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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Before The Honorable James Donato, Judge

IN RE: PG&E CORPORATION and PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY,

Debtors.

NO. 19-05257 JD

San Francisco, California Thursday, April 16, 2020

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS BY ZOOM

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Thursday - April 16, 2020 1 2:00 p.m. 2 PROCEEDINGS ---000---3 Calling Civil 19-5257, In Re PG&E THE CLERK: 4 5 Corporation and Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Counsel for the defense, will you please wave and state 6 7 your appearance. MR. ORSINI: Kevin Orsini, Cravath, Swaine & Moore, on 8 behalf of debtors. 9 10 THE CLERK: Okay. MR. KAROTKIN: Stephen Karotkin, Weil, Gotshal & 11 Manges, on behalf of the debtors as well. 12 THE CLERK: Okay. Can the -- plaintiffs' counsel, can 13 you also state your appearance? What I'm going to do is call 14 15 your names and you can wave and state your name and who you 16 represent for the court reporter, keeping in mind this matter 17 is now -- is being recorded --18 **THE COURT:** Lisa? THE CLERK: Yes. Hello? 19 20 THE COURT: Lisa? 21 THE CLERK: Yes, Judge? Can you hear me, Judge? I can hear you. All set to go, Lisa? 22 THE COURT: 23 THE CLERK: Yeah. I already called the case and 24 they're making their appearances. I'm going to call -- the 25 plaintiffs' counsel because there's so many, I'm going to call

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them and have them wave to Jo Ann so she can see who's
 1
     speaking. Okay?
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              THE COURT:
                          Sounds good.
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                         Benjamin P. McCallen.
              THE CLERK:
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 5
              MR. McCALLEN:
                            Good afternoon. I'm on behalf of the
    Ad Hoc Group of Subrogation Claim Holders, Benjamin McCallen,
 6
     Willkie, Farr & Gallagher.
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              THE CLERK: Paul J. Pascuzzi.
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              MR. PASCUZZI: Good afternoon.
                                              Paul Pascuzzi,
 9
     Felderstein Fitzgerald Willoughby Pascuzzi, for the California
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11
     state agencies.
                         David Weiss.
12
              THE CLERK:
              MR. WEISS: Good afternoon, Your Honor. David Weiss
13
     on behalf of Paradise Irrigation District, Paradise School
14
15
    District, Northern Recycling, and Napa Recycling.
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              THE CLERK: Robert Julian.
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              MR. JULIAN: I'm Robert Julian of Baker Hostetler
18
     appearing on behalf of the Tort Committee.
19
              THE CLERK: Francis Scarpulla.
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              MR. SCARPULLA: Good afternoon, Your Honor.
                                                           Francis
21
     Scarpulla on behalf of certain fire victims.
              THE CLERK: Elizabeth Cabraser.
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              MS. CABRASER: Good afternoon, Your Honor.
23
                                                          Elizabeth
24
     Cabraser, Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein, for creditor
25
     Angela Loo and numerous additional fire claimants.
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Jeremiah Hallisey.
 1
              THE CLERK:
                             Jeremiah Hallisey for miscellaneous
 2
              MR. HALLISEY:
     plaintiffs, law firm of Hallisey & Johnson.
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 4
              THE CLERK:
                          Benjamin Mintz.
                          Good afternoon. Benjamin Mintz,
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              MR. MINTZ:
     Arnold & Porter, counsel for AT&T.
 6
 7
              THE CLERK:
                         Matthew Troy.
              MR. TROY: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Matthew Troy,
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     United States Department of Justice, Civil Division, on behalf
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10
     of various federal agencies.
              THE CLERK: Alan Stone.
11
                              (No response.)
12
                          Alan Stone, did you leave the call?
13
              THE CLERK:
14
                              (No response.)
15
              THE CLERK:
                          Okay. Gerald Singleton.
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              MR. SINGLETON: Good afternoon, Your Honor.
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     Singleton. I'm appearing on behalf of over 25,000 fire victims
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     who are represented by the Singleton Law Firm, the Watts Guerra
19
     firm, and are co-counsel in this matter.
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                          Rebecca Winthrop.
              THE CLERK:
21
                              (No response.)
22
              THE CLERK:
                          Rebecca Winthrop.
                          I think she's having trouble hearing the
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              MR. WEISS:
     audio, but she's on the call.
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25
              THE CLERK:
                          Oh, okay.
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Alan Stone just came on. 1 MR. STONE: Yes, I did. Alan Stone, Milbank LLP, here 2 on behalf of the Committee of Unsecured Creditors. 3 THE CLERK: Bruce Bennett. 4 5 MR. BENNETT: Your Honor, Bruce Bennett of Jones Day on behalf of the shareholders. 6 7 THE CLERK: Mr. Baghdadi. MR. BAGHDADI: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Khaldoun 8 Baghdadi on behalf of certain creditors at California JCCP 9 10 Leadership. 11 THE CLERK: And Abid Quereshi? MR. QUERESHI: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Abid 12 Quereshi, Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, on behalf of the 13 Ad Hoc Note Holder. 14 15 THE CLERK: Mikal Watts. 16 MR. WATTS: Good afternoon, Your Honor. It's Mikal Watts on behalf of certain fire plaintiffs. 17 THE CLERK: Your Honor, I think that's everyone. 18 THE COURT: Okay. Well, good afternoon, everyone. 19 20 hope you and your families and colleagues are all doing well 21 under the circumstances. I'm encouraged to see such a good 22 turnout today, and I'm also happy to see you're all dressed for 23 court so always a good thing. 24

My personal view is that this is probably the beginning of a new culture of online court appearances, so might as well get

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used to this. I think I'll be doing this going forward, and I know a number of my colleagues probably will too once we get past our current public health problems.

There are a couple rules that we need to be conscious of as we get into this new world. The first one is please keep yourself on mute unless you're talking.

The second one is, just let me know when you'd like to speak. Use the hand button on the screen or you can do it old school and just raise your hand, but wait for me to see you and call on you. I promise everybody will have a chance to talk, but otherwise we'll have too many competing voices.

And then the last thing, just to reiterate what was in the docket entry but for everybody else who might be joining as well, you know, we're doing this to -- we're doing this online as part of our long tradition and our commitment in the federal courts keeping justice open and accessible to the public and in the sunshine so that everybody can see what happens in our federal courts.

We're doing that online today, which unfortunately does leave the possibility open that someone might try to record any of today's proceedings, download a snapshot or in any other way preserve what we're doing. Please keep in mind that any recording of a federal court proceeding by video or teleconference, including screen shots or any other audio or visual copying of the hearing, is absolutely prohibited and any

violations of that may result in sanctions, including removal of court-issued media credentials, restricted entry to future hearings, and denial of entry to future hearings, and any other sanctions that might be appropriate to impose.

So it's not meant to discourage anyone. It's just meant for us to start developing a robust and solid online court culture. And if there is a bright spot in any of this, it may be that allowing our proceedings to happen online today and in the future will actually increase public access and visibility for people who ordinarily couldn't get down to court. So that might be a good thing.

All right. Let me set the table for what I'd like to discuss today. Now, as you-all know, this case came to me in September of last year when the bankruptcy withdrawal -- reference was withdrawn for me to estimate the unliquidated and contingent claims mainly for personal injury torts and wrongful death related to the firefighters. That was under 11 United States Code, Section 502(c).

We set up with everybody's participation, and it was a wonderful display of cooperation and professionalism. In a fast-moving and complicated problem, we were able to set up a very complex enterprise to start estimating those losses and setting guidelines and getting us ready for my estimation decision.

And then we hit December of last year and at our last

meeting, which was December 17th, counsel for PG&E, I think that was Mr. Orsini, who's here with us today, said, quote (reading):

"We've had a settlement" and, quote, "If that settlement is approved and we move forward towards confirmation, we will no longer need to have the estimation proceedings before Your Honor that have been scheduled. We will have effectively stipulated to an estimated amount that will go into the trust to satisfy these claims," close quote.

That's the transcript at Docket Number 217, page 4.

I'll also note that we have a motion coming up in late

May. I'm not going to get into the merits of that today, but I

went through that background because I want to pose the

question. I'll start with Mr. Orsini. I'm not sure why we're

here today.

MR. ORSINI: Thank you, Your Honor. Good afternoon and thank you. I echo the well wishes and extend them to the Court and the Court's family and the staff and their families.

Your Honor, we're here on exactly the issue that I noted in the transcript that you just read, which is we have a stipulated estimated amount. So when we signed the restructuring support agreement that was the settlement with the tort claimants committee and fire professionals representing over 70 percent of the claimants, many of whom are

on the screen right now, one of the requirements was that we come to the Court under that RSA once the settlement was approved and ask for this Court to enter an order confirming our stipulated estimated amount of \$13.5 billion. And that was part of the requirement that was set forth in the approval order that Judge Montali issued.

And the reason for that, Your Honor, is the same reason why we were here in the first place with the withdrawal of the reference because of the nature of certain personal injury claims here.

And so what we've asked for is really quite simple. What we've asked for is if and only if the fire victim vote comes in, we would like this Court to enter a very simple order that confirms 13 and a half billion dollars as the aggregate estimated amount for the fire victim claims. That's it.

That's all we're asking for. There's a lot of discussion about other issues in the papers.

But if we get the vote of the fire victims, we will need that order in order to bring it to the Bankruptcy Court to finalize the confirmation of the plan of reorganization that's currently out for vote with all of the various creditors.

If, on the other hand, Your Honor, the vote does not come in in favor of the -- in support of the settlement that's been proposed, this motion will be withdrawn. We will not at that point be asking the Court to estimate the claims of 13 and a

half billion dollars. We'll have to, candidly, reassess where everything stands at that point in time; and if we need to come back for lengthier estimation proceedings, then we'll have to come back for lengthier estimation proceedings, but that would be the scenario where we weren't going forward with this settlement.

Now, what we're not asking from this Court -- again, the Court's jurisdiction here is quite narrow as the Court has said a number of times. It's here to do one thing, which is to provide a number as an estimate for the aggregated claims.

We're not asking for any order from this Court with respect to the treatment of those claims, no order from the Court with respect to how the amount that the Court estimates pursuant to the stipulation in the event the vote comes in is actually distributed to the claimants. All of those issues, as I believe the TCC concedes, are appropriately before

Judge Montali. They're all a function of the settlement agreement he's approved and the process for confirming a plan of reorganization.

Now, honestly, Your Honor, I think it's important to understand what's going on with respect to a lot of these filings.

THE COURT: Let me -- I'm sorry. Let me just jump in.

MR. ORSINI: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So I am with you, I think, on what might

happen if this arrangement/settlement falls apart. It seems to me that -- no one is hoping for that of course, but it seems to me that at that point the estimation proceedings may take on a different tone, both substantively and in terms of urgency.

But I'm just not -- I'm not seeing, Mr. Orsini, how what you're asking me to do is within that narrow band of authority that I have.

Now, 502(c) is very clear. I am limited to fixing or

Now, 502(c) is very clear. I am limited to fixing or liquidating contingent and unliquidated claims. You-all are past that. You put a number on it. And your own motion -- and I know we're not getting to the merits today but it's germane now -- your own motion, Docket Number 286 at page 9 says, quote, (reading):

"A settlement of the parties has effectively" -
"effectively liquidates the value of the claims for the

purposes of estimation under Section 502," close quote.

You know, I have the feeling you're kind of asking me just to say, yes, you're right, but that's not what's within the scope of Section 502(c).

MR. ORSINI: So let me address that, Your Honor.

THE COURT: It's not an estimation. That's just -it's just asking me to rubber stamp -- not rubber stamp. That
has a negative connotation. It's just asking me to say, "Yes,
that seems fine." I don't think that's something that 502(c)
contemplates.

MR. ORSINI: So, Your Honor, let me address that directly. It's actually the withdrawal of the reference under 28 U.S.C. 157 that requires us to be here, and it's the reason that it's built into the RSA and was part of the order that Judge Montali approved.

And ultimately what we're asking Your Honor to do is the same thing we would have asked you to do if we had that complicated three-week bench trial, and that is to estimate the aggregate value of the fire victim claims.

Now, as the Court has noted and as the law is pretty clear, to use your words, Your Honor, a settlement is the gold standard. So if we get to the point where all of the conditions for the settlement are actually satisfied, which the most significant one that remains open is the vote of the fire victims, at that point we will be asking the Court to estimate, for the purposes permitted under 502(c), the aggregate claims of \$13.5 billion.

And the reason we need to do that -- and this is a common practice and procedure in mass tort bankruptcies. There are other lawyers on the screen who are bankruptcy practitioners who can speak more to that. But that the reason we need the Court to ultimately enter an estimated amount is in furtherance of the ultimate channeling injunction that will be issued that will have all of the claims of the various fire victims going to the trust that's being created by the settlement and will be

confirmed by the Bankruptcy Court.

In many cases, as I understand it, Your Honor, what happens is the Bankruptcy Court will enter an order estimating these types of claims as part of the confirmation process, and then the Article III judge will have to just sign off on that. We're in a slightly different scenario here because Judge Montali can't enter that order because of the withdrawal -- the reference has been withdrawn.

And so at the end of the day, Your Honor, what we're asking you to do is the same thing we've been asking you to do all along. We're asking you to estimate what the aggregate value of those fire victim claims are; and if we can satisfy the preconditions and the fire victim vote comes in, which we believe it will, Your Honor -- early indications are people are voting overwhelmingly in favor of the plan -- if the fire victim vote comes in, at that point you will have, as I said back in December, a stipulated estimated amount and that will provide you with a record to say the appropriate estimate of these claims is the settlement amount of 13 and a half billion dollars.

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Julian -- let's hear from the victims' lawyers. Mr. Julian, let me start with you.

MR. JULIAN: Your Honor, do you have a question for me?

THE COURT: Well, I mean, what's your position on what

you've heard so far?

MR. JULIAN: Well, Your Honor, first you'll notice that they didn't come back to you in estimation with the subro, and subro claims are tied up in our claims because they stand in our shoes.

This requirement to come back to you was the debtor's insistence in the RSA, from our standpoint, in order to have a contingency hanging over our heads while the voting was going on yes or no.

Now, actually their proposed order looked okay to me because it said 13.5 but then they stuck in the language about "as agreed in the RSA," and we just don't think it's up to you to be talking about what's agreed to in the RSA. That would be Judge Montali's position.

They wanted to determine the RSA was fair and so they stuck that language in there. If they had just said "Estimate the 13.5," we probably wouldn't be here. So we included our positions in the case so they wouldn't be arguing we have a waiver of them.

I would suggest that we keep the matter on calendar and see what happens.

THE COURT: All right. Any other representatives of the victims like to say anything? Yes, Mr. Mintz.

MR. MINTZ: Your Honor, I'm Benjamin Mintz from

Arnold & Porter, counsel for AT&T. I'm speaking on behalf of

not only AT&T but also Adventist and the Paradise municipal entities. We filed objections to the motion that was filed.

To Your Honor's comment, I think that the relief that's being asked does go beyond the jurisdictional mandate.

Reference was made to 28 U.S.C. 157. That speaks to personal

injury and wrongful death claims.

Our clients and a number of the victims that are within the scope of the class are not personal injury and wrongful death claims. We have -- we have property damage claims. We have claims that aggregate in excess of a billion dollars among our group.

Our claims are liquidated and, therefore, there's no basis to put them under the purview of what's being asked here either under 502(c) or under the withdrawal of the reference or 28 U.S.C. 157. So we don't think that there's a basis for Your Honor to do what they're asking.

It's not clear to us the purpose for which they're asking notwithstanding what's been said here today. I don't think that there is any need for this for purposes of moving forward with confirmation; and I think if you ask the debtor if Your Honor declined to estimate as requested whether they'd be able to go forward with confirmation, I think the answer is certainly yes, and that's another basis to say that 502 is not applicable because it's not necessary and it will avoid a delay to the administration of the case.

Thank you.

THE COURT: That's an interesting question.

Mr. Orsini, you know, the insurance companies, the subrogation people, who, as I understand it, are getting \$11 billion of the fee in cash and they're not getting a stock component, they're getting straight cash, they didn't come to me and ask me to enter or approve their estimation. So why are you in a different position?

MR. ORSINI: Well, the primary reason for that,

Your Honor, is the settlement agreement with the subros and the

order approving that settlement agreement didn't require

estimation the same way that it's required for the tort

victims. So that's the mechanical reason.

But the policy reason behind that or the legal reason behind that is because when we settled with the subrogation plaintiffs, it wasn't only a settlement that established what would be distributed to them as part of a plan of reorganization, it actually, by virtue of the Court's order approving that settlement, created an allowed claim in a liquidated amount of \$11 billion, which the Bankruptcy Court has full authority to do notwithstanding the withdrawal of the reference.

And so the answer is, with respect to the subrogation plaintiffs, we don't need an estimated amount because under the settlement agreement, their claim has already been allowed at

\$11 billion subject to a small number of conditions and circumstances that I think everybody on this line, whether they're on the screen or not, hopes never come to pass. But there are some circumstances in which that allowed claim would go away, but that's the fundamental difference.

We don't have an allowed claim as declared by the Bankruptcy Court with respect to the fire victims. We do with respect to the subrogation insurers, and ultimately because of the withdrawal of the reference, as I said before, we absolutely need the order estimating the fire victim amounts in order to move to confirmation of plan of reorganization.

And just on this point because I think it relates to one thing Mr. Mintz said, you know, it is absolutely incorrect to say that the withdrawal of the reference did not include property claims. It 1,000 percent did, otherwise the subros wouldn't have been here.

But the ultimate question is right now what sort of claims held by these different groups. The subros have their allowed claim of \$11 billion. That is all we need for confirmation of the plan with respect to their items.

With respect to the fire victims because of the withdrawal of the reference, because of the Bankruptcy versus Article III issues associated with some of their claims, we need for the plan confirmation process an estimated amount.

THE COURT: All right. Anybody else on the victim

side would like to say anything?

(No response.)

THE COURT: Okay. Someone -- I'm sorry, I apologize, and I can't remember who -- someone suggested leading up to the motion hearing in late May weekly conferences. We've done that before I think in this case. Who suggested that? Is there someone on the phone here that did that?

Ah, Ms. Cabraser, yes. Thank you.

MS. CABRASER: I think there certainly were others, or at least I think there were, but I would join them in suggesting that. This Court has done that before. There are a number of uncertainties and contingencies as we wait for the vote, and there may be some uncertainties after that. So I think a case management under the limited withdrawal would be promoted if Your Honor was able to do that.

THE COURT: Okay. I'm open to the idea. I do it actually quite frequently. In this case, Ms. Cabraser, what would be some of the things that might be necessary to talk about every week?

MS. CABRASER: Your Honor, it may not be necessary to do it weekly. Biweekly might be sufficient. For example, a next status conference on May 1st or thereabouts we'll know more, I think, about how the vote is going by then. You have a hearing before you later in May, and it may well be that there are -- if the plan is confirmed, it may well be that there are

post-confirmation matters that you may want to take up with Judge Montali or separately.

This is a mass tort settlement as well as a bankruptcy proceeding. As you've noted, there are special procedures for mass tort proceedings in bankruptcy and some of them would involve post-confirmation matters. We don't know what those are yet. We don't know the Bankruptcy Court's view and we don't know your view, but I think it would be a good thing if the parties could keep you informed of their respective positions on these as they develop.

THE COURT: Okay. I'm persuaded I think that's a good idea. We can always cancel. It will be by Zoom so obviously no one will be traveling.

So I will -- I'll do the -- what is today? Thursday?

I'll do probably the same time the first Thursday after

May 1st. All right?

And if you-all agree among -- you know, before we get there that we don't need to have a call, that's fine. Just let me know, and we'll take it off calendar, but let's at least reserve the time and we can cancel if we need to.

Mr. Orsini.

MR. ORSINI: Your Honor, if I may, the first Thursday after May 1st is May 7th. The deadline for the vote is May 15th. I think for everybody's sake it would be most productive for us actually to be right on that deadline to have

a status conference because that's when we'll know the most.

These things, like many votes, tend to come in right at the wire so I would just propose, for the sake of efficiency and to make sure we can do the most that we need to, that we either do it on May 15th or right after that, early the following week, which still gives us a couple of weeks before the hearing.

THE COURT: Let me just -- so on that, how are people voting? Is it in something they're mailing in or is it online?

MR. ORSINI: I think it's primarily mailing in, but I believe there also may be an opportunity to do online. And in fact I see Mr. Bennett nodding. So there is an opportunity to vote online through the Prime Clerk site. They are the administrators of the notice program. If I've messed that up, Mr. Bennett or Mr. Karotkin can correct me.

THE COURT: Mr. Singleton.

MR. SINGLETON: Thank you, Your Honor.

Yes, the Prime Clerk process requests that people vote electronically so that is the majority of the voting. There is an option to mail in but most of the voting is done electronically so I would concur with Mr. Orsini's statement. I think if we came in on May 15th or shortly thereafter, we would know within a very small margin of error what the vote is going to be.

THE COURT: Let's see, I'm looking offline here

because I've got to check the names. Oh, Mr. Karotkin.

MR. KAROTKIN: Yes, sir. Just to add to what Mr. Singleton said, May 15th is a voting deadline in the evening. So just for the sake of practicality, I would suggest a day or two after that because then we'll have better information from Prime Clerk on the actual voting.

THE COURT: Okay. Mr. Mintz.

MR. MINTZ: I would just add, Your Honor, it's also the deadline for objections to confirmation so that may not be the best day for those claimants who may be filing objections to confirmation.

THE COURT: Okay. Mr. Julian.

MR. JULIAN: Yes, Your Honor. I think it would be a good idea to set a status conference for April 30. I would say it's unlikely that we would end up using that, but I think it would be good to have it on calendar inasmuch as the debtors are saying they might be -- let's leave it at that, April 30, and I do agree with counsel that shortly after the May 15 but before the May 21 hearing it would be good to have another status conference.

THE COURT: All right. I don't want to wait an entire month. I think we should have something in between. I think Mr. Julian is right.

So let's set -- I'll set something on April 30th or within a day of that. Again, if you don't want to do it and you-all

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agree, just let me know. It's easy to cancel. Then I'll have
 1
     you back let's do Friday -- what day of the week is the 15th?
 2
     Is that a Friday?
 3
              MR. JULIAN:
                           Friday.
 4
 5
              MR. ORSINI: I believe it is, Your Honor. I'm just
 6
    pulling it up.
                          Let's do that following Monday.
 7
              THE COURT:
              MR. ORSINI: The 18th.
 8
              THE COURT:
                          I quess that's the 18th.
 9
              MR. ORSINI: Yes, Your Honor, May 18th.
10
11
              THE COURT:
                         Let's do the following Monday at 2:00 p.m.
     I will take care of all the calendaring in terms of invitations
12
     of course. So we'll count on April 30th within a day of that,
13
     and then May 18th, and that basically takes us up to the eve of
14
15
     the motion hearing with me anyway so that should be enough.
16
          Okay. Anything else anybody would like to raise today?
17
                              (No response.)
18
              THE COURT:
                          No?
                                       Thank you so much.
                                                            This went
                              Great.
19
     very well and I will see you soon.
                                         Thank you.
20
              MS. CABRASER: Thank you, Your Honor.
21
              MR. ORSINI: Thank you, Your Honor.
22
                    Thank you.
              ALL:
                   (Proceedings adjourned at 2:32 p.m.)
23
24
25
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript from the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter. DATE: Friday, April 17, 2020 g andergen Jo Ann Bryce, CSR No. 3321, RMR, CRR U.S. Court Reporter