



SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
[Release No. 34-98376; File No. CboeBZX-2023-065]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Cboe BZX Exchange, Inc.; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of a Proposed Rule Change to Amend its Fee Schedule

September 13, 2023.

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 September 1, 2023, Cboe BZX Exchange, Inc. (the “Exchange” or “BZX”) 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 self-regulatory organization. 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

Cboe BZX Exchange, Inc. (the “Exchange” or “BZX”) proposes to amend its Fee Schedule. The text of the proposed rule change is provided in Exhibit 5.

The text of the proposed rule change is also available on the Exchange’s website (http://markets.cboe.com/us/equities/regulation/rule_filings/bzx/), at the Exchange’s Office of the Secretary, 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 the Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

The Exchange proposes to amend its Fee Schedule, effective September 1, 2023.

The Exchange first notes that it operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily direct order flow to competing venues if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive or incentives to be insufficient. More specifically, the Exchange is only one of 16 options venues to which market participants may direct their order flow. Based on publicly available information, no single options exchange has more than 17% of the market share and currently the Exchange represents only approximately 5% of the market share.³ Thus, in such a low-concentrated and highly competitive market, no single options exchange, including the Exchange, possesses significant pricing power in the execution of option order flow. The Exchange believes that the ever-shifting market share among the exchanges from month to month demonstrates that market participants can shift order flow or discontinue to reduce use of certain categories of products, in response to fee changes. Accordingly, competitive forces constrain the Exchange’s transaction fees, and market participants can readily trade on competing venues if they deem pricing levels at those other venues to be more favorable.

The Exchange’s Fee Schedule sets forth standard rebates and rates applied per contract. For example, the Exchange provides a rebate of \$0.25 per contract for Customer orders that add liquidity in Penny Securities, yielding fee code PY. The Fee Codes and Associated Fees section of the Fees Schedule also provides for certain fee codes associated with certain order types and market participants that provide for various other fees or rebates.

Currently, Customer orders in Penny Securities, excluding SPY, that remove liquidity are assessed a standard transaction fee of \$0.48 per contract and yield fee code “PC”. Customer SPY

³ See Cboe Global Markets U.S. Options Market Monthly Volume Summary (August 28, 2023), available at https://markets.cboe.com/us/options/market_statistics/.

orders that remove liquidity are assessed a standard transaction fee of \$0.45 per contract and yield fee code “PR”.

Currently, IWM Customer orders that remove liquidity yield fee code PC and are assessed \$0.48 per contract. The Exchange proposes to reduce the fee assessed for IWM orders that remove liquidity to \$0.45 per contract. The Exchange therefore proposes to amend current fee code PR to include Customer IWM orders that remove liquidity. The standard transaction fee assessed for orders that yield fee code PR remains the same under the proposed rule change (i.e., \$0.45 per contract).

The Exchange also proposes to amend the definition of fee code PC to clarify that such fee code (and corresponding transaction fee) applies to all customer orders in Penny securities that remove liquidity, except Customer orders in SPY and IWM.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes the proposed rule change is consistent with the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the “Act”) and the rules and regulations thereunder applicable to the Exchange and, in particular, the requirements of section 6(b) of the Act.⁴ Specifically, the Exchange believes the proposed rule change is consistent with the section 6(b)(5)⁵ requirements that the rules of an exchange be designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in regulating, clearing, settling, processing information with respect to, and facilitating transactions in securities, to remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. Additionally, the Exchange believes the proposed rule change is consistent with the section 6(b)(5)⁶ requirement that the rules of an exchange not be designed to

⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁵ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

⁶ Id.

permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers. The Exchange also believes the proposed rule change is consistent with section 6(b)(4) of the Act,⁷ which requires that Exchange rules provide for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees, and other charges among its Members and other persons using its facilities.

As described above, the Exchange operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily direct order flow to competing venues if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive or incentives to be insufficient. The proposed rule change reflects a competitive pricing structure designed to incentivize market participants to direct their order flow to the Exchange, which the Exchange believes would enhance market quality to the benefit of all market participants. The Exchange is only one of several options venues to which market participants may direct their order flow, and it represents a small percentage of the overall market.

Additionally, the Exchange believes that the proposed amendment to reduce the transaction fee for Customer IWM orders that remove liquidity (and therefore apply fee code PR to include such orders) is consistent with section 6(b)(4) of the Act in that the proposed fee is reasonable, equitable, and not unfairly discriminatory. The Exchange believes the proposed change is reasonable as Members will pay lower fees for liquidity removing IWM Customer orders. The Exchange believes its proposed change is also reasonable as the proposed rate continues to be competitive and in line with IWM-specific pricing at other exchanges.⁸ The Exchange believes the proposed amendment will also encourage market participants to increase retail IWM order flow to the Exchange, which benefits all market participants by providing additional trading opportunities. This, in turn, attracts increased large-order flow from liquidity

⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4).

⁸ See e.g., MIAX Pearl Fee Schedule, Section 1 Transaction Rebates/Fees, which provides for fees ranging between \$0.45 and \$0.48 per contract for priority customer IWM orders that remove liquidity.

providers which facilitates tighter spreads and potentially triggers a corresponding increase in order flow originating from other market participants. The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is equitable and not unfairly discriminatory as the proposed change will apply uniformly to all Customer IWM orders that remove liquidity.

The Exchange also believes it is reasonable, equitable and not unfairly discriminatory to adopt IWM-specific pricing as the Exchange already maintains product-specific pricing for other products, such as SPY. Additionally, as noted above, other exchanges similarly provide for IWM-specific pricing.⁹ The Exchange also believes that it is equitable and not unfairly discriminatory to assess a lower fee for Customer IWM orders as compared to other market participants because customer order flow enhances liquidity on the Exchange for the benefit of all market participants. Specifically, customer liquidity benefits all market participants by providing more trading opportunities, which attracts Market-Makers. An increase in the activity of these market participants in turn facilitates tighter spreads, which may cause an additional corresponding increase in order flow from other market participants. Moreover, the options industry has a long history of providing preferential pricing to customers, and the Exchange's current Fee Schedule currently does so in many places, as do the fees structures of multiple other exchanges.¹⁰

Finally, the Exchange believes the change to the description of fee code PC is reasonable as such fee code does not currently apply to SPY Customer orders that remove liquidity, and as proposed will no longer apply to IWM Customer orders that remove liquidity. The Exchange believes explicitly referencing that SPY and IWM are excluded from fee code PC in the fee code description will reduce potential confusion and maintain clarity in the Fees Schedule.

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

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ See BZX Options Fee Schedule, Fee Codes and Associated Fees; see also Cboe C2 Options Exchange Fees Schedule, Transaction Fees.

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. In particular, the Exchange believes the proposed rule change does not impose any burden on intramarket competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The proposed change to reduce the transaction fee for Customer IWM orders that remove liquidity will apply to all Members. As discussed above, the Exchange believes the proposed change to reduce the transaction fee would attract additional IWM Customer orders that remove liquidity, thereby promoting market depth, price discovery and transparency and enhancing order execution opportunities for all Members. As a result, the Exchange believes that the proposed change furthers the Securities and Exchange Commission's (the "Commission's") goal in adopting Regulation NMS of fostering competition among orders, which promotes "more efficient pricing of individual stocks for all types of orders, large and small."

The Exchange also believes the proposed rule change does not impose any burden on intermarket competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. As previously discussed, the Exchange operates in a highly competitive market. Members have numerous alternative venues they may participate on and direct their order flow, including 15 other options exchanges. Additionally, the Exchange represents a small percentage of the overall market. Based on publicly available information, no single options exchange has more than 17% of the market share. Therefore, no exchange possesses significant pricing power in the execution of order flow. Indeed, participants can readily choose to send their orders to other exchanges if they deem fee levels at those other venues to be more favorable. Moreover, the Commission has repeatedly expressed its preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. Specifically, in Regulation NMS, the Commission highlighted the importance of market forces in determining prices and SRO revenues and, also, recognized that current regulation of the market system "has been remarkably successful in promoting market competition in its broader forms that are most

important to investors and listed companies.” The fact that this market is competitive has also long been recognized by the courts. In *NetCoalition v. Securities and Exchange Commission*, the D.C. Circuit stated as follows: “[n]o one disputes that competition for order flow is ‘fierce.’ ... As the SEC explained, ‘[i]n the U.S. national market system, buyers and sellers of securities, and the broker-dealers that act as their order-routing agents, have a wide range of choices of where to route orders for execution’; [and] ‘no exchange can afford to take its market share percentages for granted’ because ‘no exchange possesses a monopoly, regulatory or otherwise, in the execution of order flow from broker dealers’”. Accordingly, the Exchange does not believe its proposed fee change imposes any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

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

The Exchange neither solicited nor received comments on the proposed rule change.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

The foregoing rule change has become effective pursuant to section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act¹¹ and paragraph (f) of Rule 19b-4¹² thereunder. 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 will institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be approved or disapproved.

¹¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

¹² 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f).

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 (<https://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an email to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include file number SR-CboeBZX-2023-065 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-CboeBZX-2023-065. This file number should be included on the subject line if email is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's internet website (<https://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 a.m. and 3 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. Do not include personal identifiable information in submissions; you should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly. We may redact in part or withhold entirely from publication submitted material that is obscene or subject to copyright

protection. All submissions should refer to file number SR-CboeBZX-2023-065 and should be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 21 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.¹³

Sherry R. Haywood,

Assistant Secretary.

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¹³ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).