program: all classes currently participating will remain the same and all minimum increments will remain unchanged. The Exchange believes the benefits to public customers and other market participants who will be able to express their true prices to buy and sell options have been demonstrated to outweigh any increase in quote traffic.

³ See Exchange Act Release No. 83533 (June 28, 2018), 83 FR 31233 (July 3, 2018) (SR-GEMX-2018-23).

Lastly, the Exchange proposes a non-substantive change in Supplementary Material .01 to Rule 710 to update “Market Information Circulars” to “Options Trader Alerts” to reflect current practice.⁴

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the requirements of the Act and the rules and regulations thereunder that are applicable to a national securities exchange, and, in particular, with the requirements of Section 6(b) of the Act.⁵ Specifically, the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,⁶ because it is designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade, remove impediments to and perfect the mechanisms of a free and open market and a national market system and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. In particular, the proposed rule change, which extends the Penny Pilot Program for an additional six months, will enable public customers and other market participants to express their true prices to buy and sell options to the benefit of all market participants. Furthermore, the Exchange’s proposal to update “Market Information Circulars” to “Options Trader Alerts” in Supplementary Material .01 to Rule 710 will bring greater transparency to the Exchange’s Rulebook to the benefit of all market participants.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement on Burden on Competition

In accordance with Section 6(b)(8) of the Act,⁷ the Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on intermarket or intramarket competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. Specifically, the

⁴ Today, the Exchange specifies which options trade in the Penny Pilot Program, and in what increments, in Options Trader Alerts distributed to Members.

⁵ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(8).

Exchange believes that, by extending the expiration of the Penny Pilot Program, the proposed rule change will allow for further analysis of the Penny Pilot Program and a determination of how the Penny Pilot Program should be structured in the future. In doing so, the proposed rule change will also serve to promote regulatory clarity and consistency, thereby reducing burdens on the marketplace and facilitating investor protection.

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

The Exchange has filed the proposed rule change pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act⁸ and Rule 19b-4(f)(6)⁹ thereunder. 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 after the date of the filing, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate, if consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest, the proposed rule change has become effective pursuant to 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act¹⁰ and Rule 19b-4(f)(6)¹¹ thereunder.

A proposed rule change filed under Rule 19b-4(f)(6)¹² normally does not become operative prior to 30 days after the date of filing. However, pursuant to Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii),¹³

⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

⁹ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

¹⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

¹¹ 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.

¹² 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

the Commission may 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 so that the proposal may become operative immediately upon filing. The Commission believes that waiving the 30-day operative delay is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest because doing so will allow the Pilot Program to continue without interruption in a manner that is consistent with the Commission's prior approval of the extension and expansion of the Pilot Program.¹⁴ Accordingly, the Commission designates the proposed rule change as operative upon filing with the Commission.¹⁵

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:

Electronic comments:

¹³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6)(iii).

¹⁴ See Securities Exchange Release No. 61061 (November 24, 2009), 74 FR 62857 (December 1, 2009) (SR-NYSEArca-2009-44).

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

- 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-GEMX-2018-44 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-GEMX-2018-44. 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 20549-1090 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-GEMX-2018-44 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.¹⁶

Eduardo A. Aleman
Deputy Secretary

¹⁶ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

