

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION
www.flsb.uscourts.gov

In re:

CHAPTER 11

PALM BEACH FINANCE PARTNERS, L.P.,
PALM BEACH FINANCE II, L.P.,

Case No. 09-36379-PGH
Case No. 09-36396-PGH
(Jointly Administered)

Debtors.

**LIQUIDATING TRUSTEE'S MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT WITH
HARVEY AND DEANNE GILBERT AND MILLENIUM TRUST COMPANY
F/B/O GEORGE LUKAS IRA AND PAYMENT OF CONTINGENCY FEE**

Any interested party who fails to file and serve a written response to this motion within 21 days after the date of service stated in this motion shall, pursuant to Local Rule 9013-1(D), be deemed to have consented to the entry of an order in the form attached to this motion. Any scheduled hearing may then be cancelled.

Barry E. Mukamal, in his capacity as liquidating trustee ("*Liquidating Trustee*") for the Palm Beach Finance Partners Liquidating Trust ("*Liquidating Trust*"), by and through undersigned counsel, and pursuant to *Fed. R. Bankr. P.* 9019, seeks an Order from this Court approving a settlement of claims that could be asserted against Harvey and Deanne Gilbert (collectively, "*Gilberts*") and Millenium Trust Company f/b/o George Lukas IRA ("*Millenium*"). In support of this relief, the Liquidating Trustee states the following:

I. Factual Background

A. *The Pre-Petition Activities of PBF I*

1. The Liquidating Trust is the successor to Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. ("*PBF I*").

2. PBF I was formed to lend monies in purchase financing transactions supposedly brokered by Thomas Petters and his company, Petters Company, Inc. (“*PCI*”) in the consumer goods business. The idea was that PBF I and other lenders would supply bridge financing to PCI and then later, once goods were received by a particular big box retailer, the retailer would remit the payment to the lender or PCI.

3. In reality, PBF I’s investments in PCI were worthless - PCI’s purchase and financing transactions were fictitious and part of an elaborate, multi-billion dollar *Ponzi* scheme perpetrated by Mr. Petters, Deanna Munson a/k/a Deanna Coleman, Robert White and others. No retailer ever made any payment on the purchase and sale of goods because the deals never existed.

4. On September 24, 2008, federal agents raided Mr. Petters’ offices. Thereafter, Mr. Petters’ companies were placed into federal receivership. Ultimately, Mr. Petters was convicted of his crimes and sentenced to 50 years in prison. Other persons complicit in the fraud were sentenced to prison sentences as well.

5. On November 30, 2009 (“*Petition Date*”), PBF I commenced a Chapter 11 bankruptcy case by filing a voluntary petition for relief under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida (“*Bankruptcy Court*”).

6. On October 21, 2010, the Bankruptcy Court entered its Order Confirming Second Amended Plan of Liquidation [ECF No. 444], creating the Liquidating Trust and appointing the Liquidating Trustee as liquidating trustee.

B. Transfers Made to the Gilberts and Millenium.

7. The Ransom Performance Fund, L.P. (“*Ransom*”) was a limited partner in PBF I.

8. The Gilberts and Millenium were two of three members in Ransom.

9. Based on a cash in, cash out analysis, the Gilberts received a profit in the amount of \$33,018.00 (“*Gilberts Profit Distribution*”) with respect to their limited partnership investment in PBF I via their membership interest in Ransom.

10. Based on a cash in, cash out analysis, Millenium received a profit in the amount of \$8,973.00 (“*Millenium Profit Distribution*”, and collectively with the Gilberts Profit Distribution, “*Profit Distributions*”) with respect to its limited partnership investment in PBF I via its membership interest in Ransom.

II. Settlement Terms

11. The key aspects of the stipulation of settlement between the parties (“*Stipulation*”) are the following:¹

- a) Within twenty (20) days from the entry of an Order by this Court approving the Stipulation, the Gilberts will pay (or cause to be paid) \$19,711.00 to the Liquidating Trustee (“*Gilberts Settlement Payment*”);
- b) Within twenty (20) days from the entry of an Order by this Court approving the Stipulation, Millenium will pay (or cause to be paid) \$5,384.00 to the Liquidating Trustee (“*Millenium Settlement Payment*”; and collectively with the Gilberts Settlement Payment, “*Settlement Payments*”);
- c) The parties shall exchange mutual, general releases; and
- d) The Gilberts and Millenium shall not be entitled to any distribution from the PBF I bankruptcy estate.

III. Relief Requested

12. The Liquidating Trustee seeks an Order from this Court (a) approving the Stipulation and (b) approving the Contingency Fee (as defined below).

¹ A copy of the Stipulation is attached as Exhibit 1. To the extent the terms of the agreement differ with the terms set forth in this Motion, the agreement shall control.

13. Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9019 provides in relevant part that “[o]n motion . . . and after a hearing on notice to creditors; the debtor . . . and to such other entities as the Court may designate, the Court may approve a compromise or settlement.”

14. Approval of a settlement in a bankruptcy proceeding is within the sole discretion of the Court and will not be disturbed or modified on appeal unless approval or disapproval is an abuse of discretion. *In re Arrow Air*, 85 BR 891 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 1988).

15. The standards for approval are well settled and require the Court to inquire into the reasonableness of the proposed settlement. *See, e.g., Protective Comm. for Indep. Stockholders of TMT Trailer Ferry, Inc. v. Anderson*, 390 U.S. 414, 424 (1968); *In re W.T. Grant Co.*, 699 F.2d 599, 608 (2d Cir. 1983); *Florida Trailer and Equip. Co. v. Deal*, 284 F.2d 567, 571 (5th Cir. 1960). The inquiry need only determine whether the settlement falls below the lowest point of the range of reasonableness. *See W.T. Grant Co.*, 699 F.2d at 608; *see also In re Martin*, 91 F.3d 389 (3rd Cir. 1996); *In re Louise's Inc.*, 211 B.R. 798 (D. Del. 1997) (setting forth considerations by the Court for approval of a settlement, including: (i) the probability of success in litigation, (ii) the likely difficulties in collection; (iii) the complexity of the litigation involved, and the expense, inconvenience and delay necessarily attending it; and (iv) the paramount interest of the creditors.

A. *The Stipulation Ought to be Approved*

16. Based upon the above legal principles, the Liquidating Trustee asserts that the Stipulation falls well above the lowest point of the range of reasonableness and, thus, should be approved.

Probability of success in litigation

17. The Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust, could assert that the Profit Distributions to the Gilberts and Millenium were fraudulent transfers under federal or state law, or alternatively, that the Gilberts and Millenium were unjustly enriched by the Profit Distributions.

18. The Liquidating Trustee believes that he will likely succeed in prosecuting either of these causes of action.

19. Nonetheless, the Liquidating Trustee acknowledges that there are risks inherent in all litigation and there is the possibility that the Gilberts and Millenium, or other similarly situated parties, could raise certain issues or defenses that potentially could impact the Liquidating Trustee's claims.

Collectability

20. Collectability is not a significant consideration.

Complexity of litigation and attendant expense, inconvenience and delay

21. This is a meaningful consideration that militates in favor of approval of the Stipulation.

22. In sum, although many of the claims outlined above are typical claims litigated before this Court, they still potentially require retention of experts and extensive fact discovery before a trial could take place. The result of these efforts will be substantial fees of professionals that could diminish the net result of any recovery to creditors in the PBF I case.

23. The Stipulation addresses these concerns. The parties avoid litigating fact specific claims, with the attendant expense and delay of litigation being nullified.

Paramount interest of creditors

24. The Settlement Payments represent a roughly 60% recovery of the Profit Distributions and a waiver of any potential or corresponding claims. This result gives certainty to the estate and avoids the risk, expense and delay attendant with litigation. As such, the Stipulation is in the paramount interest of PBF I's creditors and should be approved.

B. The Contingency Fee Ought to be Approved

25. Pursuant to the Plan and this Court's Order Approving the Trustee's Motion to Approve Hybrid Form of Compensation [ECF No. 223], Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A. ("**MRB**") is entitled to a contingency fee of 10% for any affirmative recovery it obtains on behalf of the Liquidating Trust without further order of the Court ("**Contingency Fee**").

26. As such, MRB requests that the Contingency Fee be paid from each of the Settlement Payments without further Order from this Court.

WHEREFORE, the Liquidating Trustee requests that this Court enter an Order (similar in form to the Order attached as Exhibit 2) (1) approving the Stipulation; (2) approving payment of the Contingency Fee; and (3) granting such other relief this Court deems just and proper.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that, on May 9, 2013, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served via the Court's Notice of Electronic Filing upon Registered Users set forth on the attached list on Exhibit 3, via U.S. Mail to those parties on the service list attached as Exhibit 4, Harvey and Deanne Gilbert, 159 St. Thomas Way, Tiburon, Ca 94920 and George Lukas, 45 East End Avenue, Apt. 11 F, New York, NY 10028.

s/ Joshua A. Marcus
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Joshua A. Marcus, Esquire
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*Attorneys for Barry E. Mukamal,
Liquidating Trustee*

N

STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT

This Stipulation of Settlement (the “*Stipulation*”) is entered into on _____, 2013 by and between (a) Barry E. Mukamal, in his capacity as liquidating trustee (the “*Liquidating Trustee*”) of the Palm Beach Finance Partners Liquidating Trust (the “*Liquidating Trust*”) and (b) Harvey and Deanne Gilbert (the “*Gilberts*”) and Millenium Trust Company f/b/o George Lukas IRA (“*Millenium*”; and collectively with the Gilberts, the “*Transferees*”) (the Liquidating Trustee and the Transferees are at times individually referred to as a “*Party*” or collectively, the “*Parties*”). The terms of this Stipulation are as follows:

RECITALS

A. On November 30, 2009 (the “*Petition Date*”), Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. (“*PBF I*”) commenced a Chapter 11 bankruptcy case by filing a voluntary petition for relief under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida (the “*Bankruptcy Court*”);

B. On October 21, 2010, the Bankruptcy Court entered its Order Confirming Second Amended Plan of Liquidation [ECF No. 444], creating the Liquidating Trust and appointing the Liquidating Trustee as liquidating trustee;

C. On November 17, 2011, the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust, filed an adversary proceeding against The Ransom Performance Fund, L.P. (“*Ransom*”), Adv. Case No. 11-2804-PGH, that seeks to recover certain transfers made by PBF I to or for the benefit of Ransom (the “*Litigation*”);

D. On January 10, 2013, the Bankruptcy Court entered a Final Judgment after Clerk’s Default against Ransom [ECF No. 28, Adv. Case No. 11-2804-PGH].

E. The Trustee has asserted that the Gilberts and Millenium received net profits based on their membership interests in Ransom totaling \$33,018.00 and \$8,973.00, respectively.

F. The Transferees expressly deny the claims that are asserted in the Litigation;

G. The Parties have engaged in discussions in an attempt to resolve any and all issues, including the claims asserted in the Litigation; and

H. To avoid the continued expense and risk of adverse outcome arising from the Litigation, as well as incurring costs and expenses associated therewith, among other reasons, the Parties have agreed to resolve the Litigation pursuant to the terms and conditions of this Stipulation.

NOW, WHEREFORE, it is stipulated, consented to and agreed, by and among the Parties as follows:

1. **No admission of liability.** The Parties acknowledge that this Stipulation is a compromise and settlement of a controversy. No Party admits, and each expressly denies, any liability on its part.

2. **Entire agreement.** This Stipulation constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between the Parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and there are no other stipulations, agreements, representations, or warranties other than those specifically set forth herein. All prior agreements and understandings between the Parties concerning the subject matter hereof are superseded by the terms of this Stipulation.

3. **Settlement Payments.** In full and final settlement of the Litigation, the Gilberts shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$19,711.00 ("***Gilberts Settlement Payment***") to the Liquidating Trustee and Millenium shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$5,384.00 ("***Millenium Settlement Payment***"; and collectively with the Gilberts Settlement Payment, the "***Settlement Payments***") to the Liquidating Trustee. The Settle Payments shall be made within 20 days from the date of the entry of an Order by the Bankruptcy Court approving this Stipulation. The Settlement Payments may be made via (i) wire transfer pursuant to written instructions to be provided by the Liquidating Trustee or his counsel or (ii) check made payable to "Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating

Trustee” and delivered to Jonathan S. Feldman, Esq., Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A., 200 South Biscayne Blvd., Suite 3200, Miami, Florida 33131.

4. **No entitlement to distribution.** The Transferees agree that they shall not be entitled to any monetary distribution whatsoever from the Liquidating Trust or PBF I. To the extent the Transferees have scheduled or filed any proof of claim or proof of interest in the PBF I bankruptcy case, such claim or interest shall be deemed disallowed in its entirety and be stricken.

5. **General releases between the Parties.**

A. For purposes of this Stipulation, the term “*Claims*” shall mean any obligations, claims, causes of action, demands of any type that a party may presently have, may have or have had in the past, upon or by reason of any matter, cause or thing whatsoever, including without limitation any and all obligations, claims, causes of actions and demands of any kind whatsoever, at law or in equity, indirect, derivative, or direct, known or unknown, discovered or undiscovered, including, but not limited to, those claims that could have been asserted in the Litigation.

B. Upon approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the Settlement Payments, the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust and PBF I, waives, releases and holds harmless, now and forever, the Transferees from any and all Claims that the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust or PBF I may have against the Transferees; provided that nothing herein shall be deemed to release, waive or otherwise limit any rights or obligations arising out of this Stipulation. The scope of this release shall not impact, impair or alter in any manner any Claims whatsoever that the Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trust or PBF I, may have against any parties other than the Transferees, including but not limited to Claims against any alleged concurrent or consecutive tortfeasors, if any.

C. Upon approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the Settlement Payments, the Transferees waive, release and hold harmless, now and forever, the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust and PBF I from any and all Claims that the Transferees may have against the Liquidating Trustee, the Liquidating Trust or PBF I; provided that this provision does not release, waive or otherwise limit any rights or obligations arising out of this Stipulation.

5. **Authorization to bind.** The individuals signing below represent and warrant that they have the authority to execute this Stipulation on behalf of the applicable Party and bind them to its terms.

6. **Review/No Duress.** Each of the Parties acknowledges that he, she or it has read all of the terms of this Stipulation, has had an opportunity to consult with counsel of his, her or its own choosing or voluntarily waived such right, and enters into those terms voluntarily and without duress.

7. **Attorneys' fees and costs.** Each Party shall bear its own attorneys' fees and costs in connection with the negotiation of this Stipulation and motions and orders as may be necessary to obtain the approval of this Stipulation by the Bankruptcy Court; provided that that in the event of any litigation between the Parties under this Stipulation or arising as a result of a default under this Stipulation, the prevailing Party shall be entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs related thereto, including, but not limited to, those incurred at all trial and appellate levels.

8. **No waiver of modification.** This Stipulation and any of the specific items, covenants, and conditions contained herein, may not be waived, changed, altered or modified except by an instrument in writing signed by the Party against whom enforcement of such change is sought.

9. **Effective date.** This Stipulation shall be effective upon execution by all of the Parties hereto, subject only to approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court and payment of the Settlement Payments. Upon it becoming effective, this Stipulation shall be binding on all of the Parties' successors or assigns.

10. **No effect.** If the Bankruptcy Court does not approve this Stipulation, then the Stipulation shall be of no further force or effect, and the Parties shall be restored to their rights as they existed prior to the execution of this Stipulation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Bankruptcy Court does not approve this Stipulation because any of the Parties have failed to provide the Bankruptcy Court with adequate information to rule on the merits of the Stipulation, the Parties will use their best efforts to seek reconsideration of any order declining to approve the Stipulation, or to file an amended motion to approve the Stipulation.

11. **Controlling law.** This Stipulation shall in all respects be construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Florida applicable to contracts made and to be performed wholly within the State of Florida and by federal law to the extent the same has preempted the laws of the State of Florida.


12. **Counterparts.** This Stipulation may be executed in any number of counterparts and by different parties hereto in separate counterparts, each of which when so executed shall be deemed to be an original and all of which taken together shall constitute one and the same Stipulation. Delivery of an executed counterpart of a signature page to this Stipulation by facsimile shall be effective as delivery of a manually executed counterpart of this Stipulation.

13. **Construction.** This Stipulation shall be deemed to have been jointly drafted by the Parties, and in construing and interpreting this Stipulation, no provision shall be construed and interpreted for or against any of the Parties because such provision or any other provision of the Stipulation as a whole is purportedly prepared or requested by such Party.

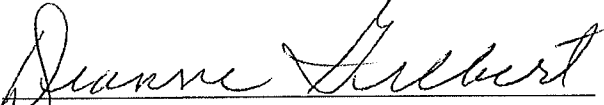
14. **Jurisdiction.** The Bankruptcy Court shall retain exclusive jurisdiction to enforce the terms of this Stipulation.

STIPULATED AND AGREED TO BY:

Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee Date: _____



Harvey Gilbert Date: 5/2/2013



Deanne Gilbert Date: 5/2/2013

Millenium Trust Company Date: _____
f/b/o George Lukas IRA

By its: _____

14. **Jurisdiction.** The Bankruptcy Court shall retain exclusive jurisdiction to enforce the terms of this Stipulation.

STIPULATED AND AGREED TO BY:



Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee

Date: 5/8/13

Harvey Gilbert

Date: _____

Deanne Gilbert

Date: _____

Millenium Trust Company
f/b/o George Lukas IRA

Date: _____

By its: _____

14. **Jurisdiction.** The Bankruptcy Court shall retain exclusive jurisdiction to enforce the terms of this Stipulation.

STIPULATED AND AGREED TO BY:

Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee

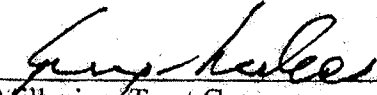
Date: _____

Harvey Gilbert

Date: _____

Deanne Gilbert

Date: _____



Millenium Trust Company
f/b/o George Lukas IRA

Date: May 3, 2013

By its: George Lukas, owner and beneficiary of Acct # 90-5266-01-1,
Millennium Trust Company, FBO George Lukas IRA

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION
www.flsb.uscourts.gov

In re:

CHAPTER 11

PALM BEACH FINANCE PARTNERS, L.P.,
PALM BEACH FINANCE II, L.P.,

Case No. 09-36379-PGH
Case No. 09-36396-PGH
(Jointly Administered)

Debtors.

ORDER GRANTING LIQUIDATING TRUSTEE'S MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT WITH HARVEY AND DEANNE GILBERT AND MILLENIUM TRUST COMPANY F/B/O GEORGE LUKAS IRA AND PAYMENT OF CONTINGENCY FEE

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Liquidating Trustee's Motion for Approval of Settlement with Harvey and Deanne Gilbert (collectively, "*Gilberts*") and Millenium Trust Company f/b/o George Lukas IRA ("*Millenium*") and Payment of Contingency Fee [ECF No. ____] ("*Motion*").¹ The Court, having reviewed the Motion and noting that a Certificate of No Response and Request for Entry of Order has been filed, finds that the notice of

¹ Capitalized terms not defined in this Order shall have the meaning ascribed to such term as set forth in the Motion.

the proposed compromise and settlement is sufficient to comply with Bankruptcy Rules 9019 and 2002(a)(3), Local Rule 9013-1(D) and any other applicable notice requirement, and accordingly, it is:

ORDERED as follows:

1. The Motion is **GRANTED**.
2. The Stipulation is **APPROVED**.
3. The Gilberts shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$19,711.00 (“*Gilberts Settlement Payment*”) to the Liquidating Trustee within twenty (20) days from the date of the entry of this Order.
4. Millenium shall pay (or cause to be paid) \$5,384.00 (“*Millenium Settlement Payment*”); and collectively with the Gilberts Settlement Payment, “*Settlement Payments*”) to the Liquidating Trustee within twenty (20) days from the date of the entry of this Order.
5. The Settlement Payments may be made via (i) wire transfer pursuant to written instructions to be provided by the Liquidating Trustee or his counsel or (ii) check made payable to “Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee” and delivered to Jonathan S. Feldman, Esq., Meland Russin & Budwick, P.A., 200 South Biscayne Blvd., Suite 3200, Miami, Florida 33131.
6. To the extent the Gilberts or Millenium have any scheduled claims or proofs of interest or have filed proofs of claim or proofs of interest in the PBF I bankruptcy case, such claims or interests are deemed disallowed in their entirety.
7. The Court retains jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Settlement.

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8. The portion of MRB's Contingency Fee in the amount \$1,971.10 based on the Gilberts Settlement Payment is approved and the Liquidating Trustee is authorized to pay this amount upon funding of the Gilberts Settlement Payment.

9. The portion of MRB's Contingency Fee in the amount \$538.40 based on the Millenium Settlement Payment is approved and the Liquidating Trustee is authorized to pay this amount upon funding of the Millenium Settlement Payment.

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Submitted By:

s/ Joshua A. Marcus
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Attorneys for the Liquidating Trustee

Copies Furnished To:

Joshua A. Marcus, Esquire, is directed to serve copies of this Order on all parties in interest and to file a Certificate of Service.

Mailing Information for Case 09-36379-PGH

Electronic Mail Notice List

The following is the list of **parties** who are currently on the list to receive email notice/service for this case.

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