

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 TRUSTSEE'S MOTION FOR
APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT WITH KARASEL, L.P.**

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 Trusts and the Palm Beach Finance II Liquidating Trusts (collectively, the "*Liquidating Trusts*"), by and through undersigned counsel, and pursuant to *Fed. R. Bankr. P.* 9019, seeks an Order from this Court approving a settlement of claims asserted against Karasel, L.P. ("*Karasel*"). In support of this relief, the Liquidating Trustee states the following:

I. Factual Background

A. *The Pre-Petition Activities of the Palm Beach Funds*

1. The Liquidating Trusts are the successors in interest to Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. ("*PBF*") and Palm Beach Finance II, L.P. ("*PBF II*") and together with PBF, the "*Palm Beach Funds*").

2. The Palm Beach Funds were 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 the funds 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, the Palm Beach Funds’ 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*”), the Palm Beach Funds commenced Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases by filing voluntary petitions 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 Trusts and appointing the Liquidating Trustee as liquidating trustee.

B. Transfers Made to Karasel

7. Karasel was a limited partner in the Palm Beach Funds.

8. Based on a cash in, cash out analysis, Karasel received a profit in the amount of \$1,102,184.19 and \$142,514.83 with respect to its limited partner investment in PBF I and PBF II, respectively, which amounts to a total profit distribution of \$1,244,699.02 (“*Profit Distribution*”).

II. Settlement Terms

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

- a) Karasel shall not be entitled to any distribution from the Palm Beach Funds’ bankruptcy estates. Karasel waives any 11 U.S.C. § 502(h) claim;
- b) To the extent any statement in the Affidavit (defined below) or exhibit attached thereto is false, the Liquidating Trustee shall be entitled to move, on an *ex parte* basis, for the entry of a judgment against Karasel in the amount in dispute in the Litigation; and

III. Relief Requested

10. The Liquidating Trustee seeks an Order from this Court approving the Stipulation.

11. 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.”

12. 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).

13. 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

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.

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*

14. 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

15. The Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trusts, could assert that the Profit Distribution to Karasel was a constructively fraudulent transfer under federal or state law, or alternatively, that Karasel were unjustly enriched by the Profit Distribution.

16. The Liquidating Trustee believes that he will likely succeed in prosecuting either of these causes of action. Nonetheless, the Liquidating Trustee acknowledges that there are risks inherent in all litigation and there is the possibility that Karasel, or other similarly situated parties, could raise certain issues or defenses that potentially could impact the Liquidating Trustee's claims.

Collectability

17. Collectability is a significant issue that substantiates approval of the Stipulation.

18. Karasel has provided the Liquidating Trustee with financial information that indicates that Karasel is a defunct entity and possesses no meaningful assets.

Complexity of litigation and attendant expense, inconvenience and delay

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

20. 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. Moreover, assuming the Liquidating Trustee was successful in obtaining a judgment against Karasel, he would then have to engage in collection efforts, which would be futile against Karasel given that it is a defunct entity with no assets.

21. 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

22. Settlement is warranted as Karasel is a defunct entity with no assets. Additionally, Karasel has agreed to waive any potential or corresponding claim.

23. 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 the Palm Beach Funds' creditors and should be approved.

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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; and (2) granting such other relief this Court deems just and proper.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that, on December 9, 2013, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served via the Court's Notice of Electronic Filing on those parties listed on the attached Exhibit 3 and via U.S. Mail to those parties on the service list attached as Exhibit 4.

s/ Jonathan S. Feldman
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*Attorneys for Barry E. Mukamal,
Liquidating Trustee*

STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT

This Stipulation of Settlement ("*Stipulation*") is entered into on 3/24/13, 2013 by and between (a) Barry E. Mukamal, in his capacity as liquidating trustee ("*Liquidating Trustee*") of the Palm Beach Finance Partners Liquidating Trust and the Palm Beach Finance II Liquidating Trust (collectively, the "*Liquidating Trusts*"); and (b) Karasel, L.P. ("*Karasel*"; and together with the Liquidating Trustee, the "*Parties*"). The terms of this Stipulation are as follows:

RECITALS

A. On November 30, 2009 ("*Petition Date*"), Palm Beach Finance Partners, L.P. ("*PBF I*") and Palm Beach Finance II, L.P. ("*PBF II*"); and together with PBF I, the "*Palm Beach Funds*") 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*");

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. The Liquidating Trustee, on behalf of the Liquidating Trusts, has asserted claims against Karasel in the Bankruptcy Court with respect to transfers Karasel received from PBF I, Adv. Case No. 11-2879-PGH, and with respect to transfers Karasel received from PBF II, Adv. Case No. 11-2863-PGH (collectively, the "*Litigation*");

D. Karasel expressly denies the claims that are or could be asserted in the Litigation;

E. The Parties have engaged in discussions in an attempt to resolve any and all issues, including the claims that are or could be raised in the Litigation;

F. Karasel has provided the Liquidating Trustee with a financial affidavit ("*Affidavit*") dated September 9, 2013, executed and notarized by Gary Busel, managing manager of Karasel Asset Management, LLC, which has been the managing partner of Karasel.

G. According to the Affidavit, which is incorporated herein by reference, Karasel currently is an insolvent entity and possesses di minimis assets; 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. **Financial Affidavit.** Karasel has provided the Affidavit to the Liquidating Trustee, which the Liquidating Trustee is relying upon in entering into this Stipulation. To the extent any statement in the Affidavit or exhibit attached thereto, is materially false, the Liquidating Trustee shall be entitled to refile the Complaint against Karasel.

4. **No entitlement to distribution.** Karasel agrees that it (1) shall not be entitled to any monetary distribution whatsoever from the Liquidating Trusts of Palm Beach Funds on account of the Litigation or this Stipulation and (2) waives any claim it may have against the Liquidating Trusts or the Palm Beach Funds pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 502(h) on account of the Litigation or this Stipulation. To the extent Karasel has scheduled or filed any proof of claim or proof of interest in the Palm Beach Funds' bankruptcy cases, such claim or interest shall be deemed disallowed in its entirety and be stricken.

5. **Dismissal of the Litigation.** Upon approval of this Stipulation by final order of the Bankruptcy Court, the Liquidating Trustee shall file the necessary papers to dismiss the Litigation without prejudice.

6. **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.

7. **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.

8. **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.



9. **No waiver or 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.

10. **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. Upon it becoming effective, this Stipulation shall be binding on all of the Parties' successors or assigns.

11. **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.

12. **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.

13. **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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AB' or similar, located in the bottom right corner of the page.

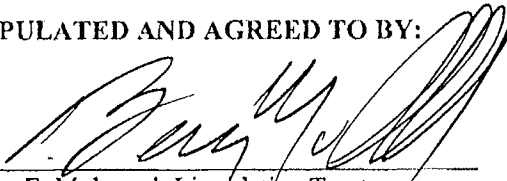
14. **Construction.** This Stipulation shall be deemed to have been jointly drafted by the Parties, and in construing and interpreting this Stipulation, no provision shall be construed and interpreted for or against any of the Parties because such provision or any other provision of the Stipulation as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

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

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STIPULATED AND AGREED TO BY:



Barry E. Mukamal, Liquidating Trustee

Date: 11/21/13



Karasel, L.P.

Date: 3/24/13

Print Name: GARY BUZEL
Its: MANAGING PARTNER

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
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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 KARASEL, L.P.**

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Liquidating Trustee's Motion for Approval of Settlement with Karasel, L.P. [ECF No. ____] (the "**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 the proposed compromise and settlement is

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

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 Settlement is **APPROVED**.
3. To the extent Defendant Karasel, L.P. has any scheduled claim or proof of interest or has filed a proof of claim or proof of interest in the Palm Beach Funds' bankruptcy cases, such claim or interest is deemed disallowed in its entirety.
4. The Court retains jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Settlement.

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Submitted By:

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Copies Furnished To:

Jonathan S. Feldman, 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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