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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
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                WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON AT SEATTLE
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     IN RE:
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     NORTHWEST TERRITORIAL MINT, LLC, )
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                 Debtor.
                                     ) 16-11767-CMA
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            TRANSCRIPT OF THE DIGITALLY RECORDED PROCEEDINGS
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               BEFORE THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER M. ALSTON
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                             APRIL 28, 2017
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     PREPARED BY: SHARI L. WHEELER, CCR NO. 2396
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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON; APRIL 28, 2017
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                   THE COURT: I'll take Northwest Territorial Mint
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    next.
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                   Mr. Gearin and Mr. Northrup, good morning.
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                   MR. NORTHRUP: Good morning, Your Honor.
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                   MR. GEARIN: Good morning, Your Honor.
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                   THE COURT: This is the trustee's motion to
     approve a settlement with Mr. Bressler, who is a member of
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     Medallic --
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                   MR. GEARIN: Art Company, LLC.
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                   THE COURT: Right. MAC, LLC. I just call that
     entity "Medallic."
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                   I know the committee has filed a supporting
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     statement in favor of the settlement. Let me just say,
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    normally, it's the committee's money. If they want to agree
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     to have a $3 million claim added to it -- like Judge
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     Overstreet would always say, Hey, it's your money -- but I do
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     have a duty to independently review proposed settlements under
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     the HyLoft case, 451 B.R. 104 (Bankr. D. Nev. 2011), which
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     says: The trustee's business judgment is not alone
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     determinative of the issue of Court approval; the Court is not
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    permitted to act as a mere rubber stamp but must make an
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     independent determination that the compromise is fair and
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equitable.

So I have some questions. What dispute does the trustee have with Mr. Bressler?

MR. GEARIN: I don't think we have any specific disputes with Mr. Bressler pending, Your Honor. I think the issue has always been around Mr. Bressler's support for Medallic's defense of the substantive consolidation action that's before you in the adversary proceeding. It's Mr. Bressler's role as a member and a party who could be harmed in connection with substantive consolidation. That's been the role that has been central to our discussions around settlement with him.

Could there be claims? Could Mr. Bressler have claims against the estate? And could the estate have claims against Mr. Bressler? Hypothetically, that's possible. But that's really not the focus of the discussions we've had with Mr. Bressler. The trustee has been more concerned, as has the committee, with making sure that we can get certainty with the substantive consolidation issue. And we've been coming in and telling you for quite some time that that is central to our ability to restructure and reorganize the company.

THE COURT: I get that, but 9019 is for resolving disputes. What's being compromised? That's what I'm kind of struggling with here. You're offering him a substantial consideration. After the Cohen group, would he be

1 the largest unsecured creditor in the case? 2 Mr. Calvert is nodding his head yes. \$3 million. 3 4 MR. GEARIN: That could be true. 5 THE COURT: And claims are, what, 50 million, 60 million? 6 That's a meaningful increase in the unsecured 7 claims. 8 MR. GEARIN: No dispute on that. No dispute. 9 THE COURT: So other than being a witness and being a member of Medallic, how was Mr. Bressler involved in 10 the Medallic litigation? 11 12 MR. GEARIN: Well, I don't think he was actively 13 supporting -- or I think he was really conceding to Mr. Hansen 14 control over that litigation. Mr. Hansen was the manager 15 through a corporation that Mr. Hansen controlled. Mr. Hansen, 16 effectively, was the manager of Medallic Art Company, and 17 Mr. Bressler was allowing him to go forward and to defend the substantive consolidation action. 18 We felt that Mr. Bressler's concession -- that 19 20 his interest would not be a factor any longer in the Court's 21 decision about substantive consolidation. We thought that was 22 highly important, and apparently so did Medallic. Because I 23 think what you've seen now is that Medallic has withdrawn all 24 of its defenses, has dismissed its claims, and its defenses 25 have all been dismissed as well. And what they tell you is

1 that one of the core issues that brought them to that 2 conclusion was the settlement with Mr. Bressler. 3 So I think we believed that that was the path 4 that's allowing us to succeed. We're not there yet. We still 5 have a hearing before you next week as to whether substantive 6 consolidation is going to be ordered. But we think it was 7 highly important. We think we got the benefit of our bargain, 8 frankly. 9 THE COURT: Mr. Bressler is not a creditor. Не hasn't filed a proof of claim, has he? 10 11 MR. GEARIN: He's not. THE COURT: And the claims bar date has passed, 12 13 so he's got no claims against the estate. 14 MR. GEARIN: Unless you allow him a claim 15 through the settlement process, that's correct. He does not 16 have a claim against this estate. 17 THE COURT: Right. 18 MR. GEARIN: I will say, Your Honor, if 19 substantive consolidation occurs -- and by the way, the claim 20 that's authorized for him is premised on -- conditioned upon 21 substantive consolidation, so --22 THE COURT: Right. I guess that's what gives me 23 the biggest reason for pause here. He testified on behalf of 24 Medallic in connection with the summary judgment motion, 25 right?

1 MR. GEARIN: He did.

THE COURT: So he's a Medallic -- at least as of December, he was a witness for Medallic.

MR. GEARIN: I agree. And I think that was unfortunate, that he did. And I think there may be some -- based on my discussion with Mr. Lerner, there may be some regret that he did so. But I think that's a different issue from whether he withdraws his opposition to the substantive consolidation.

THE COURT: Well, how does he have a right to oppose substantive consolidation? He's not a party to the litigation. He has no standing to oppose substantive consolidation.

MR. GEARIN: Well, I think that's right, Your Honor. I think what we focused on was the factors that Courts look at in determining whether substantive consolidation is appropriate or not. And one of the Bonham factors really is harm to the nondebtor entity that's being substantively consolidated. I think that the focus of that, frankly, is on creditors of that entity. But I think there are arguments, and the arguments that were being made to you were that the equity interests of Medallic, Mr. Bressler's interest, was a factor. And if harm were going to be inflicted on that economic interest, then you had to take that into consideration in whether you ordered sub-con or you didn't.

THE COURT: Right. 1 2 It was a focal argument, a central MR. GEARIN: 3 argument to what the Medallic parties were making to you in 4 their opposition to substantive consolidation. So we thought 5 we could take that issue off the table, and Mr. Bressler's 6 stipulation did that. 7 THE COURT: So he was stipulating to testify in favor of the trustee? 8 9 MR. GEARIN: No. He was stipulating to 10 substantive consolidation and alter ego -- an alter ego finding by the Court -- and stipulating --11 12 THE COURT: Well, no. I had the settlement. agrees not to oppose substantive consolidation. Since he's 13 14 not a party to the litigation, he has no standing to oppose 15 substantive consolidation. I'm trying to understand. What is 16 he supposed to do for his \$3 million claim? 17 MR. GEARIN: Well, let me find the settlement 18 agreement, Your Honor. My recollection is that he actually 19 stipulated -- he did both. He stipulated he would not oppose. 20 THE COURT: Right. 21 MR. GEARIN: And he stipulated to sub-con. But let me find the settlement. 22 23 THE COURT: I have it. Bressler stipulates to 24 and agrees not to oppose the trustee's proposed substantive consolidation of Medallic with the bankruptcy estate of the 25

1 Mint. 2 So let's take that. He's not a party to the 3 litigation. He's a shareholder, or an interest holder of 4 Medallic. But he has no right to file a motion to oppose substantive consolidation. He's not a creditor. He has no 5 6 right to file anything in the main case to oppose substantive 7 consolidation. It's kind of like me agreeing to give up smoking for Lent. I don't smoke. 8 9 He can't oppose substantive consolidation, can 10 he? MR. GEARIN: Well, could he fund the opposition? 11 Could he intercede in a way that would support Medallic? I 12 13 think he could do that. And I think he does stipulate to 14 substantive consolidation. Stipulates to and agrees not to 15 oppose. 16 THE COURT: To the extent he obtains management 17 control over Medallic, he will cause Medallic to stipulate to 18 and not oppose the trustee's proposed substantive 19 consolidation. 20 Okay. So he doesn't have control. There's no 21 obligation for him to get control. This is just kind of basic 22 first-year contract. Where's the consideration that he's 23 giving? Unless -- and I hate going down this path -- unless 24 you're buying his testimony.

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MR. GEARIN: No.

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THE COURT: Well, he certainly is incentivized to change his testimony, isn't he? Because he only gets his \$3 million claim if the trustee wins. This is not like on Law & Order, where the guy gets his deal, and whether or not McCoy wins, he gets his deal. He gets his deal only if the trustee wins, and he testified for Medallic. He is a Medallic witness. At a minimum, this appears to incentivize him to change his testimony. MR. GEARIN: Well, change his testimony? Honor, I can tell you straightforwardly there was never any intent to influence or buy his testimony. That wasn't the discussion at all. What I will go back and I will tell you about is that we had conversations, Mr. Lerner and I, going back for months. THE COURT: Mr. Lerner is stepping up, so maybe I'll hear from him in a second. MR. GEARIN: I think that would be appropriate. We discussed many other avenues of settling this. We talked about purchasing Mr. Bressler's interest in the company, to acquire his interest. We had obstacles in the operating agreement that precluded us from doing that.

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talked about a number of other mechanisms by which we could

reach an agreement with Mr. Bressler under which he would step

away and would not oppose, would support substantive

consolidation. That dialogue was ongoing.

It frankly came as a surprise to me that he offered a declaration in connection with the summary judgment motion. My understanding is he -- you know, he may not have ever been contacted about whether he was going to testify or not testify at the trial. So I don't know whether he would or would not testify. If he were subpoensed --

THE COURT: Well, did you get initial disclosures from Medallic?

MR. GEARIN: We did. And Medallic actually did name him as a witness. But from my understanding, he's never been contacted. He's never been subpoenaed. I don't know whether he was going to appear at trial or he wasn't.

THE COURT: Well, he signed a declaration prepared by Mr. Bucknell, Medallic's lawyer, dated November 10, 2016, with his actual real signature. So Mr. Bressler, at least as of November 2016, was testifying in support of Medallic.

Now you're presenting me a settlement agreement where he has agreed to not oppose the trustee's requested relief. And if the trustee prevails, he gets a \$3 million claim. You can see where, at a minimum, it gives the appearance that he's incentivized to not testify or change his testimony or conform his testimony in a way that gets him a \$3 million claim. That troubles me.

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MR. GEARIN: Well, Your Honor, I do understand
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     that it would change his incentives. Mr. Bressler, from my
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     experience in dealing with him, is a very straightforward,
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     truthful, honest guy. I don't think he's going to change his
     testimony one way or the other. I think he's going to tell
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     the truth.
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                   And I can tell you, I think what he's agreed to
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     do here -- reading from the settlement agreement, he's
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     agreed -- in paragraph 2, he stipulates to and agrees not to
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     oppose the trustee's proposed substantive consolidation of
     Medallic. So whether he has control or not, he's stipulating
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     to substantive consolidation. Now, you --
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                   THE COURT: But that's meaningless because he's
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     not a party. It would be like a 1 percent shareholder
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     stipulating to something. It doesn't matter. If you don't
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     control the entity, it's meaningless.
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                   MR. GEARIN: Medallic didn't think it was
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    meaningless. Mr. Hansen didn't think it was meaningless.
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                   THE COURT: Well, maybe because they were
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     fearful he was going to change his testimony.
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                   MR. GEARIN: Your Honor, I can tell you, I don't
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     think it has anything to do with that. And I understand
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     the --
                   THE COURT: I'll hear from you in a moment,
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     Mr. Lerner.
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MR. GEARIN: I understand the incentive issues, 1 2 but I can tell you that that's never been part of the 3 dialogue. We never -- there's nothing in this agreement that 4 talks about him testifying one way or the other. And I never 5 had a conversation with Mr. Lerner, telling him that Mr. Bressler needed to testify one way or the other. 6 7 THE COURT: Okay. I'll hear from Mr. Lerner. But I'm still kind of stuck on, what is Mr. Bressler giving 8 9 up? He had no right to oppose or do anything because he's not 10 a party. 11 Mr. Lerner, you're going to answer that question for me? 12 13 MR. LERNER: I'm going to try, Your Honor. 14 have, throughout the history of the Mint case, since Medallic 15 became a subject of discussion, tried very hard to stay on 16 that side of the bar and not get involved in this litigation 17 on behalf of Mr. Bressler. 18 THE COURT: Let the record reflect you're 19 pointing to the back of the room. 20 MR. LERNER: And throughout the course of the 21 case, we've certainly had many discussions with Mr. Gearin. We've had some discussions with Mr. Calvert. We have been 22 23 given notice that -- I think all of the parties, at some point 24 or another, expected to call upon Mr. Bressler to testify. 25 Medallic Art asked Mr. Bressler to provide a

declaration regarding the history of his involvement with the company and the company. And his declaration was narrowly tailored, specific to documents that were exhibits to that declaration.

What prompted me to break faith with my practice of staying in the back of the room, Your Honor, was the suggestion that anybody had asked Mr. Bressler, directly or indirectly, or by implication, or had any expectation that he would alter his testimony one iota from the truth in consideration of this agreement with the trustee.

He has, I think, standing to intervene in the substantive consolidation proceedings. He has chosen not to do that.

THE COURT: Well, first, as a matter of law, he hasn't. So as of right now, he has no right to oppose it.

But why would he intervene? His interests are being represented by Medallic. He's a 50 percent shareholder. To allow someone to intervene, you've got to show me that his interests aren't being represented.

MR. LERNER: Well, we can parse the operating agreement, which gives Mr. Hansen tight-fisted control over the entity, Your Honor. Mr. Bressler was a passive investor throughout in Medallic Art. And while I was also not always in the room with regard to the negotiations among the parties and the mediation efforts among the parties, the impression

I've had is that Mr. Hansen had, at times, been negotiating for personal interests in the context of trying to settle the corporate interests. So I think there may have been conflicts within the way he was going about that representation of the company.

Had we not reached an agreement with the trustee, I think it's certainly conceivable that we would have come forward before the Court, if Mr. Bressler chose to seek to intervene, and we could have established a factual basis for that. Whether or not you would grant that is another question. But certainly we could have sought that intervention.

But we did reach an accommodation with the trustee that essentially eliminates Mr. Bressler's 50 percent interest, his \$3 million investment, as a factor in whether or not the Court should grant substantive consolidation. We were encouraged to do that by the unsecured creditors committee, to reach an agreement with the trustee for substantive consolidation. I understand that the unsecured creditors committee supports Mr. Bressler's agreement with the trustee here. And I do think that he is foregoing the possibility of the continued value of his independent interest in Medallic. If Medallic goes forward as an independent entity, then that interest presumably would have value.

Your Honor, in the last, I think, maybe nine

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that's what he said.

months, I'm aware of three substantive consolidation motions that have come before the Court, none of which have been granted. Not necessarily in this case, but in other cases. It's not an easy task, so --THE COURT: I know that. MR. LERNER: So I think that Mr. Bressler's support of the trustee here is meaningful, in terms of the factors of somebody who was an outsider from all this, except for his capital and passive investment, to get on board with the interest of all the unsecured creditors. But it's not going to affect how he testifies, if anybody asks him to testify. THE COURT: Well, I don't doubt for a moment -and I believe everybody, that there was no discussion about testimony. But you can see where I'm coming from. perception is, he testified -- and I've got his declaration here. It's not just attached to copies of documents. five-page declaration, including the last paragraph, which says, essentially: I believe that Medallic owns the assets, and they've never been transferred to the Mint. I mean, that's the operative paragraph here. Clearly, that is the thesis of his testimony. He wanted to preserve the separateness of the entities and preserve

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Medallic's alleged rights to all the disputed assets.

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MR. LERNER: Well, I think, Your Honor, you're carrying what he said a little bit further there. said was what his understanding was of the way the assets were kept separate. THE COURT: Right. MR. LERNER: How Mr. Bucknell argued that, is up to Mr. Bucknell. But Mr. Bressler was very narrow in his testimony. I can tell you, for sure, that the declaration that he provided -- and he would have provided the same declaration if the trustee had asked him for it -- was not the declaration we were initially asked to embrace. THE COURT: Well, again, I did say, "to my understanding, "that's what he says. Clearly, he was doing more than saying, This is a copy of a document. He was providing his understanding of events, which is perfectly fine. If I approve this deal and this trial were to go forward, he would be incentivized to change his testimony. There's no doubt he would be incentivized. That's just a fact, isn't it? I mean, he may not do it, but he would be incentivized.

MR. LERNER: Well, Your Honor, it's really hard for me to answer that question. Anytime somebody reaches a settlement agreement, there's a compromise, in terms of how they evaluate where their interests are. But I have to, with all respect, take exception to any suggestion or implication

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that Richard Bressler would alter his testimony from what his 1 2 understanding was of the absolute truth, regardless of 3 anything that happens in this court. 4 THE COURT: Well, I don't know Mr. Bressler. has never been before this Court. But it's a fact that he 5 6 would be incentivized. Whether or not he would do anything 7 different, I don't know. But there is no escaping the conclusion that he gets a \$3 million claim if the trustee 8 9 wins. Meaning he has an incentive to change his testimony. 10 That's the Court's finding. You're not going to shake me from that. 11 Let me talk, then, about the more basic 12 13 The lawsuit is over. The trustee has won. question. Why 14 should I approve the deal now? 15 I know that you're obligated to bring it because 16 you signed it. And Mr. Lerner would be very upset, rightfully 17 so, if you didn't bring the motion because you signed it. 18 Now, you signed it mid-March. You waited a month to bring the 19 motion. I'm not sure why. I'm not sure I really care. But 20

so, if you didn't bring the motion because you signed it.

Now, you signed it mid-March. You waited a month to bring the motion. I'm not sure why. I'm not sure I really care. But it's kind of too late now. The lawsuit is over. The trustee has won. We don't need Mr. Bressler's cooperation. The settlement was contingent upon Court approval. If Mr. Bressler wanted this deal, he could have acted a long time ago, and he didn't.

So it's kind of like the prisoner's dilemma.

1 The first one gets the deal. The first one who talks, gets 2 five years. The second one gets life in prison. Mr. Bressler 3 could have, quote, talked a long time ago, got his deal, and 4 got this approved. 5 Now that we know that on Tuesday I'm entering a judgment in favor of the trustee -- I'll let you talk to your 6 7 client. On Tuesday, I'm entering a judgment in favor of 8 9 the trustee on substantive consolidation. I'm going to do It's just a matter of how the language works. 10 Mr. Bressler's cooperation is not necessary, is it? 11 12 MR. GEARIN: Your Honor, I'm not going to jinx 13 So I'm not going to say whether it's over or it's 14 not over until you actually enter your judgment. 15 THE COURT: Right. 16 MR. GEARIN: I appreciate the comments. I think 17 it gives the trustee great comfort. But the trustee, I think, 18 is obligated to bring the motion forward. As a matter of 19 policy, if the trustee makes a deal, we are going to stick 20 with that, and we're going to abide by it and bring it in 21 front of you. 22 I think that's correct. You had to THE COURT: 23 do it because you made a deal and you said that you would. 24 MR. GEARIN: I also want to say, in fairness, 25 Your Honor, I think we got the benefit of the bargain.

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think that the reason that you're entering this judgment -one of the principal reasons, maybe not the only reason; in fact, I have doubts that it -- I think there's a considerable question as to whether Medallic intended to go forward with this trial at all. And I think that's something we may have to face postjudgment. But what they've told you, and what I believe to be true is that Mr. Bressler's concession and his willingness to walk away from his interest and to stipulate to substantive consolidation was a significant factor in Mr. Hansen's mind when he rolled over, when he capitulated. So I think we got the benefit of the bargain, and I think the Court -- I understand you have an independent obligation. I think we had an obligation to bring it forward. And I do think we got the benefit of our bargain. THE COURT: All right. Thank you, Mr. Gearin. I believe everyone here has acted in good faith. I don't want to give anyone the impression that I have a contrary view, but I have three concerns that lead me to deny this motion. I'll start with the last one. Again, as I said, Mr. Bressler is here too late. If he wanted this deal, it should have been approved before Medallic completely rolled over. Medallic has already rolled over. I've already entered an order dismissing Medallic's claims and affirmative defenses and defenses. So there is no defense to the trustee's

substantive consolidation motion. The only thing left for

Tuesday is the form of the judgment. So the deal is

unnecessary. Mr. Bressler could have entered this deal a long
time ago and gotten it approved before Medallic rolled over.

Under the A&C Properties factors, the first one is, the chances of the trustee winning without this settlement is 100 percent. So there's no reason to do it.

Second, I don't believe there's any consideration being exchanged by Mr. Bressler. He has no right to agree to substantive consolidation because he does not control the entity that is to be substantively consolidated. He has no right to oppose because he's not a creditor in this case, and he's not a party in the adversary proceeding. So as I said before, if you don't have a right to do something, you're not giving it up, you're not conveying anything of value because you're not changing your legal position.

Third, while, again, I don't believe this was anyone's intention, the perception is that Mr. Bressler's testimony is being bought. He testified for Medallic, and now he's agreed that if Medallic loses, he gets a \$3 million claim. He's a witness in this case, and I don't want anyone to think that witness testimony can be bought. Whether it was the intentions of the parties or discussed at all, that is clearly the perception. It would be one thing if this result

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was not conditioned upon the trustee prevailing. But since it
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     is, it's clear that, at a minimum, Mr. Bressler has the
     incentive to alter his testimony to support the trustee.
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                   For those three reasons, the Court finds that
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     this compromise will not be approved. The Court will enter
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     its own order.
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                   Thank you.
                   I'm sorry that took so long for the other folks,
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     but I wanted to take that one first.
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                   All right. Thank you, everybody.
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                   (The proceedings in this matter were concluded.)
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1	CERTIFICATE
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3	I, Shari L. Wheeler, court reporter and court-approved
4	transcriber, certify that the foregoing is a correct
5	transcript from the official electronic sound recording of the
6	proceedings in the above-entitled matter. Some editing
7	changes may have been made at the request of the Court.
8	
9	These pages constitute the original or a copy of the
10	original transcript of the proceedings, to the best of my
11	ability.
12	
13	Signed and dated this 14th day of July, 2017.
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16	by /s/ Shari L. Wheeler
17	SHARI L. WHEELER, CCR NO. 2396
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