



SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-91408; File No. SR-GEMX-2021-01]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq GEMX, LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Amend Various Rules in Options 3

March 25, 2021.

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 March 12, 2021, Nasdaq GEMX, LLC (“GEMX” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III, 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 various rules in Options 3.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s Website at <https://listingcenter.nasdaq.com/rulebook/gemx/rules>, 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 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.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed rule change is to amend various rules in Options 3. The proposed changes consist of conforming existing rules to current System technology, amending rule text to add greater detail on how certain Exchange functionality operate today. Furthermore, the proposed changes are intended to harmonize the Exchange’s rules where appropriate with the rules of the Exchange’s affiliated options markets, including by using consistent language to describe identical functionality.³ As such, no System changes to existing functionality are being made pursuant to this proposal. Rather, this proposal is designed to reduce any potential investor confusion as to the features and applicability of certain functionality presently available on the Exchange. These changes are described in detail below, and include amending Exchange rules governing: (1) the Block Order Mechanism (“Block”),⁴ (2) the Facilitation Mechanism (“Facilitation”),⁵ (3) the Solicited Order Mechanism (“Solicitation”),⁶ (4) the Price Improvement Mechanism (“PIM”),⁷ and (5) Anti-Internalization.⁸

Universal Changes

In September 2019, the Exchange amended its regular allocation rule in Options 7, Section 10 (Priority of Quotes and Orders) to make non-substantive changes, among other changes, to replace references to Professional interest with non-Priority Customer interest.⁹ The

³ The Exchange’s affiliate, Nasdaq ISE, LLC (“ISE”) recently filed a substantially similar rule change as part of this exercise. See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 91223 (February 26, 2021) (SR-ISE-2021-01).

⁴ See Options 3, Section 11(a).

⁵ See Options 3, Section 11(b).

⁶ See Options 3, Section 11(d).

⁷ See Options 3, Section 13.

⁸ See Options 3, Section 15(a)(3)(A).

⁹ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 86946 (September 12, 2019), 84 FR 49158 (September 18, 2019) (SR-GEMX-2019-10).

Exchange now proposes to make similar changes to replace all instances of “Professional” interest with “non-Priority Customer” interest throughout its auction allocation rules in Options 3, Section 11 and Section 13 to align with the changes made in SR-GEMX-2019-10.¹⁰ While the term “Professional Orders” is defined within Options 1, Section 1(a)(38) as an order that is for the account of a person or entity that is not a Priority Customer, the Exchange believes that using the term “non-Priority Customer” is more clear in describing the types of market participant to which the allocation applies, and also reduces confusion regarding any reference to Professional Orders or Professional Customer orders.

In addition, the Exchange proposes to make universal changes in its Facilitation and Solicitation rules¹¹ to clearly delineate between orders and Responses¹² of the same capacity. For example, where the existing rule text currently states “Priority Customer bids (offers),” the Exchange proposes instead to state “Priority Customer Orders and Priority Customer Responses to buy (sell).” The Exchange notes that this is merely a non-substantive change as auction orders and Responses of the same capacity do not get treated differently for allocation purposes today. With the proposed changes, the Exchange is merely seeking to bring greater transparency around how allocation takes place in those auction mechanisms today.

Block Order Mechanism

The Exchange proposes minor changes to the current descriptions of the Block execution and allocation process in Options 3, Section 11(a). As discussed below, the proposed Block changes are non-substantive in nature, and are intended to harmonize with the Block rule on its

¹⁰ Specifically in Options 3, Section 11, the Exchange will amend current subsections (a)(2)(ii), (b)(3)(i)-(iii) (renumbered to (b)(4)(i)-(iii) under this proposal), and (d)(2)(iii) (renumbered to (d)(3)(iii) under this proposal). In Options 3, Section 13, the Exchange will amend current subsections (d)(1)-(3).

¹¹ Specifically in Options 3, Section 11, subsections (b)(3)(i)-(iii) (renumbered to (b)(4)(i)-(iii)), and (d)(2)(i) and (iii) (renumbered to (d)(3)(i) and (iii)) will be updated.

¹² A “Response” is an electronic message that is sent by Members in response to a broadcast message. See Options 3, Section 11.

affiliated market, BX Options (“BX”) in order to ensure rule consistency between the Exchange and its affiliate offering identical functionality.

First, the Exchange proposes to add “up to the size of the block order” at the end of subsection (a)(2)(i). As amended, the rule will provide that bids (offers) on the Exchange at the time the block order is time the block order is executed that are priced higher (lower) than the block execution price, as well as Responses that are priced higher (lower) than the block execution price, will be executed in full at the block execution price up to the size of the block order. The Exchange is making this non-substantive change to align with BX’s Block rule,¹³ which will ensure rule consistency for identical functionality across affiliated markets. The language states that better priced interest gets executed in full only if there is sufficient size to execute against such interest, which is how block orders are executed and priced on the Exchange and BX today.

Second, the Exchange proposes a non-substantive change in the first sentence of subsection (a)(2)(ii) to replace “first and in time priority” with “first in price time priority.” As amended, the rule will provide that at the block execution price, Priority Customer Orders and Priority Customer Responses will be executed first in price time priority. This is not a change to the current Block allocation methodology, but rather a non-substantive change for better readability, and to align with BX’s Block rule¹⁴ in order to ensure rule consistency for identical functionality across affiliated markets. Block orders will continue to trade at a single execution price that allows the maximum number of contracts of the block order to be executed against both the Responses entered to trade against the order and unrelated interest on the Exchange’s order book.

Example 1

Block order is entered to buy 50 contracts @ 1.50

¹³ See BX Options 3, Section 11(a)(2)(A).

¹⁴ See BX Options 3, Section 11(a)(2)(B).

The following Responses are received:

Priority Customer Response 1 to sell 40 contracts @ 1.40

Priority Customer Response 2 to sell 10 contracts @ 1.40

Priority Customer Response 3 to sell 10 contracts @ 1.39

The block execution price would be \$1.40 (i.e., the price at which the maximum number of contracts could be executed) and would be executed as follows:

Block order trades 10 with Priority Customer Response 3 @ 1.40

Block order trades 40 with Priority Customer Response 1 @ 1.40

As shown above, Priority Customer Response 3 would be executed in full since it is priced better than the block execution price and there is sufficient size to execute Response 3 against the block order, while Priority Customer Responses 1 and 2, which are priced at the block execution price, would participate in price time priority – i.e., the remaining 40 contracts would go to Response 1, which was received before Response 2.

Facilitation Mechanism

The Exchange proposes a number of changes to its Facilitation rule, none of which will change the current operation of this technology offering.

In Options 3, Section 11(b), the Exchange proposes to add new subsection (b)(1),¹⁵ which will provide that Orders must be entered into the Facilitation Mechanism at a price that is (A) equal to or better than the NBBO on the same side of the market as the agency order unless there is a Priority Customer order on the same side Exchange best bid or offer, in which case the order must be entered at an improved price; and (B) equal to or better than the ABBO¹⁶ on the opposite side. Orders that do not meet these requirements are not eligible for the Facilitation Mechanism and will be rejected. The Exchange is not proposing any other changes to the current entry

¹⁵ As a result, current subsections (b)(1) - (3) will be renumbered as (b)(2) - (4). The Exchange will also renumber current subsection (b)(3)(iv) as subsection (b)(5).

¹⁶ The term “Away Best Bid or Offer” or “ABBO” means the displayed National Best Bid or Offer not including the Exchange’s Best Bid or Offer. See Options 1, Section 1(a)(4).

requirements for Facilitation. The new subsection (b)(1) would simply provide additional detail about Facilitation's existing entry checks.

Example 2

Assume the following market:

Exchange BBO: 1 x 2 (also NBBO)

CBOE: 0.75. x 2.25 (next best exchange quote)

Facilitation order is entered to buy 50 contracts @ 2.05

No Responses are received.

The Facilitation order executes with resting 50 lot quote @ 2. In this instance, the Facilitation order is able to begin crossed with the contra side Exchange BBO because in execution, the resting 50 lot quote @ 2 is able to provide price improvement to the facilitation order.

In renumbered subsection (b)(3), the Exchange proposes to replace the words "must not exceed" with "will only be considered up to." This change more accurately describes current behavior in that the System will cap Responses to the size of the auction for purposes of allocation methodology.

In renumbered subsections (b)(4)(ii) and (b)(4)(iii), the Exchange proposes to amend the rule to provide that the facilitating Member will be allocated up to forty percent (40%) (or such lower percentage requested by the Member) of the original size of the facilitation order. If the Member requests a lower allocation percentage, the contra-side order would receive an allocation consistent with the percentage requested by the Member. Regardless of the Member's request, the contra-side order would still be responsible for executing up to the full size of the agency order if there is not enough interest to execute the agency order at a particular price.¹⁷

¹⁷ Other options exchanges such as BX provide similar functionality that allows members using an auction mechanism to configure allocation priority. See, e.g., BX Options 3, Section 13, which provides a similar feature for the BX Options Price Improvement Auction ("PRISM") called "Surrender." ISE also recently amended its Facilitation rule in ISE Options 3, Section 11(b), which governs identical functionality on ISE as the

The Exchange also proposes to more accurately describe Facilitation’s auto-match functionality, which provides an enhanced price improvement opportunity for the agency order by permitting the contra-side order to further participate in the cross by auto-matching the price and size of competing interest providing price improvement from other market participants. The Exchange adopted Facilitation (and its auto-match functionality) as part of its application to be registered as a national securities exchange.¹⁸ In approving Facilitation, the Commission noted that it was largely based on similar functionality offered by ISE.¹⁹ The rule currently provides that upon entry of an order into the Facilitation Mechanism, the facilitating Electronic Access Member can elect to automatically match the price and size of orders, quotes and responses received during the exposure period up to a specified limit price or without specifying a limit price. In this case, the facilitating Electronic Access Member will be allocated its full size at each price point, or at each price point within its limit price if a limit is specified, until a price point is reached where the balance of the order can be fully executed.²⁰ The Exchange proposes to state that if a Member elects to auto-match, the facilitating Electronic Access Member will be allocated the aggregate size of all competing quotes, orders, and Responses (instead of “its full size”) at each price point, or at each price point up to the specified limit price (instead of “within its limit price”) if a limit is specified, until a price point is reached where the balance of the order can be fully executed. The Exchange believes that the modified language more accurately

Exchange’s Facilitation Mechanism, to make the same change as proposed herein. See supra note 3.

¹⁸ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 70050 (July 26, 2013), 78 FR 46622 (August 1, 2013) (File No. 10-209).

¹⁹ ISE adopted its auto-match functionality in 2010. See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 62644 (August 4, 2010), 75 FR 48395 (August 10, 2010) (SR-ISE-2010-61) (“Auto-Match Filing”). As discussed later in this filing, the Auto-Match Filing also introduced the auto-match feature on ISE’s PIM, which is functionally identical to the Exchange’s PIM. As such, the Exchange is proposing to make similar changes in PIM’s auto-match rule as proposed for Facilitation’s auto-match rule.

²⁰ See Options 3, Section 11(b)(3)(iii) (renumbered to Section 11(b)(4)(iii) under this proposal).

explains how the functionality works today, and better aligns with how this feature is described in the Auto-Match Filing.²¹

Lastly, the Exchange proposes to add at the end of Supplementary Material .01 to Options 3, Section 11 that any solicited contra orders entered by Members into the Facilitation Mechanism to trade against Agency Orders may not be for the account of an Exchange Market Maker that is assigned to the options class.²² This language was included in the approval order to SR-ISE-2006-78 to allow solicited transactions in ISE's Facilitation Mechanism. As discussed above, the Exchange's Facilitation Mechanism is functionally identical to ISE's Facilitation Mechanism. As such, the Exchange seeks to import the same prohibition into the Exchange's rule text for greater transparency.

Solicited Order Mechanism

The Exchange proposes the below changes to its Solicitation rule, none of which will change the current operation of this technology offering.

In Options 3, Section 11(d), the Exchange proposes to add new subsection (d)(1),²³ which will provide that orders must be entered into the Solicited Order Mechanism at a price that is equal to or better than the NBBO on both sides of the market; provided that, if there is a Priority Customer order on the Exchange best bid or offer, the order must be entered at an improved price. Orders that do not meet these requirements are not eligible for the Solicited Order Mechanism and will be rejected. The Exchange is not proposing any other changes to the

²¹ The Auto-Match Filing describes the auto-match feature as allowing the initiating member to submit a contra-side order that will automatically match the price and size set forth by the competing interest from other market participants (i.e., auction responses, quotes, and orders) at any price level during the auction or up to a specified limit price if a limit is specified.

²² See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 55557 (March 29, 2007), 72 FR 16838 (April 5, 2007) (SR-ISE-2006-78) (Order Granting Approval of Proposed Rule Change Relating to Facilitation Mechanism).

²³ As a result, current paragraphs (d)(1) - (3) will be renumbered accordingly. The Exchange will also renumber current paragraph (d)(2)(iv) as paragraph (d)(4).

current entry requirements for Solicitation. The new subsection (d)(1) would simply provide additional detail about Solicitation's existing entry checks.

Example 3

Assume the following market:

Exchange BBO: 1 x 2 (also NBBO)

CBOE: 0.75. x 2.25 (next best exchange quote)

Solicitation order is entered to buy 500 contracts @ 2.05

The Solicitation order is rejected upon entry for being crossed with the NBBO on the contra side.

In contrast to Example 2 above for Facilitation, the Solicitation order in this instance is not able to begin crossed with the contra side Exchange BBO because of the all-or-none contingency of the Solicitation order.²⁴

Price Improvement Mechanism

The Exchange proposes a number of changes to the PIM rule, none of which will change the current operation of this technology offering. As noted above, many of these modifications are similar to the changes proposed for Facilitation.

The Exchange proposes in Options 3, Section 13(b)(2) to delete "national best bid or offer" as NBBO is already defined in subsection (b)(1) above. The Exchange proposes in subsection (c)(2) to provide that responses in the PIM (i.e., "Improvement Orders") will only be considered up to the size of the Agency Order. The proposed amendment will specify that the System will cap the size of the Improvement Orders to the auction size for purposes of the allocation methodology. This is similar to the change proposed above for Facilitation. The Exchange also proposes in subsection (c)(3) to amend the internal numbering from (1) and (2) to (i) and (ii) for greater numbering consistency within the PIM rule.

In subsection (d)(3), which describes how allocation and execution takes place in PIM,

²⁴ See Options 3, Section 11(d) (requiring that each Solicitation order be designated as all-or-none).

the Exchange proposes that the Counter-Side Order will be allocated the greater of one contract or 40% (or such lower percentage requested by the Member) of the initial size of the Agency Order. Similar to Facilitation as discussed above, the System currently permits Members entering orders into PIM to elect to receive a percentage allocation that is less than 40%, although the current rule is silent in this regard. If the Member requests a lower allocation percentage, the Counter-Side Order would receive an allocation consistent with the percentage requested by the Member. Regardless of the Member's request, the Counter-Side Order would still be responsible for executing up to the full size of the agency order if there is not enough interest to execute the agency order at a particular price.²⁵

The Exchange also proposes to more accurately describe PIM's auto-match functionality in a similar manner as Facilitation's auto-match functionality, as discussed above. In this instance, the Exchange proposes to amend the third sentence of subsection (d)(3) to provide: "If a Member elects to auto-match, the Counter-Side Order will be allocated the aggregate size of all competing quotes, orders, and Responses at each price point up to the specified limit price if a limit is specified, until a price point is reached where the balance of the order can be fully executed." Similar to the proposed amendments to Facilitation's auto-match, the Exchange believes that the proposed language for PIM's auto-match more clearly explains how the functionality works today, and better aligns with how this feature is described in the Auto-Match Filing.

The Exchange further proposes technical amendments in subsection (d)(3) to replace all instances of "Counter-Side order" as "Counter-Side Order" to use the correct terminology.

Anti-Internalization

The Exchange proposes to amend its anti-internalization ("AIQ") rule in Options 3, Section 15(a)(3)(A). Specifically, the Exchange proposes to add that AIQ does not apply during

²⁵ As noted above, BX has a similar feature called Surrender for its PRISM auction. See supra note 17.

the opening process or reopening process following a trading halt pursuant to Options 3, Section 8 to provide more specificity on how this functionality currently operates. The Exchange notes that the same procedures used during the opening process are used to reopen an option series after a trading halt, and therefore proposes to specify that AIQ will not apply during an Opening Process (i.e., the opening and halt reopening process) in addition to an auction, as currently within the Rule. AIQ is unnecessary during an Opening Process due to the high level of control that Market Makers exercise over their quotes during this process. The proposed changes will align the Exchange’s AIQ rule with BX’s AIQ rule, which sets forth materially identical functionality.²⁶

Technical Amendments

The Exchange proposes two technical changes in the Supplementary Material to Options 3, Section 11. First, the Exchange proposes in Supplementary Material .03 to update an incorrect cross-cite from Options 3, Section 22(d) to Section 22(b), which limits principal transactions. Second, the Exchange proposes in Supplementary Material .05 to update the reference to “Block Mechanism” to “Block Order Mechanism” to use the correct terminology.

Lastly, the Exchange proposes to retitle General 4 (currently titled “Regulation”) to “Registration Requirements” to harmonize its General Rule titles with that of its affiliates The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC and Nasdaq BX, Inc.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,²⁷ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,²⁸ in particular, in that it is designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to remove impediments to and perfect

²⁶ See BX Options 3, Section 15(c)(1).

²⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

²⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general to protect investors and the public interest.

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with the protection of investors and public interest as all of the proposed changes will increase transparency around how various existing Exchange mechanisms work today. As such, no System changes to existing functionality are being made pursuant to this proposal. Rather, this proposal is designed to reduce any potential investor confusion as to the features and applicability of certain functionality presently available on the Exchange.

Furthermore, the proposed changes seek to provide greater harmonization between the rules of the Exchange and its affiliates.²⁹ The Exchange believes that these harmonizing changes would result in greater uniformity, and ultimately less burdensome and more efficient regulatory compliance by market participants. As such, the proposed rule change would foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in facilitating transactions in securities and would remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system. The Exchange also believes that more consistent rules will increase the understanding of the Exchange's operations for Members that are also members on the Exchange's affiliates, thereby contributing to the protection of investors and the public interest.

Specifically, the Exchange believes that the proposed universal changes to replace all instances of Professional interest with non-Priority Customer interest throughout the Exchange's auction allocation rules will add greater consistency within the Exchange's rules. As discussed above, the Exchange previously made the same modifications within its standard allocation rule in Options 7, Section 10, so the proposed changes will promote more consistent terminology in the rules and make them easier for market participants to navigate and comprehend. The Exchange also believes that using the term "non-Priority Customer" reduces any potential

²⁹ See supra note 3.

confusion regarding any reference to Professional Orders or Professional Customer orders. In addition, the Exchange believes that clearly delineating between orders and Responses of the same capacity in the Facilitation and Solicitation rules will bring clarity and transparency around how allocation takes place in those auction mechanisms today. The Exchange is simply adding more granularity within its rules and specifying the capacity of such order or Response. As noted above, the Exchange is not changing the current allocation methodology, and auction orders and Responses of the same capacity do not get treated differently for allocation purposes today.

The Exchange believes that the proposed changes to the Block rule are consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest as the modifications will more accurately reflect the handling of auctions in Block, specifically as it relates to execution and allocation. The proposed changes will specify that better priced interest entered into Block gets executed in full only if there is sufficient size to execute against such interest, and that Priority Customer interest gets executed first in price time priority. This specificity will be helpful to market participants utilizing Block and provide greater certainty as to how their Block orders will be executed and allocated. The Exchange also believes that the proposed changes will continue to ensure a fair and orderly market by maintaining and protecting the priority of Priority Customer orders, while still affording the opportunity for all market participants to seek liquidity and potential price improvement during each Block auction commenced on the Exchange. As noted above, the Exchange is not proposing any changes to the current execution or allocation methodology but believes that the changes will promote consistency with the rulebook of its affiliated exchange BX, which offers identical functionality.³⁰

Similarly, the Exchange believes that specifying the entry checks for Facilitation and Solicitation is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest by bringing more

³⁰ See supra notes 13-14, and accompanying text.

transparency around how the entry checks operate today. The Exchange is not amending the current Facilitation and Solicitation entry checks; rather, the proposed changes are simply intended to add a more robust description of current System behavior in the Exchange's rules. The Exchange also believes it is appropriate to require that the Facilitation order be entered at an improved price if there is a Priority Customer order on the same side Exchange best bid or offer as the agency order. The Exchange believes this will ensure a fair and orderly market by maintaining priority of orders and quotes and protecting Priority Customer orders, while still affording the opportunity to seek liquidity and for potential price improvement during each Facilitation auction commenced on the Exchange. For the same reasons, the Exchange believes that it is appropriate to require that the Solicitation order be entered at an improved price if there is a Priority Customer order on the Exchange best bid or offer.

The proposed changes to replace "must not exceed" with "will only be considered up to" in the Facilitation and PIM rules are intended to more accurately describe that the System will cap the size of Responses to the size of the agency order for purposes of allocation. The Exchange is not amending current System behavior; rather, the modifications will more clearly articulate the handling of Responses by the System.

The Exchange believes that its proposal to specify in the Facilitation and PIM rules that an initiating Member may elect to receive a percentage allocation lower than 40% is consistent with the Act. This feature provides an initiating Member that submits an order into Facilitation or PIM with the flexibility to configure its allocation percentage up to the full 40% entitlement. The Exchange notes that regardless of the Member's instruction, the contra-side order would still be responsible for executing up to the full size of the agency order if there is not enough interest to execute the agency order at a particular price. The Exchange continues to believe that the 40% allocation entitlement is consistent with the statutory standards for competition and free and open markets by promoting price competition within Facilitation and PIM as Members would still have a reasonable opportunity to compete for a significant percentage of the incoming order.

The Exchange also notes that the configurable 40% allocation entitlement for Facilitation and PIM is consistent with the configurable allocation entitlements in place on its affiliated exchanges.³¹ Accordingly, the Exchange believes that the proposed changes will promote consistency across the rulebooks of exchanges offering identical functionality.

With respect to the proposed changes to the Facilitation and PIM auto-match feature, the Exchange is amending the current rule text so that it more accurately explains how the Exchange will allocate an order designated for auto-match today. As discussed above, the Exchange is not making any substantive changes to the allocation procedure itself; rather the proposed changes are intended to better align how this feature is described in the Auto-Match Filing.³² Similarly, the Exchange believes that the proposed change in Supplementary Material .01 to Options 3, Section 11 to add the provision that any solicited contra orders entered by Members into the Facilitation Mechanism to trade against Agency Orders may not be for the account of an Exchange Market Maker that is assigned to the options class will better align the rule text with SR-ISE-2006-78. As discussed above, this restriction was included in the approval order to the rule filing that allowed solicited transactions in ISE's Facilitation Mechanism, which is identical to the Exchange's Facilitation Mechanism, so the Exchange will import that language into the rule text for greater transparency.³³

The Exchange believes its proposal to provide that AIQ will not apply during an Opening Process (i.e., the opening process or halt reopening process) will more accurately state how this functionality currently operates. AIQ prevents Market Makers from trading against their own quotes and orders. While the Exchange believes that this protection is useful for Market Makers to manage their trading during regular market hours, applying AIQ is unnecessary during an Opening Process due to the high level of control that Market Makers already exercise over their

³¹ See supra note 17.

³² See supra note 21.

³³ See supra note 22.

quotes during this process. Furthermore, the proposed AIQ changes will promote consistency with the rulebook of its affiliated exchange BX, which offers identical functionality.³⁴

The Exchange further believes that the technical changes it is proposing throughout Options 3 are non-substantive changes intended to enhance the accuracy of the Exchange's Rulebook, which will alleviate potential confusion as to the applicability of its rules. As discussed above, these changes consist of updating cross-cites and using correct terminology. Lastly, the Exchange believes that the harmonizing change to retitle General 4, as discussed above, will serve to further harmonize its Rule titling with that of its affiliates, thereby promoting efficiency and conformity of its processes with those of its affiliated exchanges.

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 not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. As indicated above, no System changes to existing functionality are being made pursuant to this proposal; rather, this proposal is designed to reduce any potential investor confusion as to the features and applicability of certain functionality presently available on the Exchange. Therefore, the proposed changes are designed to enhance clarity and consistency in the Exchange's Rulebook.

Furthermore, many of the proposed changes seek to provide greater harmonization between the rules of the Exchange and its affiliates, and therefore promotes fair competition among the options exchanges. In particular, the proposed changes discussed above for Block and AIQ are based on BX rules governing identical functionality.³⁵ The Exchange notes that it operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily direct order flow to competing venues who offer similar functionality. The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change will enhance competition among the various markets for auction execution, potentially resulting in more active trading in auction mechanisms across all options exchanges.

³⁴ See supra note 26.

³⁵ See BX Options 3, Section 11(a) (Block) and Section 15(c)(1) (AIQ).

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

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 from the date on which it was filed, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate, it has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)(iii) of the Act³⁶ and subparagraph (f)(6) of Rule 19b-4 thereunder.³⁷

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:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or

³⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(iii).

³⁷ 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.

- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-GEMX-2021-01 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-2021-01. 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, 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-2021-01, 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.³⁸

³⁸ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,

Assistant Secretary.

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