DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD

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IN THE MATTER OF: :
Fresh Direct, LLC, :

t/a Fresh Direct :

(No Location) : Fact Finding

License No. 104699 :

:

(Request to Extend : Safekeeping) :

Thursday November 8, 2018

: Hearing

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board met in the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board Hearing Room, Reeves Building, 2000 14th Street, N.W., Suite 400S, Washington, D.C. 20009, Chairperson Donovan W. Anderson, presiding.

PRESENT:

Retailer A

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson BOBBY CATO, Member MIKE SILVERSTEIN, Member JAMES SHORT, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

RISA HIRAO, Applicant's Counsel TEEPOO RIAZ, Applicant

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON:

2:14 p.m.

Good afternoon,

we're back on record. Our next case is a factfinding hearing on Fresh Direct, license no.

104699.

This is the sixth request for

It's in the sixth request for safekeeping of the license, and this is a Retailer A. And one of the reasons why we have brought the parties in for this request, Retailer As are very valuable licenses.

We caps on two licenses, on A and on B. And so, therefore, the Board is concerned that if we have a license that's very valuable, it should be on board earning taxpayer revenue for the Government.

So we need to find out why is it that this license is not on board so can you please identify yourself for the record, please?

MS. HIRAO: Sure, I'm applicant's counsel, Risa Hirao with Pascal and Weiss representing Fresh Direct and to my right is Mr.

1 Teepoo Riaz.

He's the senior vice president and general counsel for Fresh Direct, and he just traveled here from New York. So thank you for accommodating our schedule today.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you, there's a sign in sheet, can you please sign in on it?

MS. HIRAO: Yes.

MR. RIAZ: We did.

MS. HIRAO: We did.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, where are
we and why that you are now requesting for the
sixth time, I see, for a safekeeping request?

And if the Board was to grant the
request, it would be through March 31st, 2019.
So we can start from there.

MS. HIRAO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: If the request was to be granted, will this license on board by March 31st, 2019? And if it's not going to be on board by March 31st, 2019, why not? Okay, and

1 yes.

MS. HIRAO: Okay, sure, Chairman, so one thing I wanted to clarify is Fresh Direct is an e-commerce grocer. So this A license would be in the Internet category.

The applicant purchased this license before the release of the A licenses, so I did want to make that clarification.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So why didn't you, why don't you transfer it from A to a AI, if it's going to be Internet-based? If it's not if you're not going to have a brick and mortar?

MS. HIRAO: But we would like to keep in safekeeping, especially with the investment that has been made to purchase it.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But I'm saying though, and I'm just saying, as you know we changed and we created a different category.

MS. HIRAO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, therefore, if and we have informed all the Internet-based A and give them a period of time

to either come up with a brick and mortar or we're going to transfer it to AI.

So if your business model is that it's going to be an AI, why not transfer it to an AI?

I mean it still will be in, I guess, a concept, I think it still would be in safekeeping.

But at least you wouldn't be hearing from me.

MS. HIRAO: True.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: To say why is it that you're, why are you holding onto an A that we can give to someone else. You will still have an AI because it's still an A, but it's strictly Internet-based.

MS. HIRAO: Sure, we felt that that clarification should have been made after the license was taken out of safekeeping. But if there is a process to change that classification while it's in safekeeping, we will take a look at that.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You did not get, you did not receive notice from --

MS. HIRAO: During different rules.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You didn't get notice from agency that says that we now have this class of listen AI, and that --

MS. HIRAO: We did receive it, but as far as the timing for the conversion, this was actually what we were thinking of.

But if I can also add to this the reason why we're making this a safekeeping request, what the basis was basically there was a change, I guess what you would say is this fresh Direct was originally based in Long Island City.

MS. HIRAO: And they changed their headquarters to the Bronx location. And as a result of that change, as things were progressing there were some logistical problems that had arisen.

There was intent to go full force and look in open in D.C. at some point. But this logistical problems that have occurred in the New York location had definitely impacted the timing for Fresh Direct to open and proceed to have a

green light on their D.C. operations.

So part one, this was part of our explanation to the Board, the reason why we're seeking a safekeeping request extension for this, for the applicant.

And then the next one would have been the next process was to convert to from a General Class A to an AI.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Because there's never, no intent to open a brick and mortar. Is that correct?

MS. HIRAO: The intent is to have a brick and mortar eventually in D.C., however, since it would be an Internet-based operation, it would not be open to the public.

So I'm wondering if I answered the Chairman's question? But it's a matter of logistics, do we convert now to an AI to ensure that this license can remain in safekeeping, and also at the same time, while it's in this status, request the Board to also extend it so that we have time for the conversion.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I sense, 2 since I'm bringing this up for the first time. MS. HIRAO: 3 Sure. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And I would be 4 5 in favor of granting, at least make a recommendation to the Board to grant the 6 7 extension --8 MS. HIRAO: Thank you. 9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- through March and I would like to make a motion to --10 11 MS. HIRAO: Okay, sorry. 12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- I tell you, 13 I tell you, although I am the Chairman, I can 14 only speak for myself. 15 MS. HIRAO: I'm sorry. 16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And that's why 17 I'm saying that, so yes I can make the 18 recommendation to the Board, and we'll decide 19 today. So, therefore, I'm saying I'm speaking to 20 say based on the presentation you're making, I 21 would be in favor of making the motion to the 22 Board for them to do that.

1	Ms. HIRAO: All right.		
2	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But it can't		
3	happen until I make the motion and someone		
4	seconds it and I have at least two other members		
5	that agree with me.		
6	But I'm going to let them ask some		
7	questions; I'll let them have some questions.		
8	But, yes, and I said before, when the letters		
9	went out about the conversion process it was a		
10	while back, and I don't remember.		
11	I know that a couple of locations did		
12	change to AI and I think others, maybe one or two		
13	decided that they were going to convert to a		
14	brick and mortar and so we gave them a period of		
15	time to either find a location or that we were		
16	going to automatically you over.		
17	So we gave them that option, but okay,		
18	all right. Any questions by, go ahead Mr. Short.		
19	MEMBER SHORT: Well, good afternoon.		
19 20	MEMBER SHORT: Well, good afternoon. MS. HIRAO: Good afternoon, how are		

1 you, and I'm glad you are better. I'll just say 2 this, the reason the policy has changed about safekeeping is because at one time we had over a 3 thousand licenses in safekeeping which was kind 4 5 of stagnating the city. And so we cracked down on it. 6 Why shouldn't we crack down on you if you don't 7 8 convert right away? Why should we treat you any 9 different than anybody else who comes here who says I have a valuable license, I don't want to 10 11 open up, I just want to keep it in safekeeping an 12 pay the fees rather than have a functioning 13 business paying taxes to the city? 14 MS. HIRAO: Well, the --15 MR. RIAZ: May I, may I? 16 MEMBER SHORT: Please. 17 MR. RIAZ: Hi, so well one of the 18 reasons is --19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: State who you 20 are, sir. 21 MR. RIAZ: Hi, Teepoo Riaz, I'm the

general counsel from Fresh Direct. Just to

1 Risa's initial point, to your point, Member, is 2 that we're here, so we're delivering groceries to the D.C. metropolitan area. 3 And so we have already put a stake in 4 5 the ground for one component of our business. So you have a 6 MEMBER SHORT: 7 functioning business here in Washington? 8 MR. RIAZ: We do, we have, it has been 9 compressed because of our struggle. Can you tell us what 10 MEMBER SHORT: the name of it is and the location? 11 12 MR. RIAZ: Yes, it is Fresh Direct, 13 and we have a facility located in Capitol Height, 14 Maryland which is basically --MEMBER SHORT: What about Washington, 15 16 D.C.? You've applied for a license in 17 Washington, D.C. 18 MR. RIAZ: Correct, we did, and we 19 were going to open, and we understood that opening the facility in Maryland, we could not go 20 21 across state lines with alcohol. 22 And so our intent was to get, our

1 intent still is to get a space in the Washington, 2 D.C. area to run our online business. And so we have one component of business here which is our 3 4 food component. 5 And we have put a stake in the ground 6 here coming down from New York that we want to be 7 in the D.C. metropolitan area. We're serving all 8 the wards in the D.C. area, and so the component 9 that we --10 MEMBER SHORT: Let me stop you for a 11 moment, so you are actually functioning in business in Washington, D.C. in all the wards, 12 13 right now? 14 MR. RIAZ: Correct, food delivery. 15 MS. HIRAO: Only food delivery. 16 MR. RIAZ: Only food delivery. 17 MS. HIRAO: Not alcohol. 18 MR. RIAZ: Not alcohol. 19 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. 20 MR. RIAZ: And so that stake is in the 21 ground as our commitment to basically the city and the surrounding area. To your point that why 22

are we not generating tax revenue for the city, we would not just be a liquor store.

We're kind of more than that, and so that is the reason why I'm telling you that we're different than other places. Because I'm not just an individual holding a license that's not using it.

I am running a component of my business here. It's not as much as we want right now.

MEMBER SHORT: Good, that's what I wanted on the record. So, maybe that would give us reason to treat you a little different than someone who does not have any component.

So that would give me another reason to want to vote along with the Chair, but I wanted to hear that, without hearing you put that on the record, I wouldn't have had a clue.

MR. RIAZ: Fair enough and so that is our commitment here. And we have, and we want to be a part of D.C. when we open. We had our government areas, the public affairs people come

down and meet with representatives.

MEMBER SHORT: And now my quest would be, how soon or do you have any estimations of time that you will be functioning your AI here in Washington, D.C. if granted the AI.

MR. RIAZ: And so having to talk to counsel about, I'm not versed enough about the switching of the license.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, but even without switching the license, it's something you need to consider to see if it's worthwhile to do an AI. So if you're not switching, so the question is that you have an A.

So how close are you to bringing this A on board?

MR. RIAZ: And so we have periodically been looking for space in the area. It's been a challenge to find space, and so what we continue to do to look for that, we would end up taking a space that would most likely be not open to the public as an online retailer.

Our hope would be that sometime over

1 the winter, we would be able to start looking in 2 earnest for a space to come online. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: 3 But the 4 problem, as I said before, if we were to grant 5 the extension, which more likely than not we will. 6 7 It would be through March 31st, 2019, 8 so therefore if you have not identified a space 9 to utilize it, then you have to come back to us again for another six months. 10 11 So that's why I'm saying, I mean, do you, is it reasonable, realistic in fact that you 12 13 will bring this license on board by March 31st, 14 2019, or are you going to say to me, based on 15 where we are, we are going to come back for an 16 extension again to take you to another year? 17 MR. RIAZ: Right. 18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And that's 19 where I am because it's only for six months. 20 MR. RIAZ: Right. 21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And we're already a couple months in the six months. 22

MR. RIAZ: Right, so when I did mention to Risa that I would need another six months back over the summer when my business started struggling in New York which affected deliveries everywhere, including the D.C. metropolitan area.

We had to kind of focus on the headquarters, and so my answer to you is within six months most likely I could be in a position where I would at least be able to come to you with either we're working or lease or we have a lease.

Versus right now, I've had to kind of, we've had to like come in, focus on the Bronx facility and that is kind of where that's what happened over the summer.

We are getting better; our capacity is increasing, our ability to service customers is growing. And that means we're able to focus on things other than, "Oh, no, the Bronx is suffering right now."

And so that's where I would be able to

1 come back to you. I don't want to over promise 2 to you, but that's where I would be able to come back to you that we are either working on a 3 4 lease, or we have an LOI, or we are in a lease 5 negotiation. And we could even share that in 6 advance of March 31st. 7 8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I -- go 9 ahead. 10 MS. HIRAO: I mean, I'm sorry, and 11 finding that ideal spot where it meets Fresh 12 Direct's requirements to be able to be in a central location to deliver within their one-hour 13 time slot is critical. 14 15 And also, as you know, finding 16 warehouse space is extremely difficult in the 17 District of Columbia, so this is where we're at 18 right now is the New York operations have 19 impacted D.C. 20 We are still, and when I say we, Fresh 21 Direct, is still looking for that ideal location

where they can thrive. And have, they've be

called a D.C. business, but it's to find that location.

And again, if I can emphasize the license class, Fresh Direct will be an Internet, an Internet-based operation. So no, it will not be opened to the public as traditional As are.

I'm sorry, I'm losing --

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, that's fine. Well, I, if, the suggestion I'm making is that you need to talk to licensing about converting to an AI if the goal is that you're going to be a strictly Internet-based business.

There will be less pressure; I see on you if you're an AI than an A because there is a cap on As. And I'm not sure where we are in the 250 cap. I think a couple of licenses came on board, a couple dates we realized, I think, a couple of licenses.

So I'm not quite sure if there are even anymore licenses available. And so, therefore, if you have an A and it's not being utilized, then the Board, if you haven't

converted and it doesn't sound to me that this license is going to be onboard by March 31st, 2018, I'm sorry, 2019.

And so if you're going to come back for another extension, if you're still an A then it has to be you have a lease, or we're in the final negotiation of a lease.

But if it's "Okay, we're still looking for property." Since you have, this decision was made, the summer, to say what was going on with your business.

You were forward looking to say this is what's going on, this is why we need an extension, and we need for the extension. If the Board, if there's a definition when the period would end, then the Board would look at it by saying, "We're going to move forward to revoking the license."

And again, we would have to have a hearing. It would be a contested case where you'd have to come and present why the Board should not, should not revoke the license.

So I'm just letting you know that if you're able to convert, there'll be less pressure because there's not that hard cap on the AIs, but there's a hard cap on the A.

And so that's why that I would again would meet with our licensing specialist to see whether or not this is something that you can do. Yes, I want you to utilize the license, whether or not it's A or AI, but at least in my view there would be less pressure.

So if you have to come back to us for another extension then having an AI, it's a little bit easier. But as an A, I'm going to say, if you're coming back as an A, then you would need to have a signed license or substantial negotiation where you've identified a property, and we are in discussion to sign a lease.

I just want to let you know that.

MR. RIAZ: No, I understand. And I again, I'll reiterate that I have no reason, I can chat about the, I was not aware of the A

versus AI component. And so I'm happy to talk to 1 2 her and strategize regarding the best move for the business. 3 And if that turns out to be the AI is 4 5 the way to go, then -- if they can be involved, I was not aware of that. 6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: For Internet-7 8 based --9 MR. RIAZ: Right. 10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And you said that your business is Internet-based. 11 12 MR. RIAZ: Correct. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: We have created 13 a class of license for Internet-based licenses 14 15 which are AI. So, and I said before, if that is, 16 if you are strictly an Internet-based business 17 then it makes sense to convert to an AI. 18 You're not losing anything; your 19 license is not any less valuable, it's only, I 20 guess in your purpose it would be less valuable 21 if you had an anticipated to open a brick and

mortar where people can come and shop.

But if you're saying that that is not my business model, then there is no loss to you to convert to an AI, if your business model is strictly Internet-based.

Okay, anything else, anything else for the recommendation? All right with that said,

I'll make a motion that will grand the extension through March 31st, 2019.

And I'm going to make this a part of the motion to grant the extensions that licensee meet with our licensing division to make a determination whether or not it should be, they should convert from an A to an AI.

And that is the conversion doesn't occur, that for, if they are making recommendations for us for further extension, we need is a signed lease or substantial negotiation that they have identified a location to operate.

Is there a second?

MEMBER SHORT: Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Short has seconded the motion. All those in favor say aye.

1	(Chorus of ayes.)
2	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Those opposed,
3	okay the matter passed, four/zero/zero, so it's
4	clear you as a businessman, of course, you want
5	timelines. You're dealing with timelines. You
6	have some timelines, so you know where the work
7	standard.
8	DR. SUZUKI: Understood and thank you.
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And thank you
10	for being here today, sir.
11	MR. RIAZ: Oh, we appreciate it very
12	much.
13	MS. HIRAO: Thank you Board members,
14	thank you Chairman.
15	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, with
16	that said, we are adjourned for the day. Thank
17	you.
18	(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
19	went off the record at 2:36 p.m.)
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21	
22	

ability 16:18 able 15:1 16:10,19,22 17:2,12 20:2 above-entitled 23:18 accommodating 3:5 add 6:8 adjourned 23:16 advance 17:7 **affairs** 13:22 afternoon 2:3 9:19,20 agency 6:3 agree 9:5 ahead 9:18 17:9 **AI** 4:10 5:2,4,4,13 6:4 7:8,18 9:12 14:4,5,12 18:11,14 20:9,12 21:1 21:4,15,17 22:3,13 **Als** 20:3 alcohol 11:21 12:17,18 **Alcoholic** 1:2,13,13 **Anderson** 1:15,17 2:3 3:6,12,19 4:9,16,20 5:10,21 6:2 7:9 8:1,4 8:9,12,16 9:2 10:19 14:9 15:3,18,21 17:8 18:8 21:7,10,13 22:21 23:2,9,15 answer 16:8 answered 7:16 anticipated 21:21 anybody 10:9 anymore 18:20 applicant 1:21 4:6 7:5 applicant's 1:21 2:20 applied 11:16 appreciate 23:11 area 11:3 12:2,7,8,22 14:17 16:6 areas 13:22 arisen 6:17 automatically 9:16 available 18:20 aware 20:22 21:6 ave 22:22 ayes 23:1 В

B 2:13 back 2:4 9:10 15:9,15 16:3 17:1,3 19:4 20:11,14 based 6:12 8:20 15:14 21:8 basically 6:10 11:14 12:21 basis 6:10 best 21:2 better 9:22 10:1 16:17 **Beverage** 1:2,13,13 **bit** 20:13 board 1:2,13,13 2:13,15 2:18 3:15,20,22 7:3 7:21 8:6,18,22 14:15 15:13 18:17,22 19:15 19:16,21 23:13 **BOBBY** 1:18 brick 4:12 5:1 7:10,13 9:14 21:21 **bring** 15:13 bringing 8:2 14:14 **Bronx** 6:14 16:14,20 brought 2:10 Building 1:14 **business** 5:3 10:13 11:5,7 12:2,3,12 13:9 16:3 18:1,12 19:11 21:3,11,16 22:2,3

С

businessman 23:4

called 18:1 cap 18:15,16 20:3,4 capacity 16:17 Capitol 11:13 caps 2:12 case 2:4 19:20 **category** 4:5,18 **CATO** 1:18 central 17:13 **Chair** 13:16 **Chairman** 4:2 8:13 23:14 Chairman's 7:17 Chairperson 1:15,17 2:3 3:6,12,19 4:9,16 4:20 5:10,21 6:2 7:9 8:1,4,9,12,16 9:2

8:1,4,9,12,16 9:2 10:19 14:9 15:3,18,21 17:8 18:8 21:7,10,13 22:21 23:2,9,15 challenge 14:18 change 5:18 6:11,15 9:12 changed 4:18 6:13 10:2 chat 20:22

changed 4:18 6:13 10:2 chat 20:22 Chorus 23:1

city 6:12 10:5,13 12:21 13:1

clarification 4:8 5:16 clarify 4:3 class 6:4 7:8 18:4 21:14 classification 5:18

clear 23:4 close 14:14 clue 13:18

Columbia 1:1 17:17 come 5:1 13:22 15:2,9 15:15 16:10,14 17:1,2 19:4,21 20:11 21:22 **comes** 10:9 **coming** 12:6 20:14 commitment 12:21 13:20 component 11:5 12:3.4 12:8 13:8,14 21:1 compressed 11:9 concept 5:5 concerned 2:13 consider 14:11 contested 19:20 continue 14:18 **Control** 1:2,13,13 conversion 6:6 7:22 9:9 22:14 **convert** 7:7,18 9:13

10:8 20:2 21:17 22:3 22:13 converted 19:1

converting 18:11 correct 7:11 11:18 12:14 21:12 counsel 1:21 2:21 3:3 10:22 14:7 couple 9:11 15:22 18:16,17,18

course 23:4 crack 10:7 cracked 10:6 created 4:18 21:13 critical 17:14

customers 16:18

D

D.C 1:14 6:19 7:1,13 11:3,16,17 12:2,7,8 12:12 13:21 14:5 16:5 17:19 18:1 **dates** 18:17 day 23:16 dealing 23:5 decide 8:18 decided 9:13 decision 19:9 definitely 6:21 definition 19:15 **deliver** 17:13 deliveries 16:5 delivering 11:2 delivery 12:14,15,16 determination 22:12 different 4:18 6:1 10:9 13:5,13

difficult 17:16

Direct 1:6,6 2:5,22 3:3 4:3 6:12,22 10:22 11:12 17:21 18:4 Direct's 17:12 discussion 20:17 District 1:1 17:17 division 22:11 Donovan 1:15,17 DR 23:8

Ε

e-commerce 4:4 earnest 15:2 earning 2:15 easier 20:13 either 5:1 9:15 16:11 17:3 emphasize 18:3 **ensure** 7:18 especially 4:14 estimations 14:3 eventually 7:13 explanation 7:3 extend 1:9 7:21 **extension** 7:4 8:7 15:5 15:16 19:5,14,14 20:12 22:7.16 extensions 22:10 extremely 17:16

F

facility 11:13,20 16:15 fact 1:7 15:12 **fact-** 2:4 Fair 13:19 far 6:6 favor 8:5,21 22:22 fees 10:12 **felt** 5:15 **final** 19:7 find 2:17 9:15 14:18 18:1 finding 1:7 2:5 17:11,15 **fine** 18:9 first 8:2 **focus** 16:7,14,19 **food** 12:4,14,15,16 force 6:18 forward 19:12,17 four/zero/zero 23:3 fresh 1:6,6 2:5,22 3:3 4:3 6:11,22 10:22 11:12 17:11,20 18:4 full 6:18 **functioning** 10:12 11:7 12:11 14:4 further 22:16

initial 11:1 losing 18:7 21:18 one-hour 17:13 G intent 6:18 7:10,12 loss 22:2 online 12:2 14:21 15:2 general 3:3 7:7 10:22 lot 9:22 11:22 12:1 open 6:19,22 7:10,15 generating 13:1 **Internet** 4:5 18:4 10:11 11:19 13:21 getting 16:17 M Internet-21:7 14:20 21:21 give 4:22 5:12 13:12,15 Internet-based 4:11,22 making 6:9 8:20,21 **opened** 18:6 **alad** 10:1 opening 11:20 5:14 7:14 18:5,12 18:9 22:15 **ao** 6:18 9:18 11:20 17:8 21:11,14,16 22:4 March 3:16,21,22 8:10 operate 22:18 21:5 investment 4:14 **operation** 7:14 18:5 15:7,13 17:7 19:2 qoal 18:11 involved 21:5 22:8 **operations** 7:1 17:18 going 3:21 4:11,12 5:2 Maryland 11:14,20 Island 6:12 opposed 23:2 5:4 9:6,13,16 11:19 matter 1:5 7:17 23:3,18 option 9:17 15:14,15 18:12 19:2,4 J mean 5:5 15:11 17:10 originally 6:12 19:10,13,17 20:13 **JAMES** 1:19 means 16:19 22:9 meet 14:1 20:6 22:11 Р **good** 2:3 9:19,20 13:11 Κ MEETING 1:3 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S **government** 2:16 13:22 keep 4:13 10:11 meets 17:11 grand 22:7 p.m 2:2 23:19 kind 10:4 13:3 16:7,13 **Member** 1:18.18.19 grant 3:15 8:6 15:4 9:19,22 10:16 11:1,6 part 7:2,2 13:21 22:9 16:15 22:10 **know** 4:17 9:11 17:15 11:10,15 12:10,19 parties 2:10 granted 3:20 14:5 20:1,19 23:6 13:11 14:2 22:20 Pascal 2:21 granting 8:5 members 9:4 23:13 **passed** 23:3 green 7:1 mention 16:2 pay 10:12 grocer 4:4 met 1:13 lease 16:11.12 17:4.4 **paying** 10:13 groceries 11:2 metropolitan 11:3 12:7 19:6.7 20:18 22:17 people 13:22 21:22 ground 11:5 12:5,21 period 4:22 9:14 19:15 letters 9:8 16:6 **growing** 16:19 **MIKE** 1:18 periodically 14:16 letting 20:1 guess 5:5 6:11 21:20 model 5:3 22:2,3 **places** 13:5 license 1:8 2:5,8,14,18 moment 12:11 Н 3:20 4:4,6 5:17 7:19 **please** 2:18,19 3:7 **months** 15:10.19.22.22 10:16 10:10 11:16 13:6 14:8 happen 9:3 14:10 15:13 18:4 19:2 16:3.9 **point** 6:19 11:1,1 12:22 happened 16:16 19:18,22 20:8,15 mortar 4:12 5:1 7:10,13 policy 10:2 **happy** 21:1 21:14,19 9:14 21:22 position 16:9 hard 20:3,4 licensee 22:10 motion 8:10,21 9:3 22:7 present 1:16,20 19:21 headquarters 6:14 16:8 **licenses** 2:11,12 4:7 22:10.22 presentation 8:20 **hear** 13:17 10:4 18:16,18,20 **move** 19:17 21:2 president 3:2 hearing 1:7,14 2:5 5:7 21:14 presiding 1:15 13:17 19:20 Ν licensing 18:10 20:6 **pressure** 18:13 20:2,10 **Height** 11:13 **N.W** 1:14 problem 15:4 22:11 Hi 10:17,21 light 7:1 **problems** 6:16,20 name 11:11 **Hirao** 1:21 2:20,21 3:9 lines 11:21 need 2:17 14:11 16:2 proceed 6:22 3:11,18 4:2,13,19 5:9 18:10 19:13,14 20:15 **process** 5:18 7:7 9:9 liquor 13:2 5:15 6:1.5.13 7:12 8:3 listen 6:4 22:17 progressing 6:15 8:8,11,15 9:1,20 little 13:13 20:13 negotiation 17:5 19:7 promise 17:1 10:14 12:15,17 17:10 property 19:9 20:17 **LLC** 1:6 20:16 22:17 23:13 **public** 7:15 13:22 14:21 **never** 7:10 **located** 11:13 **holding** 5:11 13:6 New 3:4 6:20 12:6 16:4 location 1:7 6:14,21 18:6 hope 14:22 purchase 4:15 9:15 11:11 17:13,21 17:18 18:2 22:18 notice 5:22 6:3 purchased 4:6 November 1:11 locations 9:11 purpose 21:20 ideal 17:11,21 put 11:4 12:5 13:17 logistical 6:16,20 **identified** 15:8 20:16 0 logistics 7:18 22:18 Q **LOI** 17:4 occur 22:15 identify 2:19 quest 14:2 occurred 6:20 **Long** 6:12 **impacted** 6:21 17:19 look 5:19 6:19 14:19 question 7:17 14:13 **Oh** 16:20 23:11 including 16:5 okay 3:22 4:2 8:11 9:17 **auestions** 9:7.7.18 19:16 increasing 16:18 looking 14:17 15:1 12:19 19:8 22:5 23:3 **quite** 18:19 individual 13:6

onboard 19:2

17:21 19:8,12

informed 4:21

	seconds 9:4	Т	Washington 1:14 11:7
	see 3:14 14:11 18:13	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	11:15,17 12:1,12 14:
realistic 15:12	20:6	t/a 1:6	way 21:5
realized 18:17		take 5:19 15:16	we'll 8:18
reason 6:9 7:3 10:2	seeking 7:4	taken 5:17	
13:4,13,15 20:21	senior 3:2	talk 14:6 18:10 21:1	we're 2:4 5:2 6:9 7:3
reasonable 15:12	sense 8:1 21:17	tax 13:1	11:2,2 12:7 13:3,4
reasons 2:9 10:18	service 16:18	taxes 10:13	15:21 16:11,19 17:17
receive 5:22 6:5	serving 12:7	taxpayer 2:15	19:6,8,17
recommendation 8:6	share 17:6	Teepoo 1:21 3:1 10:21	we've 16:14
8:18 22:6	sheet 3:7	tell 8:12,13 11:10	Weiss 2:21
	shop 21:22		went 9:9 23:19
recommendations	Short 1:19 9:18,19,22	telling 13:4	winter 15:1
22:16	10:16 11:6,10,15	thank 3:4,6 8:8 9:22	wondering 7:16
record 2:4,19 13:12,18	12:10,19 13:11 14:2	23:8,9,13,14,16	work 23:6
23:19		thing 4:3	
Reeves 1:14	22:20,21	things 6:15 16:20	working 16:11 17:3
regarding 21:2	sign 3:7,7 20:17	think 5:6 9:12 18:16,17	worthwhile 14:11
reiterate 20:21	signed 20:15 22:17	thinking 6:7	wouldn't 5:7 13:18
release 4:7	SILVERSTEIN 1:18	thousand 10:4	-
remain 7:19	sir 10:20 23:10	thrive 17:22	X
remember 9:10	six 15:10,19,22 16:2,9	Thursday 1:11	
	sixth 2:7 3:14		Y
representatives 14:1	slot 17:14	time 3:14 4:22 7:20,22	year 15:16
representing 2:22	soon 14:3	8:2 9:15 10:3 14:4	York 3:4 6:21 12:6 16:
request 1:9 2:7,10 3:14	sorry 8:11,15 17:10	17:14	
3:16,19 6:10 7:4,21		timelines 23:5,5,6	17:18
requesting 3:13	18:7 19:3	timing 6:6,21	Z
requirements 17:12	sound 19:1	today 3:5 8:19 23:10	
result 6:15	space 12:1 14:17,18,20	traditional 18:6	
retailer 1:7 2:9,10 14:21	15:2,8 17:16	transfer 4:10 5:2,4	0
revenue 2:15 13:1	speak 8:14	traveled 3:4	
revoke 19:22	speaking 8:19	treat 10:8 13:13	1
	specialist 20:6		104699 1:8 2:6
revoking 19:17	spot 17:11	True 5:9	14th 1:14
Riaz 1:21 3:1,10 10:15	stagnating 10:5	turns 21:4	14011.14
10:17,21,21 11:8,12	stake 11:4 12:5,20	two 2:12 9:4,12	2
11:18 12:14,16,18,20			
13:19 14:6,16 15:17	standard 23:7	U	2:14 2:2
15:20 16:1 20:20 21:9	start 3:17 15:1	understand 20:20	2:36 23:19
21:12 23:11	started 16:4	understood 11:19 23:8	2000 1:14
right 2:22 9:1,18 10:8	state 10:19 11:21	utilize 15:9 20:8	20009 1:14
12:13 13:9 15:17,20	status 7:20	utilized 18:22	2018 1:11 19:3
16:1,13,21 17:18 21:9	stop 12:10	dtiiized 10.22	2019 3:16,21,22 15:7,1
	store 13:2		19:3 22:8
22:6 23:15	strategize 21:2		250 18:16
Risa 1:21 2:21 16:2	Street 1:14	valuable 2:11,14 10:10	200 10.10
Risa's 11:1	strictly 5:14 18:12	21:19,20	3
Room 1:14	21:16 22:4	versed 14:7	-
rules 6:1	-	versus 16:13 21:1	31st 3:16,21,22 15:7,1
run 12:2	struggle 11:9	vice 3:2	17:7 19:2 22:8
running 13:8	struggling 16:4	view 20:9	
	substantial 20:16 22:17	vote 13:16	4
S	suffering 16:21		400S 1:14
safekeeping 1:9 2:8	suggestion 18:9	W	
3:14 4:14 5:6,17,19	Suite 1:14		5
	summer 16:3,16 19:10	W 1:15,17	
	sure 2:20 3:18 4:2 5:15	want 4:8 10:10,11 12:6	6
6:9 7:4,19 10:3,4,11	 	13:9,16,20 17:1 20:8	l — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
saying 4:16,17 8:17,19			
saying 4:16,17 8:17,19 15:11 19:17 22:1	8:3 18:15,19	20:19 23:4	
saying 4:16,17 8:17,19	8:3 18:15,19 surrounding 12:22	20:19 23:4 wanted 4:3 13:12,17	7
saying 4:16,17 8:17,19 15:11 19:17 22:1	8:3 18:15,19 surrounding 12:22 SUZUKI 23:8	wanted 4:3 13:12,17	
saying 4:16,17 8:17,19 15:11 19:17 22:1 says 6:3 10:10	8:3 18:15,19 surrounding 12:22		7 8

<u>C E R T I F I C A T E</u>

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Fresh Direct, LLC

Before: ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD

Date: 11-08-18

Place: WASHINGTON, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Court Reporter

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