

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD
+ + + + +
MEETING

IN THE MATTER OF: :

Soundcheck, LLC, :

t/a Soundcheck :

1420 K Street NW : Fact Finding

Retailer CN : Hearing

License No. 98536 :

AND :

Ekho Events, Inc., :

t/a Echostage :

2135 Queens Chapel Road :

NE :

Retailer CN :

License No. 90250 :

(Change of Ownership) :

Thursday
November 7, 2019

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

PRESENT:

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson
BOBBY CATO, JR., Member
JAMES SHORT, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

**ANTONIOS KARAGOUNIS
PANAGIOTIS "PETE" KALAMOUTSOS
MATTHEW CRONIN
ANDREW KLINE**

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

2 1:32 p.m.

3 MR. ANDERSON: All right. Good
4 afternoon. We're back on the record. Our next
5 case is a -- do you work with both
6 establishments, Mr. Kline?

7 MR. KLINE: Yes, I do.

8 MR. ANDERSON: All right. Our next
9 case is a fact finding hearing, Soundcheck,
10 License No. 98536, Echostage License No. 90250.

11 These two cases are a fact finding
12 hearing. It involves a stock transfer regarding
13 ownership. This matter first came before the
14 Board on the license agenda, and that Board
15 thought it prudent that some discussion be had on
16 the record with respect to what this license is
17 trying to accomplish.

18 In that vein, the Board is going to
19 ask a few questions, specifically to establish
20 that the transfer is made pursuant to an arm's
21 length transaction, that there is some
22 transparency in these transactions, and that ABRA
23 record accurately reflect who are the owners of
24 the establishment, who are the new owners, if
25 they're new owners, and whether all remaining or

1 new owners have clean hands regarding any tax
2 liability or there are outstanding tax return
3 onto the District of Columbia.

4 And so, Mr. Kline, maybe can identify
5 your clients. So let's first of all start with
6 because I'm not sure if the same ownership
7 transferred, so let's start -- everyone introduce
8 themselves for the record. Let's talk about
9 Soundcheck first.

10 MR. KLINE: Sure. I'm Andrew Kline,
11 the Veritas Law Firm here on behalf of
12 Soundcheck.

13 MR. CRONIN: I'm Matthew Cronin, one
14 of the partners of Soundcheck.

15 MR. ANDERSON: Max who? I'm sorry;
16 your last name, sir?

17 MR. CRONIN: Cronin; C-R-O-N-I-N.

18 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: Panagiotis
19 Kalamoutsos, one of the partners at Soundcheck.

20 MR. ANDERSON: How do you spell your
21 last name, sir?

22 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: K-A-L-A-M-O-U-T-S-O-
23 S.

24 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. And who else do
25 we have?

1 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Antonios Karagounis,
2 one of the partners at Soundcheck.

3 MR. ANDERSON: Offer me your last name
4 again, sir.

5 MR. KARAGOUNIS: K-A-R-A, G as in
6 George, O-U-N-I-S.

7 MR. ANDERSON: Yes. K-A-R-A --

8 MR. KARAGOUNIS: G, as in George.

9 MR. ANDERSON: Yes.

10 MR. KARAGOUNIS: -- O-U, N, as in
11 Nick, I-S, Karagounis.

12 MR. ANDERSON: Now, currently Mr.
13 Cronin; what percentage -- all right. Let me ask
14 the question that way. On our current records,
15 who are the owners of Soundcheck, and where are
16 the ownership shared stakes?

17 MR. CRONIN: Mr. Chairman, I believe
18 -- can I just give a little background, because -
19 -

20 (Simultaneous speaking.)

21 MR. ANDERSON: Okay, go ahead.

22 MR. CRONIN: Mr. Chairman, we were
23 before you and the other members of the Board in
24 connection with some other establishments where
25 there were some individuals who've had some

1 difficulty with the U.S. prosecutors, I guess, is
2 the most polite way to put it, and that is what I
3 think what led this to be on the Board's radar
4 along with those other establishments.

5 At that time, in connection with those
6 other establishments, it was determined that,
7 regrettably and unfortunately, the individual who
8 had been responsible for interacting with ABRA
9 and making sure that the records were straight
10 and what was filed was correct and what needed to
11 be filed was filed, had not done what he was
12 supposed to do.

13 For the record, that was Arman
14 Amirshahi. I don't know if there's any point in
15 hiding it; it's very clear. So those were
16 resolved, and there were some transactions that
17 were done, and this license is renewed.

18 At the same time, there were
19 negotiations underway for the sale of this
20 business, Soundcheck, and the other one that
21 we're going to talk about, Echostage, primarily
22 to a publicly-traded company.

23 As a result of the last hearing when
24 the Board, understandably was very concerned that
25 the ownership had not been properly reflected

1 among the Board's records. Our firm was retained
2 because, obviously, we have expertise in these
3 areas. We've been before you many times.

4 So we started looking at it, and the
5 license needed to be renewed, and before
6 transferring the license to the buyer, in working
7 with our staff it was clear that your efforts
8 needed to reflect the true and actual ownership.

9 So what we are talking about today is
10 the true and actual ownership of the business as
11 it exists, and as it has existed, apparently, for
12 some time, but was not properly reflected in your
13 records, which is wrong.

14 But our effort is to clean it up. We
15 have, in the meantime, filed a subsequent
16 transfer application, which was just filed this
17 week, in connection with the disposition of the
18 two businesses to the third party. So that's by
19 way of background.

20 The ownership of Soundcheck is
21 outlined in the letter which you may or may not
22 have before you from our office, dated October
23 17, 2019, and the ownership is as follows: Mr.
24 Karagounis, who is here today, owns 42 percent of
25 Soundcheck. Mr. Kalamoutsos, who is also here

1 today, owns 15 percent. Mr. Marmaras, who is not
2 here today --

3 MR. ANDERSON: Mr. who?

4 MR. KLINE: Marmaras, Dmitrius
5 Marmaras. You saw him once before in connection
6 with a couple of the other licenses.

7 MR. ANDERSON: How do you spell the
8 last name?

9 MR. KLINE: M-A-R-M-A-R-A-S.

10 MR. ANDERSON: All right. And he
11 owned what?

12 MR. KLINE: Five percent.

13 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

14 MR. KLINE: Mr. Amirshahi owns 15
15 percent. Mr. Cronin, through an L.L.C., Cronin,
16 L.L.C., who is present today, owns three percent,
17 and Bellhaven, S.L.L.C., owns 20 percent, and
18 Bellhaven, L.L.C. is owned by a gentleman by the
19 name of Win Sheridan.

20 MR. ANDERSON: So you said Bellhaven
21 --

22 MR. KLINE: S.L.L.C.

23 MR. ANDERSON: L.L.C. What so
24 Bellhaven L.L.C. You said they own 20 percent?

25 MR. KLINE: Right.

1 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. So that adds up
2 to 100 percent. It's Mr. Cronin, Mr.
3 Kalamoutsos, Mr. Karagounis, Mr. Marmaras, Mr.
4 Amirshahi, and Bellhaven, S.L.L.C., those are the
5 owners.

6 Now, are those the owners that are on
7 the license, or -- that's what it is. That's
8 what I'm -- who are --

9 MR. KLINE: We have filed
10 documentation and police clearances and all the
11 required documentation with ABRA to reflect them
12 as the owners and to be qualified as the owners
13 during this transition period while the
14 subsequent transfer to the publicly-traded
15 company is being considered.

16 MR. ANDERSON: Now, let me ask you
17 another question.

18 MR. KLINE: Sure.

19 MR. ANDERSON: And maybe -- and this
20 is probably something I should have asked ABRA to
21 prepare to inquire, I'm sorry. Are you aware of
22 what it is that our records -- let me see.

23 MR. KLINE: I believe your records
24 reflect that Mr. Karagounis and Mr. Amirshahi are
25 the only owners.

1 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. So our records
2 said Mr. Kara -- I'm sorry.

3 MR. KLINE: Karagounis. We know him
4 as Antonios.

5 MR. ANDERSON: So our records say he
6 owns what?

7 MR. KLINE: Fifty percent.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Fifty percent, and Mr.
9 Amirshahi owns 50 percent?

10 MR. KLINE: And Mr. Karagounis was
11 before you before and expressed his regret that
12 this had not been properly handled, and will
13 certainly express it again today. And he has
14 indicated, going forward to the extent that he's
15 involved in any of these establishments, he will
16 be retaining professionals to make sure that it's
17 properly done, because it was not before.

18 MR. ANDERSON: All right. But just
19 for some background information, so I'm not quite
20 sure when the representation was made to ABRA
21 that there are two owners. And I know business
22 models change over the years, but approximately
23 when did all of this change occur internally?

24 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Some of the
25 percentage was doing the --

1 MR. ANDERSON: Identify yourself for
2 the record when you're speaking, please, sir.

3 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Mr. Karagounis.

4 MR. ANDERSON: Go ahead.

5 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Okay. So some of the
6 percentages were given out right at the time
7 before we opened, and some of them as an
8 investment after the opening.

9 MR. ANDERSON: The concerns that I
10 have, Mr. Kline, is that, so you're saying that
11 this is a two-step process; that you are trying
12 to establish to ABRA what the correct ownership
13 structure is. And secondly, once it has been
14 established, the correct ownership, that we're
15 going to have a further transfer?

16 MR. KLINE: Okay. So, three things.
17 Keep in mind we're at renewal time, and in
18 renewing the license, we want this to be fixed.
19 I mean, we want this to be straightened out. We
20 want the Board's records to reflect who the
21 actual owners are.

22 So that was the purpose of this
23 filing: to straighten out the ownership so the
24 Board has the information and can identify who
25 the owners are, and that they are all qualified.

1 Renewal is also an important step at
2 this point in the year, given that we're almost
3 40 days past the renewal deadline. Then there is
4 a contract for the sale of the business, and
5 it's -- I mean, it's in the public record this
6 morning, so I don't think there's any secret
7 about it, Livenation, which is a nationally known
8 publicly-traded entertainment company that runs a
9 venue in Silver Spring and all over the country.
10 Fillmore is all over the country; I mean, they
11 are well --

12 MR. ANDERSON: And that's for
13 Soundcheck?

14 MR. KLINE: That's for both of these
15 establishments.

16 MR. ANDERSON: Oh, all right.

17 MR. KLINE: So we have already filed
18 -- we just filed them -- transfers. We had hoped
19 that the transfers would be filed a couple months
20 ago, but the negotiations between the business
21 parties took some time.

22 So these transfers have been filed,
23 and the plan is, assuming we can get through
24 this and get the licenses renewed, to get to
25 closing on this deal as quickly as we can get to

1 closing. And that's why we filed a subsequent
2 transfer application. Our staff has not yet
3 reacted to them. I suspect they may say, Well,
4 wait a minute. There's seems to be already a
5 transfer pending. But that's why we're here
6 today; to straighten out and make sure that the
7 current ownership is properly reflected upon the
8 records of your agency as it should be, and move
9 forward from there to the subsequent transfer.

10 MR. ANDERSON: All right. But you
11 said one of the reasons you were trying to
12 clarify the record is for renewal. I don't know
13 who you represent, so I'm not going to ask you
14 who you represent, but --

15 MR. KLINE: You can ask me. I'm
16 before you today in connection with this
17 proceeding, I represent these two entities.

18 MR. ANDERSON: All right. But I guess
19 the bottom line is that in order to do a renewal,
20 all the owners have to provide us with clean
21 hands. Owners owning more than ten percent. And
22 I'll say this: although one of the owners, Mr.
23 Amirshahi, it's in the news, so I'm not going to
24 act like I don't know what's going on. We have,
25 on one hand, that ABRA is processing transfer

1 applications to take his name off all these
2 licenses.

3 But on this side of the equation
4 you're asking us to approve your transfer to
5 place his name on an application.

6 MR. KLINE: But he's already on it.

7 MR. ANDERSON: I know he's on it, and
8 you're reducing his percentage. But at least in
9 my view, it would look disjointed that if the
10 licensing division is bringing transfer
11 applications to us to say, There is some reason,
12 for whatever reason; I don't know. But for
13 whatever reason, please take this individual off
14 all his licenses. And so we're doing that.

15 But we're taking this individual's
16 name off -- and it's not -- it apparently, and I
17 don't know, because it has not been shared with
18 me, but it appears that there is some indication
19 that this person has to come off the license,
20 because there's some -- there's an issue.
21 There's an issue.

22 MR. KLINE: Did they say that
23 directly?

24 MR. ANDERSON: Yes.

25 MR. KLINE: So, two things. There is

1 no current disability that this individual is
2 under with respect to holding a license. A clean
3 hands has been provided, and there is no current
4 criminal conviction.

5 Now, we believe that in the near
6 future he will be under a disability in terms of
7 being eligible to be a member of a company that
8 holds an ABC license. And we've been transparent
9 about that, and we'll continue to be transparent
10 about that.

11 But at this moment, rather than
12 dealing with what's in the newspaper and
13 innuendo, we prefer to deal with what's of
14 record. And what's of record at this point is
15 that a clean hands certificate has been produced,
16 and there is no conviction until the last stage
17 of the criminal proceeding, which is underway.

18 Having said that, it's moving forward,
19 and I understand the Board's concern, and I'm not
20 minimizing the Board's concern in any way in
21 terms of this individual continuing in the
22 indefinite future, from being on an ABC license.
23 Well, we get that.

24 But given the fact that there already
25 is a transfer application that's been filed which

1 will result in him being out completely, we would
2 hope that that would allay the Board's concerns
3 with respect to where he is right now, because
4 right now he's not under any disability. And the
5 way I understand the Board's concerns from what's
6 in the newspaper, the fact of the matter is,
7 we're not yet at the stage where he's under
8 disability.

9 MR. ANDERSON: All right. But why do
10 we need to do -- why, if there is a new
11 application and a new transfer application in
12 that is transferring the license to a different
13 entity, why are we doing the second step? Why
14 don't we just -- I'm asking, I'm asking. Why
15 doesn't the licensee just pull that transfer
16 application and say, You know what, said ABRA,
17 our records weren't correct.

18 However, we're sending it to a new
19 entity, and this is a new entity, and just
20 process this transfer application. But we don't
21 need to clarify the record for two days. Why are
22 you asking the staff to do all this extra work to
23 clarify the records, and the next day we're going
24 to change ownership again?

25 MR. KLINE: A series of issues, Mr.

1 Chairman. One is, we'll do it however the Board
2 wants. I mean, but we wanted to clean up the
3 record. We want it to be transparent; we want to
4 clean up the record. And to presume that, well
5 gee, it's all going to get fixed; it's all going
6 to go away. Who cares? That's not the way we
7 approached it. We wanted it to be transparent so
8 that we address whatever concerns the Board might
9 have, which are very legitimate in terms of, we
10 need to know who the owners are.

11 I mean, that was very clear to us the
12 last time we were here, so we were uncomfortable
13 just glossing it over and saying, Yes, we're just
14 going to move to the transfer A.

15 But, I mean, in terms of how it's
16 handled, we're at the Board's pleasure. We'll do
17 it; we've provided the information which we think
18 the Board should have. If the Board wants to
19 handle it a different way, we're amenable to
20 that. That's not an issue for us.

21 The other issue is the transfer, and
22 we've got to get through the transfer process to
23 the ultimate buyer. So there's a period of time
24 for that to take place. As I said, we're happy
25 to do whatever the Board prefers.

1 MR. ANDERSON: You know, one of the
2 interesting things about it, Mr. Kline; I've now
3 been Chair for five years, and I'm learning tax
4 law. I'm learning transfer; it's just not
5 necessarily what I signed up for when the mayor
6 approached me a couple of years ago to ask me to
7 have this position. It becomes more fascinating.

8 I'll just be transparent. I am
9 disappointed in the sense that we have owners,
10 and I said this before in another case, we have
11 an owner who has owned 20 percent, 15 percent of
12 the entity, and that was not known to the ABC
13 Board. That's a concern to me.

14 That is a concern to me, and but not
15 for this unfortunate event with one of the
16 owners, then people would not come to the ABC
17 Board to say, Oh, by the way, let me clarify the
18 ownership. And that's something that concerns
19 me.

20 It concerns me a lot that these are
21 establishments that we have been dealing with for
22 a significant period of time. These are not mom
23 and pop licenses. These are large licensees that
24 do a lot of business in the District of Columbia,
25 and it does concern me that for a significant

1 period of time, we do have licensees that have
2 owned more than 10 percent of the establishments,
3 and for whatever reason the licensee has failed
4 to provide this information to ABRA.

5 It concerns me that because it doesn't
6 appear to me that it's a cost factor. I don't
7 believe it would cost the licensee any
8 significant money to let us know who the
9 ownership is, and it concerns me that that was
10 not done.

11 MR. KLINE: Mr. Chairman, your concern
12 is justified. I mean, I don't know think you
13 would be here for five years if you didn't
14 appropriately express concerns such as that. I
15 mean, that's what the law requires, and I
16 represent them now, and as their representative,
17 I don't make any excuses. It should have been
18 done; it wasn't done. I can tell you that my
19 office has seen other situations that come to our
20 attention, and we clean them up as quickly as we
21 can.

22 I agree with you that it's unfortunate
23 that this one is not being cleaned up until now,
24 and I think the Board is right to be concerned.
25 However, you have the information at this point,

1 and we're hoping that we can move forward. These
2 businesses are important ones in the District,
3 and that doesn't matter; they still have
4 responsibilities, and they still have to comply
5 with the law.

6 That's what we're attempting to do
7 with these filings, is clean it up, fix it, move
8 forward, and hopefully the Board will be
9 comfortable with the knowledge that certain
10 individuals who may have been involved in these
11 businesses will no longer be involved. And with
12 respect to these two businesses, a larger, more
13 substantial organization that has systems in
14 place that will deal with situations such as this
15 on a regular basis.

16 MR. ANDERSON: Now -- and I'm going to
17 ask if the other Board members have questions,
18 but just one final comment. And I've not seen
19 the new transfer application that's before the
20 Board, so are all these individuals that, if we
21 were to process the first transfer, will all
22 those individuals be removed from the license, or
23 will they have any ownership stake moving
24 forward?

25 MR. KLINE: Fair question. Mr.

1 Kalamoutsos will be working with Livenation, the
2 purchaser, so he will remain as an owner; just
3 Mr. Kalamoutsos.

4 MR. ANDERSON: And he's going to own
5 approximately what? I don't know. Does he know?
6 If it's not public information, you don't have to
7 -- it will -- well, it is public information.

8 MR. KLINE: It's over 10 percent.

9 MR. ANDERSON: It's over 10 percent.
10 But you said that you filed an application.

11 MR. KLINE: Correct.

12 MR. ANDERSON: That application solves
13 -- was the -- so who --- what's on that
14 application, if you know, because I have not seen
15 it.

16 MR. KLINE: In terms of --

17 MR. ANDERSON: Of the new the
18 Livenation into --

19 MR. KLINE: The majority is a
20 publicly-traded company.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

22 MR. KLINE: Our other individuals, the
23 only one who is before you today, or who is a
24 current owner is Mr. Kalamoutsos.

25 MR. ANDERSON: So Mr. Kalamoutsos,

1 I've seen you too many times. I think I'm
2 getting your name correctly, unfortunately. All
3 right. So, Mr. Kalamoutsos, what experience --
4 since you were not on the license before, just as
5 an FYI. So what experience? Are you a silent
6 partner? What experience do you have in running
7 a night club?

8 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: So I've been doing
9 the bookings for the last -- the whole time.

10 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

11 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: All the artists from
12 my relationships, I've been bringing in.

13 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Fine.

14 MR. KLINE: So he's not -- I mean,
15 just so we clarify, he's not a facilities
16 manager, per se. His talent, his expertise, his
17 experience, has been dealing with the talent.

18 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: Marketing and
19 bookings.

20 MR. KLINE: Yes, marketing and
21 bookings. In terms of the issues that the Board
22 is usually more concerned with in terms of
23 handling alcohol, security, the issues that tend
24 to have effects on community and public safety,
25 have not really been under his purview or not his

1 expertise.

2 But Livenation, which operates venues
3 like this all over the country, has a great deal
4 of experience in those issues.

5 MR. ANDERSON: The reason I ask is
6 because I saw that he was a 15 percent ownership,
7 and since he was never reflected on any of the
8 licenses, and since he's going to remain as an
9 owner, it was just for my information, just
10 asking --

11 MR. KLINE: Fair question.

12 MR. ANDERSON: Any questions by any of
13 the Board members? Yes, Mr. Short.

14 MR. SHORT: I'd like to know, can you,
15 Mr. Kline, provide for us the names of
16 Livenation? What names are they, and what their
17 qualifications are?

18 MR. KLINE: It's all in the app, in
19 the subsequent transfer.

20 MR. SHORT: Do they all have clean
21 hands certificates?

22 MR. KLINE: They will. I mean, that's
23 -- yes.

24 MR. SHORT: They will?

25 MR. KLINE: I mean they -- I can't

1 tell you as I sit here right now that we've filed
2 them. So when you say, Do they have them? But
3 what I'm representing to you is, there are not
4 any issues with taxes owed to the District of
5 Columbia, and they will clear clean hands.

6 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Well, I
7 understand that.

8 MR. KLINE: Yes.

9 MR. ANDERSON: I guess what I'm asking
10 is, why don't we just file and get everything
11 cleared, above board, and -- (Claps hands.) Why
12 are we putting a -- but you say you haven't any -
13 -

14 MR. KLINE: No, I think he said that
15 -- I think that the transfer to Livenation is
16 before -- is already in the agency, isn't it?

17 MR. SHORT: Okay. It's been filed.
18 (Simultaneous speaking.)

19 MR. KLINE: I didn't understand it.
20 That pretty much has been filed.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Any other
22 questions by any of the Board members? Any last
23 representation you need to make on Soundcheck?

24 MR. KLINE: No. The only thing I want
25 to say is, we appreciate the Board's concerns,

1 and they're certainly appropriate. The law is
2 clear as to what it requires. We are trying to
3 get through the licensing in compliance with that
4 law, and we appreciate your support and
5 consideration.

6 MR. ANDERSON: As far as Soundcheck is
7 concerned, the Board will take this matter under
8 advisement, okay? That's as far as Soundcheck is
9 concerned.

10 All right. So let's talk about
11 Echostage. What is -- you had submitted an
12 initial transfer application for Echostage, so
13 what is --

14 MR. KLINE: I don't -- actually, I
15 think with respect to Echostage, it's clean. I
16 don't think there's actually a transfer. And
17 this is technical; it doesn't make any
18 difference. You're still entitled to know who
19 the owners are.

20 But it wasn't a more than 50 percent
21 change in ownership that was reflected on the
22 Board's records, so it wasn't technically a
23 transfer. By the same token, the issues are the
24 same.

25 MR. ANDERSON: All right. So who are

1 -- let's talk about Echostage. For Echostage,
2 who are the owners of Echostage as far as ABRA's
3 records are concerned? Who owns Echostage?

4 MR. KLINE: We believe that it is Mr.
5 Karagounis and Mr. Amirshahi.

6 MR. ANDERSON: So is it a 50 percent
7 Mr. Karagounis? Can you tell us into here? On
8 the ownership of Echostage, does our record
9 reflect that you own 50 percent and Mr. Amirshahi
10 represents as having 50 percent?

11 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I am not sure how Mr.
12 Amirshahi had filed the documents. I'm assuming,
13 because of the previous one, it's 50-50, but that
14 is not accurate.

15 MR. SHORT: Well, what is accurate?

16 MR. ANDERSON: I don't have -- do we
17 have our records of what our current records --
18 what our records state for Echostage? I'm going
19 to take a pause to see what it is that our
20 records reflect for the ownership of Echostage.

21 We're going to take a pause for a
22 couple of minutes so I can find the current
23 ownership of Echostage.

24 MR. KLINE: As reflected on your
25 records.

1 MR. ANDERSON: AS reflected by the
2 ABRA records.

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
4 went off the record at 2:05 p.m. and resumed at
5 2:07 p.m.)

6 MR. ANDERSON: All right. We're back
7 on the record. I'm trying to get some more
8 updated information. This is in 2010, I believe.
9 We have Mr. Karagounis as president owning 90
10 percent, and Mr. Amirshahi, as treasurer, owning
11 10 percent.

12 So this was an application that was
13 provided to us, and it was approved in August of
14 2012.

15 MR. KLINE: I don't know that that
16 changed.

17 MR. ANDERSON: So, Mr. Karagounis,
18 now, in all of these transfers, you have been a
19 major player in all of these transfers. All
20 right. All the clubs, I think you have appeared
21 in front of me before in about two or three
22 different -- I mean, why is it that -- and you're
23 going to remain owner. I'm talking about other
24 establishments that are not hearing from me
25 today, but were here before.

1 But I'm concerned, sir, that you are
2 one name that has been -- you have played an
3 owner; you have had an ownership stake and will
4 remain an owner in these establishments, and I
5 don't understand why it is that your actual
6 ownership of the establishment has not been known
7 to ABRA.

8 Because from what I have in front of
9 me, you have -- you're now decreasing your
10 ownership from 90 percent to 42 percent. Mr.
11 Bellhaven is supposed to have 20 percent; Mr.
12 Amirshahi, 15 percent; Mr. Kalamoutsos, 15
13 percent; Mr. Marmaras, five percent, and Cronin,
14 L.L.C., three percent.

15 MR. KLINE: Mr. Chair, before he
16 answers, just so the record is clear; if we're
17 talking about Echostage, the percentages are
18 slightly different.

19 MR. ANDERSON: I thought I was -- I'm
20 reading --

21 MR. KLINE: No, for Echostage --

22 MR. ANDERSON: Oh, I'm sorry. I
23 apologize. Let me go back to -- I thought I had
24 switched the art.

25 MR. KLINE: If you don't readily find

1 it, do you want me to recite what the percentages
2 are?

3 MR. ANDERSON: All right. For -- no,
4 I don't have -- that's for Soundcheck.

5 MR. KLINE: Yes. In the filing for
6 Echostage is a summary of shares, percentage of
7 interest. That's for the ownership.

8 MR. ANDERSON: I don't have -- the
9 application doesn't have it. So for Echostage,
10 the application for Echostage, what are the
11 ownerships in for Echostage?

12 MR. KLINE: Yes. Mr. Chairman, Mr.
13 Karagounis, 43 percent.

14 MR. ANDERSON: Forty-three percent?

15 MR. KLINE: Yes, sir.

16 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

17 MR. KLINE: Mr. Kalamoutsos, 17
18 percent.

19 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

20 MR. KLINE: Mr. Edwin Sheridan through
21 Bellhaven, S.L.L.C., 22 percent.

22 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

23 MR. KLINE: Mr. Andre Demoya, six
24 percent.

25 MR. ANDERSON: How do you spell the

1 last name?

2 MR. KLINE: D-E-M-O-Y-A.

3 MR. ANDERSON: Six percent?

4 MR. KLINE: Six percent, yes, sir.

5 MR. ANDERSON: All right.

6 MR. KLINE: Mr. Dmitrius Marmaras, M-

7 A-R-M-A-R-A-S, six percent.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

9 MR. KLINE: Mr. Armond Amirshahi, six
10 percent.

11 MR. ANDERSON: All right. So our
12 records reflect that it was 90 percent Mr.
13 Karagounis -- I apologize -- and Mr. Amirshahi
14 was 10 percent. And so for me, Mr. Karagounis,
15 your name has always been in all these
16 applications. You represent to us that you owned
17 90 percent of this establishment in 2012.

18 So you and Mr. Amirshahi, over the
19 years, have brought in one, two, three, four,
20 four additional partners interview your
21 establishment, and you didn't know that you were
22 supposed to report to ABRA that you no longer own
23 90 percent of this establishment, sir?

24 MR. KARAGOUNIS: That is correct.

25 MR. ANDERSON: And what bothers me,

1 and I'm not sure if I -- what bothers me is that
2 it's the same name that I'm seeing, and that you
3 have your business model, and I see all the
4 names, and we've shuffled the ownership, and this
5 is 2012, so you might have gone through renewal
6 in 2015, 2018, that you have gone through all
7 these renewals, and we're being provided -- and
8 one's aware that in order to go through a
9 renewal, you to get clean hands for all the
10 owners.

11 But someone knew that you and Mr.
12 Amirshahi were not the only owners of this club.
13 But I don't understand why, all these years, that
14 you continue to tell ABRA that we were the two
15 owners of Echostage when you knew that was not
16 true.

17 Because everyone knows that when ABRA
18 comes to an establishment, we ask for an owner or
19 an ABC manager, and Echostage had one, two,
20 three; three owners at more than 10 percent,
21 because you only have to report 10 percent.

22 Echostage has had three owners, and
23 since I've been here, a lot of times one of
24 investigators goes to an establishment and says,
25 I want to see -- let me speak to the ABC

1 manager/owner, and someone jumps up and says, I'm
2 an owner. So we take that as their word until
3 the investigator comes to the office and checks
4 our records and the owner doesn't exist.

5 So everyone knows that this is what we
6 do when ABRA goes to an establishment. So why is
7 it that if you and Mr. Marmaras, who have
8 ownership in all of these clubs? I mean, why is
9 it that no one thought it was important to tell
10 ABRA that these are the true owners?

11 And part of the problem for me is
12 that, how can I have faith in you, sir, going
13 forward, if you continue to have ownership -- and
14 I know that some of the transfers that we've
15 approved that you continue to -- you're going to
16 have ownership in it. And you've said to us,
17 because I was not to say someone hire a manager -
18 - what kind of confidence are you giving this
19 board that when next year or in three years when
20 you submit your application to renew your
21 license, that information that you're providing
22 us is correct?

23 I mean, what type of assurance are you
24 providing me, since you are going to remain --
25 are you going to remain on this license, sir?

1 MR. KARAGOUNIS: No.

2 MR. ANDERSON: No?

3 MR. KARAGOUNIS: These two businesses
4 will be trust.

5 MR. ANDERSON: So in these two
6 businesses, except for Mr. Marmaras, I mean --

7 MR. KARAGOUNIS: No; Kalamoutsos.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Kalamoutsos, and
9 he's going to own 17 percent. And I believe that
10 in all the transfers that we have approved, he
11 owns -- he has now -- at least ABRA now has a
12 record that he owns it, but maybe not for this
13 establishment, and I should not be mixing apples
14 with oranges, but you're in front of me.

15 And for both owners, what confidence
16 are you giving me that when I see an application
17 that comes in with your name on it, for me just
18 to approve this without bringing you in here and
19 asking you; Is there someone else out there
20 that's hiding who is an owner who you're not
21 telling us?

22 MR. KARAGOUNIS: May I answer that?

23 MR. KLINE: Yes.

24 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Okay. So the fact of
25 the matter is, I have been in front of you for

1 five or six different businesses in the past
2 month. You have seen me before.

3 MR. ANDERSON: That is true.

4 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I wasn't in charge of
5 that aspect of the businesses. Unfortunately,
6 whatever happened, happened. The fact is that
7 I'm here, trying to clear all this mess. So next
8 time I'm in front of you, if you told me what I'm
9 telling you, but you find out I've lied to you,
10 obviously you will not approve this application,
11 correct? It's up to you to do it or not. So I
12 can't ask you for anything else. I have made
13 mistakes in the past, yes. Yes, I did not fill
14 out this application, but at the end of the day,
15 I agree with you. I am responsible because it is
16 my business. I didn't know; I'm trying to fix
17 it.

18 MR. KLINE: Mr. Chairman, may I just
19 add to that in terms of something that Mr.
20 Karagounis related to the Board the last time we
21 were before you with other applications? He
22 entrusted Mr. Amirshahi to do this. I think the
23 words we used last time were, Mr. Amirshahi was
24 doing it, but he wasn't doing it very well.

25 Mr. Karagounis pledged to you last

1 time that this is not what he knows; this is not
2 what he does. Going forward and going to hire a
3 qualified attorney or a qualified person who
4 deals with ABRA and will make sure that his
5 businesses are square and straight in terms of
6 their paperwork with your agency.

7 MR. ANDERSON: Go ahead, Mr. Short.

8 MR. SHORT: Well, I'd just like to ask
9 Mr. Karagounis; Mr. Karagounis, just two
10 questions, two-phased questions. First, how long
11 have you been in the nightclub or entertainment
12 business, hospitality business in the District of
13 Columbia? How many years?

14 MR. KARAGOUNIS: Since 1994.

15 MR. SHORT: How many years is that,
16 Mr. Karagounis?

17 MR. KARAGOUNIS: It is 25 years.

18 MR. SHORT: Twenty-five years, since
19 1994, and during this whole period of time you
20 didn't know the rules and regulations about
21 ownership and clubs?

22 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I did not own a
23 nightclub until 2006.

24 MR. SHORT: No, but that's okay; 2006.
25 All right. Go ahead.

1 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I am not sure. I
2 believe that the rules changed at some point
3 regarding the 10 percent ownership. At the time
4 in 2006 I was a 10 percent investor of Lima
5 Restaurant and Lounge; that is no longer in
6 business. I did purchase Utrabar with a partner.
7 At the time we were the only two partners that
8 were on the application.

9 MR. SHORT: Okay. Again, I'd like to
10 ask, during that whole period of time, you knew
11 about the rule changes or the law changes, you
12 never thought that you had to put the proper
13 ownership on the applications?

14 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I didn't know that
15 they would change.

16 MR. SHORT: Okay. Well, we also
17 talked about things that have been in the
18 newspaper. So do you think any of that, that you
19 just said you didn't know, and you trusted
20 somebody else to do it, got you in that problem?
21 Is that what happened?

22 MR. KARAGOUNIS: I'm not sure how to
23 respond to that question, because --

24 (Simultaneous speaking.)

25 MR. SHORT: Okay. Good. Well, one

1 other question I'd like to ask Mr. Kline. Mr.
2 Kline, do you think it would ever come a time
3 when all of these people who are on these, the
4 old ownership and the new ownership, can we get
5 them all here at one time? Would that be hard to
6 do?

7 That's so that any questions we have,
8 we wouldn't have to ask you to ask someone else;
9 they can answer for themselves. Because the
10 transfer -- because it seems to be, as you said
11 yourself, it's a mess, and I think to really
12 clear it up and try to get this mess somewhat on
13 an even keel, if we had everybody here at once to
14 explain who they are, how they got involved, how
15 much ownership they have; that would -- put it on
16 the record.

17 MR. KLINE: I'm not sure who you're
18 missing.

19 MR. ANDERSON: No, we're not -- the
20 only person who is not here is Mr. Amirshahi. I
21 think, in all the --

22 MR. KLINE: Mr. Sheridan is a passive
23 investor.

24 MR. ANDERSON: But I think -- I hear
25 what you're saying, Mr. Short, and I think in the

1 previous cases with the exception of Mr.
2 Amirshahi I think, all the new owners have
3 presented themselves in front of us, which is not
4 something that normally occurs.

5 Normally what occurs when somebody
6 applies for a license, we never bring them in,
7 because we don't know who it is. It's routine.
8 But not for this unfortunate incident with Mr.
9 Amirshahi, then the Board thought it prudent
10 that, if there is going to be a transfer, that we
11 need to have a public hearing so that it's clear
12 that there are arm's length transactions going
13 on.

14 And as I said before -- and I'll say
15 this. I'll say it publicly. Both Echostage and
16 Soundcheck, the transfers were going to be
17 approved administratively. But I caught it, and
18 I said that it does not make sense for the agency
19 who, if we are removing Mr. Amirshahi from all
20 these other licenses, why are we approving him to
21 put him on another license whether or not we
22 straight the record.

23 We need to have a public hearing to
24 figure out exactly what's going on, to let the
25 parties come in and explain to us what's going

1 on, so that whatever decision we make in the
2 boardroom is being made by -- because we have
3 not.

4 I'm glad that we're having these
5 hearings because what we're seeing is that we're
6 having major owners who we didn't know existed.
7 We did not know, and that's unfortunate. That's
8 one of the reasons why I'm having this dialogue
9 with Mr. Karagounis; you are one name who will
10 maybe not necessarily these two establishments --
11 and I might never have the opportunity to see you
12 again, because you might do everything that
13 you're supposed to do correctly.

14 Normally people come before the ABC
15 Board when something goes awry, so I might never
16 get an opportunity to see you again. But that's
17 one of the reasons I'm taking this opportunity to
18 say that, because I've seen your name that you
19 are going to be a player in all these other
20 establishments that you've asked to transfer.

21 So I need to make sure that when I see
22 your name on an application, I can sign off on
23 this routinely. I can put my name, put my
24 initials and say, I approve this, because I know
25 that information that Mr. Karagounis gave me is

1 correct.

2 That's a name that I can have
3 confidence in. He knows the rules of ABRA; he
4 now knows that if an owner, if someone comes into
5 his business, and if someone owns more than 10
6 percent of the business, that he knows that he
7 needs to come to ABRA, not at renewal, or not
8 when something happens, but he needs to alert
9 ABRA that we have changed our ownership status.

10 So he now knows that, so therefore
11 when I see his name on an application, I will
12 have confidence that he's aware of the rules and
13 regulations, and I will confidently sign off on
14 an application that has his name on it.

15 Can I leave here today, sir, feeling
16 with that level of comfort that you, in moving
17 forward and owning, not necessarily Echostage and
18 Soundcheck, but all the other establishments,
19 both you and Mr. Marmaras, who owns, who are here
20 today, who are owners of the club, that when
21 application comes in here, that this Board can be
22 confident that the information that you put in
23 this application is correct?

24 MR. KARAGOUNIS: One hundred percent,
25 and you will never see an application from a

1 partner ever again. It will always be from a law
2 firm representing us to do things right.

3 MR. ANDERSON: I'm not asking you to
4 hire a lawyer. I never want to be that ABC
5 chair, and I'm a lawyer. I don't want it to be -
6 - I don't want the record to reflect that the ABC
7 chair is telling you to hire a lawyer. I am just
8 saying that, and at the same time, as an
9 attorney, we only make representation.

10 We only make representation based on
11 what our client tells us. If my client tells me
12 he owns 90 percent of the club, I'm not going to
13 ask my client if they own 90 percent. I'm not
14 going to ask that because I'm only making
15 representation that you -- so Mr. Kline can only
16 represent what you have told him.

17 So that's why I'm moving away from Mr.
18 Kline. Since you're here, I'm asking you. So
19 therefore when Mr. Kline comes, if he's
20 representing you, whatever representation that
21 he's making, I want to feel comfortable that he's
22 making that representation because the
23 information you're providing him is correct.

24 Any other questions by the Board
25 members?

1 MR. SHORT: I have no questions.

2 MR. ANDERSON: Any final comments that
3 you want to make regarding this?

4 MR. KLINE: The only thing I want to
5 say is, Mr. Short, I understand your concerns,
6 and if the Board wants to see anybody else, we'll
7 bring them. We're not hiding anybody.

8 If Mr. Amirshahi were here, I suspect
9 it would largely be a waste of time because he
10 would be exercising his Fifth Amendment rights, I
11 suspect. So I don't know that that would add
12 anything. I'm not sure who you were alluding to
13 that you needed to see, but if that's who it was,
14 I don't think that would add anything.

15 But if there is somebody else, and the
16 Board wants to see them and make sure, then our
17 goal, in terms of my office with respect to these
18 licenses is to be as transparent with ABRA and
19 with you as can be in disclosing all the
20 information and make sure you have what you
21 didn't have before, which is full disclosure as
22 to who is running these ABC license
23 establishments.

24 MR. SHORT: I do appreciate that.

25 MR. ANDERSON: All right. One last --

1 as far as Echostage, are you saying that there is
2 a second transfer application in for Echostage?

3 MR. KLINE: Yes, sir. The business
4 deal that involves Soundcheck involves both
5 establishments, Soundcheck and Echostage.

6 MR. ANDERSON: So off the top of your
7 head, can you tell us what are the entities that
8 are going to own Echostage?

9 MR. KLINE: Not off the top of my
10 head. It is the same structure. I mean, it's
11 all one deal, and it's all the same structure.
12 So, given that we have a different application to
13 go through again in terms of the record,
14 Livenation is a publicly-traded company. It's
15 majority owner.

16 MR. ANDERSON: Approximately how much?

17 MR. KLINE: At least 51 percent.

18 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: No, they're more.

19 MR. KLINE: They're more, yes; more
20 than 51 percent.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Okay, so more than 51
22 percent.

23 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: It's just me and
24 them.

25 MR. SHORT: What is yours? Mr.

1 Marmouth?

2 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: It's 20, if you need
3 to know.

4 MR. SHORT: That would mean it would
5 80.

6 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: Yes.

7 MR. SHORT: And Mr. Marmouth, so
8 you're saying that --

9 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: I'm Mr. Kalamoutsos.

10 MR. SHORT: Mr. Kalamoutsos; I'm
11 sorry.

12 MR. KLINE: I'll --

13 (Simultaneous speaking.)

14 MR. ANDERSON: No, no, I'm not going
15 to do that to Mr. Kline. At least not in the
16 record, okay? At least not on the record.

17 All right. So you are going to own --

18 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: Yes, I'm just going
19 on board as an employee for them.

20 MR. ANDERSON: But you own 20 percent?

21 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: Correct.

22 MR. ANDERSON: And so you are aware
23 that -- and I think one thing; we need to ask
24 questions. If you own 20 percent of an
25 establishment, based on what's going on here, so

1 you can be someone who sits in the background and
2 says, I don't know. You also need to know our
3 rules and regulations.

4 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: I'm learning them as
5 we go.

6 MR. ANDERSON: Because you're sitting
7 here and saying, Well, I was only in this part of
8 this business. But you're here in front of me,
9 and I'm saying stuff to you. And I'm not going
10 to accept the second time that you're going to
11 say, I'm just a silent partner. I did not know
12 what my partner was doing. I didn't know he's
13 not doing this. I didn't know that he wasn't
14 doing this. I didn't know that he's making these
15 representations. That can't work anymore.

16 MR. KALAMOUTSOS: That's why we retain
17 Andrew; to help us with this process. And that's
18 why I partnered with Livenation; because I'm
19 counting on their operations to help grow the
20 business.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Any other comments or
22 concerns?

23 MR. KLINE: No, sir. I would say what
24 I said before which is, we hope that we've given
25 you the information, and the Board is clear as to

1 ownership. We're happy if there are subsequent
2 questions or inquiries, to respond to any of
3 those, even if we need to do it off the record.
4 Our goal, as I've said, is to make sure the Board
5 has all the information, and that this situation
6 is cleaned up so we can move forward with the
7 next phase, which is the transaction I described.

8 MR. ANDERSON: All right. Thank you
9 again, and we'll take this matter under
10 advisement. Have a great day.

11 MR. KLINE: Thank you.

12 (Whereupon, the fact finding hearing
13 in the above-entitled matter was concluded at
14 2:31 p.m.)
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A

A-R-M-A-R-A-S 30:7
ABC 15:8,22 18:12,16
 31:19,25 39:14 41:4,6
 42:22
above-entitled 27:3
 46:13
ABRA 3:22 6:8 9:11,20
 10:20 11:12 13:25
 16:16 19:4 27:2 28:7
 30:22 31:14,17 32:6
 32:10 33:11 35:4 40:3
 40:7,9 42:18
ABRA's 26:2
accept 45:10
accomplish 3:17
accurate 26:14,15
accurately 3:23
act 13:24
actual 7:8,10 11:21
 28:5
add 34:19 42:11,14
additional 30:20
address 17:8
adds 9:1
administratively 38:17
advisement 25:8 46:10
afternoon 3:4
agency 13:8 24:16 35:6
 38:18
agenda 3:14
ago 12:20 18:6
agree 19:22 34:15
ahead 5:21 11:4 35:7
 35:25
alcohol 22:23
Alcoholic 1:2,17,17
alert 40:8
allay 16:2
alluding 42:12
amenable 17:19
Amendment 42:10
Amirshahi 6:14 8:14
 9:4,24 10:9 13:23
 26:5,9,12 27:10 28:12
 30:9,13,18 31:12
 34:22,23 37:20 38:2,9
 38:19 42:8
Anderson 1:19,21 3:3,8
 4:15,20,24 5:3,7,9,12
 5:21 8:3,7,10,13,20
 8:23 9:1,16,19 10:1,5
 10:8,18 11:1,4,9
 12:12,16 13:10,18
 14:7,24 16:9 18:1
 20:16 21:4,9,12,17,21
 21:25 22:10,13 23:5
 23:12 24:6,9,21 25:6

25:25 26:6,16 27:1,6
 27:17 28:19,22 29:3,8
 29:14,16,19,22,25
 30:3,5,8,11,25 33:2,5
 33:8 34:3 35:7 37:19
 37:24 41:3 42:2,25
 43:6,16,21 44:14,20
 44:22 45:6,21 46:8
Andre 29:23
Andrew 2:3 4:10 45:17
answer 33:22 37:9
answers 28:16
Antonios 2:2 5:1 10:4
anybody 42:6,7
anymore 45:15
apologize 28:23 30:13
app 23:18
apparently 7:11 14:16
appear 19:6
appeared 27:20
appears 14:18
apples 33:13
application 7:16 13:2
 14:5 15:25 16:11,11
 16:16,20 20:19 21:10
 21:12,14 25:12 27:12
 29:9,10 32:20 33:16
 34:10,14 36:8 39:22
 40:11,14,21,23,25
 43:2,12
applications 14:1,11
 30:16 34:21 36:13
applies 38:6
appreciate 24:25 25:4
 42:24
approached 17:7 18:6
appropriate 25:1
appropriately 19:14
approve 14:4 33:18
 34:10 39:24
approved 27:13 32:15
 33:10 38:17
approving 38:20
approximately 10:22
 21:5 43:16
areas 7:3
arm's 3:20 38:12
Arman 6:13
Armond 30:9
art 28:24
artists 22:11
asked 9:20 39:20
asking 14:4 16:14,14
 16:22 23:10 24:9
 33:19 41:3,18
aspect 34:5
assuming 12:23 26:12
assurance 32:23

attempting 20:6
attention 19:20
attorney 35:3 41:9
August 27:13
aware 9:21 31:8 40:12
 44:22
awry 39:15

B

back 3:4 27:6 28:23
background 5:18 7:19
 10:19 45:1
based 41:10 44:25
basis 20:15
behalf 4:11
believe 5:17 9:23 15:5
 19:7 26:4 27:8 33:9
 36:2
Bellhaven 8:17,18,20
 8:24 9:4 28:11 29:21
Beverage 1:2,17,17
board 1:2,17 3:14,14,18
 5:23 6:24 11:24 17:1
 17:8,18,18,25 18:13
 18:17 19:24 20:8,17
 20:20 22:21 23:13
 24:11,22 25:7 32:19
 34:20 38:9 39:15
 40:21 41:24 42:6,16
 44:19 45:25 46:4
Board's 6:3 7:1 11:20
 15:19,20 16:2,5 17:16
 24:25 25:22
boardroom 39:2
BOBBY 1:22
bookings 22:9,19,21
bothers 30:25 31:1
bottom 13:19
bring 38:6 42:7
bringing 14:10 22:12
 33:18
brought 30:19
Building 1:18
business 6:20 7:10
 10:21 12:4,20 18:24
 31:3 34:16 35:12,12
 36:6 40:5,6 43:3 45:8
 45:20
businesses 7:18 20:2
 20:11,12 33:3,6 34:1
 34:5 35:5
buyer 7:6 17:23

C

C-R-O-N-I-N 4:17
cares 17:6
case 3:5,9 18:10
cases 3:11 38:1

CATO 1:22
caught 38:17
certain 20:9
certainly 10:13 25:1
certificate 15:15
certificates 23:21
chair 18:3 28:15 41:5,7
Chairman 5:17,22 17:1
 19:11 29:12 34:18
Chairperson 1:18,21
change 1:13 10:22,23
 16:24 25:21 36:15
changed 27:16 36:2
 40:9
changes 36:11,11
Chapel 1:11
charge 34:4
checks 32:3
Claps 24:11
clarify 13:12 16:21,23
 18:17 22:15
clean 4:1 7:14 13:20
 15:2,15 17:2,4 19:20
 20:7 23:20 24:5 25:15
 31:9
cleaned 19:23 46:6
clear 6:15 7:7 17:11
 24:5 25:2 28:16 34:7
 37:12 38:11 45:25
clearances 9:10
cleared 24:11
client 41:11,11,13
clients 4:5
closing 12:25 13:1
club 22:7 31:12 40:20
 41:12
clubs 27:20 32:8 35:21
CN 1:7,12
Columbia 1:1 4:3 18:24
 24:5 35:13
come 14:19 18:16
 19:19 37:2 38:25
 39:14 40:7
comes 31:18 32:3
 33:17 40:4,21 41:19
comfort 40:16
comfortable 20:9 41:21
comment 20:18
comments 42:2 45:21
community 22:24
company 6:22 9:15
 12:8 15:7 21:20 43:14
completely 16:1
compliance 25:3
comply 20:4
concern 15:19,20 18:13
 18:14,25 19:11
concerned 6:24 19:24

22:22 25:7,9 26:3
28:1
concerns 11:9 16:2,5
17:8 18:18,20 19:5,9
19:14 24:25 42:5
45:22
concluded 46:13
confidence 32:18 33:15
40:3,12
confident 40:22
confidently 40:13
connection 5:24 6:5
7:17 8:5 13:16
consideration 25:5
considered 9:15
continue 15:9 31:14
32:13,15
continuing 15:21
contract 12:4
Control 1:2,17,17
conviction 15:4,16
correct 6:10 11:12,14
16:17 21:11 30:24
32:22 34:11 40:1,23
41:23 44:21
correctly 22:2 39:13
cost 19:6,7
counting 45:19
country 12:9,10 23:3
couple 8:6 12:19 18:6
26:22
criminal 15:4,17
Cronin 2:3 4:13,13,17
4:17 5:13,17,22 8:15
8:15 9:2 28:13
current 5:14 13:7 15:1
15:3 21:24 26:17,22
currently 5:12

D

D-E-M-O-Y-A 30:2
D.C 1:18
dated 7:22
day 16:23 34:14 46:10
days 12:3 16:21
deadline 12:3
deal 12:25 15:13 20:14
23:3 43:4,11
dealing 15:12 18:21
22:17
deals 35:4
decision 39:1
decreasing 28:9
Demoya 29:23
described 46:7
determined 6:6
dialogue 39:8
difference 25:18

different 16:12 17:19
27:22 28:18 34:1
43:12
difficulty 6:1
directly 14:23
disability 15:1,6 16:4,8
disappointed 18:9
disclosing 42:19
disclosure 42:21
discussion 3:15
disjointed 14:9
disposition 7:17
District 1:1 4:3 18:24
20:2 24:4 35:12
division 14:10
Dmitrius 8:4 30:6
documentation 9:10,11
documents 26:12
doing 10:25 14:14
16:13 22:8 34:24,24
45:12,13,14
Donovan 1:19,21

E

Echostage 1:10 3:10
6:21 25:11,12,15 26:1
26:1,2,3,8,18,20,23
28:17,21 29:6,9,10,11
31:15,19,22 38:15
40:17 43:1,2,5,8
Edwin 29:20
effects 22:24
effort 7:14
efforts 7:7
Ekho 1:10
eligible 15:7
employee 44:19
entertainment 12:8
35:11
entities 13:17 43:7
entitled 25:18
entity 16:13,19,19
18:12
entrusted 34:22
equation 14:3
establish 3:19 11:12
established 11:14
establishment 3:24
28:6 30:17,21,23
31:18,24 32:6 33:13
44:25
establishments 3:6
5:24 6:4,6 10:15
12:15 18:21 19:2
27:24 28:4 39:10,20
40:18 42:23 43:5
event 18:15
Events 1:10

everybody 37:13
exactly 38:24
exception 38:1
excuses 19:17
exercising 42:10
exist 32:4
existed 7:11 39:6
exists 7:11
experience 22:3,5,6,17
23:4
expertise 7:2 22:16
23:1
explain 37:14 38:25
express 10:13 19:14
expressed 10:11
extent 10:14
extra 16:22

F

facilities 22:15
fact 1:7 3:9,11 15:24
16:6 33:24 34:6 46:12
factor 19:6
failed 19:3
Fair 20:25 23:11
faith 32:12
far 25:6,8 26:2 43:1
fascinating 18:7
feel 41:21
feeling 40:15
Fifth 42:10
Fifty 10:7,8
figure 38:24
file 24:10
filed 6:10,11,11 7:15,16
9:9 12:17,18,19,22
13:1 15:25 21:10 24:1
24:17,20 26:12
filing 11:23 29:5
filings 20:7
fill 34:13
Fillmore 12:10
final 20:18 42:2
find 26:22 28:25 34:9
finding 1:7 3:9,11 46:12
Fine 22:13
firm 4:11 7:1 41:2
first 3:13 4:5,9 20:21
35:10
five 8:12 18:3 19:13
28:13 34:1
fix 20:7 34:16
fixed 11:18 17:5
follows 7:23
Forty-three 29:14
forward 10:14 13:9
15:18 20:1,8,24 32:13
35:2 40:17 46:6

four 30:19,20
front 27:21 28:8 33:14
33:25 34:8 38:3 45:8
full 42:21
further 11:15
future 15:6,22
FYI 22:5

G

G 5:5,8
gee 17:5
gentleman 8:18
George 5:6,8
getting 22:2
give 5:18
given 11:6 12:2 15:24
43:12 45:24
giving 32:18 33:16
glad 39:4
glossing 17:13
go 5:21 11:4 17:6 28:23
31:8 35:7,25 43:13
45:5
goal 42:17 46:4
goes 31:24 32:6 39:15
going 3:18 6:21 10:14
11:15 13:13,23,24
16:23 17:5,5,14 20:16
21:4 23:8 26:18,21
27:23 32:12,15,24,25
33:9 35:2,2 38:10,12
38:16,24,25 39:19
41:12,14 43:8 44:14
44:17,18,25 45:9,10
Good 3:3 36:25
great 23:3 46:10
grow 45:19
guess 6:1 13:18 24:9

H

hand 13:25
handle 17:19
handled 10:12 17:16
handling 22:23
hands 4:1 13:21 15:3
15:15 23:21 24:5,11
31:9
happened 34:6,6 36:21
happens 40:8
happy 17:24 46:1
hard 37:5
head 43:7,10
hear 37:24
hearing 1:7,17 3:9,12
6:23 27:24 38:11,23
46:12
hearings 39:5
help 45:17,19

hiding 6:15 33:20 42:7
 hire 32:17 35:2 41:4,7
 holding 15:2
 holds 15:8
 hope 16:2 45:24
 hoped 12:18
 hopefully 20:8
 hoping 20:1
 hospitality 35:12
 hundred 40:24

I

I-S 5:11
 identify 4:4 11:1,24
 important 12:1 20:2
 32:9
 incident 38:8
 indefinite 15:22
 indicated 10:14
 indication 14:18
 individual 6:7 14:13
 15:1,21
 individual's 14:15
 individuals 5:25 20:10
 20:20,22 21:22
 information 10:19
 11:24 17:17 19:4,25
 21:6,7 23:9 27:8
 32:21 39:25 40:22
 41:23 42:20 45:25
 46:5
 initial 25:12
 initials 39:24
 innuendo 15:13
 inquire 9:21
 inquiries 46:2
 interacting 6:8
 interest 29:7
 interesting 18:2
 internally 10:23
 interview 30:20
 introduce 4:7
 investigator 32:3
 investigators 31:24
 investment 11:8
 investor 36:4 37:23
 involved 10:15 20:10
 20:11 37:14
 involves 3:12 43:4,4
 issue 14:20,21 17:20,21
 issues 16:25 22:21,23
 23:4 24:4 25:23

J

JAMES 1:22
 JR 1:22
 jumps 32:1
 justified 19:12

K

K 1:7
 K-A-L-A-M-O-U-T-S-O-
 4:22
 K-A-R-A 5:5,7
 Kalamoutsos 2:2 4:18
 4:19,22 7:25 9:3 21:1
 21:3,24,25 22:3,8,11
 22:18 28:12 29:17
 33:7,8 43:18,23 44:2
 44:6,9,9,10,18,21
 45:4,16
 Kara 10:2
 Karagounis 2:2 5:1,1,5
 5:8,10,11 7:24 9:3,24
 10:3,10,24 11:3,3,5
 26:5,7,11 27:9,17
 29:13 30:13,14,24
 33:1,3,7,22,24 34:4
 34:20,25 35:9,9,14,16
 35:17,22 36:1,14,22
 39:9,25 40:24
 keel 37:13
 Keep 11:17
 kind 32:18
 Kline 2:3 3:6,7 4:4,10
 4:10 8:4,9,12,14,22
 8:25 9:9,18,23 10:3,7
 10:10 11:10,16 12:14
 12:17 13:15 14:6,22
 14:25 16:25 18:2
 19:11 20:25 21:8,11
 21:16,19,22 22:14,20
 23:11,15,18,22,25
 24:8,14,19,24 25:14
 26:4,24 27:15 28:15
 28:21,25 29:5,12,15
 29:17,20,23 30:2,4,6
 30:9 33:23 34:18 37:1
 37:2,17,22 41:15,18
 41:19 42:4 43:3,9,17
 43:19 44:12,15 45:23
 46:11
 knew 31:11,15 36:10
 know 6:14 10:3,21
 13:12,24 14:7,12,17
 16:16 17:10 18:1 19:8
 19:12 21:5,5,14 23:14
 25:18 27:15 30:21
 32:14 34:16 35:20
 36:14,19 38:7 39:6,7
 39:24 42:11 44:3 45:2
 45:2,11,12,13,14
 knowledge 20:9
 known 12:7 18:12 28:6
 knows 31:17 32:5 35:1
 40:3,4,6,10

L

L.L.C 8:15,16,18,23,24
 28:14
 large 18:23
 largely 42:9
 larger 20:12
 law 4:11 18:4 19:15
 20:5 25:1,4 36:11
 41:1
 lawyer 41:4,5,7
 learning 18:3,4 45:4
 leave 40:15
 led 6:3
 legitimate 17:9
 length 3:21 38:12
 let's 4:5,7,8 25:10 26:1
 letter 7:21
 level 40:16
 liability 4:2
 license 1:8,12 3:10,10
 3:14,16 6:17 7:5,6 9:7
 11:18 14:19 15:2,8,22
 16:12 20:22 22:4
 32:21,25 38:6,21
 42:22
 licensee 16:15 19:3,7
 licensees 18:23 19:1
 licenses 8:6 12:24 14:2
 14:14 18:23 23:8
 38:20 42:18
 licensing 14:10 25:3
 lied 34:9
 Lima 36:4
 line 13:19
 little 5:18
 Livenation 12:7 21:1,18
 23:2,16 24:15 43:14
 45:18
 LLC 1:6
 long 35:10
 longer 20:11 30:22 36:5
 look 14:9
 looking 7:4
 lot 18:20,24 31:23
 Lounge 36:5

M

M- 30:6
 M-A-R-M-A-R-A-S 8:9
 major 27:19 39:6
 majority 21:19 43:15
 making 6:9 41:14,21,22
 45:14
 manager 22:16 31:19
 32:17
 manager/owner 32:1
 marketing 22:18,20
 Marmaras 8:1,4,5 9:3

28:13 30:6 32:7 33:6
 40:19
 Marmouth 44:1,7
 matter 1:5 3:13 16:6
 20:3 25:7 27:3 33:25
 46:9,13
 Matthew 2:3 4:13
 Max 4:15
 mayor 18:5
 mean 11:19 12:5,10
 17:2,11,15 19:12,15
 22:14 23:22,25 27:22
 32:8,23 33:6 43:10
 44:4
 MEETING 1:3
 member 1:22,22 15:7
 members 5:23 20:17
 23:13 24:22 41:25
 mess 34:7 37:11,12
 met 1:17
 mind 11:17
 minimizing 15:20
 minute 13:4
 minutes 26:22
 missing 37:18
 mistakes 34:13
 mixing 33:13
 model 31:3
 models 10:22
 mom 18:22
 moment 15:11
 money 19:8
 month 34:2
 months 12:19
 morning 12:6
 move 13:8 17:14 20:1,7
 46:6
 moving 15:18 20:23
 40:16 41:17

N

N 5:10
 N.W 1:18
 name 4:16,21 5:3 8:8
 8:19 14:1,5,16 22:2
 28:2 30:1,15 31:2
 33:17 39:9,18,22,23
 40:2,11,14
 names 23:15,16 31:4
 nationally 12:7
 NE 1:11
 near 15:5
 necessarily 18:5 39:10
 40:17
 need 16:10,21 17:10
 24:23 38:11,23 39:21
 44:2,23 45:2 46:3
 needed 6:10 7:5,8

42:13
needs 40:7,8
negotiations 6:19
 12:20
never 23:7 36:12 38:6
 39:11,15 40:25 41:4
new 3:24,25 4:1 16:10
 16:11,18,19 20:19
 21:17 37:4 38:2
news 13:23
newspaper 15:12 16:6
 36:18
Nick 5:11
night 22:7
nightclub 35:11,23
normally 38:4,5 39:14
November 1:15
NW 1:7

O

O-U 5:10
O-U-N-I-S 5:6
obviously 7:2 34:10
occur 10:23
occurs 38:4,5
October 7:22
Offer 5:3
office 7:22 19:19 32:3
 42:17
Oh 12:16 18:17 28:22
okay 4:24 5:21 8:13 9:1
 10:1 11:5,16 21:21
 22:10,13 24:6,17,21
 25:8 29:16,19,22 30:8
 33:24 35:24 36:9,16
 36:25 43:21 44:16
old 37:4
once 8:5 11:13 37:13
one's 31:8
ones 20:2
opened 11:7
opening 11:8
operates 23:2
operations 45:19
opportunity 39:11,16
 39:17
oranges 33:14
order 13:19 31:8
organization 20:13
outlined 7:21
outstanding 4:2
owed 24:4
owned 8:11,18 18:11
 19:2 30:16
owner 18:11 21:2,24
 23:9 27:23 28:3,4
 31:18 32:2,4 33:20
 40:4 43:15

owners 3:23,24,25 4:1
 5:15 9:5,6,12,12,25
 10:21 11:21,25 13:20
 13:21,22 17:10 18:9
 18:16 25:19 26:2
 31:10,12,15,20,22
 32:10 33:15 38:2 39:6
 40:20
ownership 1:13 3:13
 4:6 5:16 6:25 7:8,10
 7:20,23 11:12,14,23
 13:7 16:24 18:18 19:9
 20:23 23:6 25:21 26:8
 26:20,23 28:3,6,10
 29:7 31:4 32:8,13,16
 35:21 36:3,13 37:4,4
 37:15 40:9 46:1
ownerships 29:11
owning 13:21 27:9,10
 40:17
owns 7:24 8:1,14,16,17
 10:6,9 26:3 33:11,12
 40:5,19 41:12

P

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
 3:1
p.m 3:2 27:4,5 46:14
Panagiotis 2:2 4:18
paperwork 35:6
part 32:11 45:7
parties 12:21 38:25
partner 22:6 36:6 41:1
 45:11,12
partnered 45:18
partners 4:14,19 5:2
 30:20 36:7
party 7:18
passive 37:22
pause 26:19,21
pending 13:5
people 18:16 37:3
 39:14
percent 7:24 8:1,12,15
 8:16,17,24 9:2 10:7,8
 10:9 13:21 18:11,11
 19:2 21:8,9 23:6
 25:20 26:6,9,10 27:10
 27:11 28:10,10,11,12
 28:13,13,14 29:13,14
 29:18,21,24 30:3,4,7
 30:10,12,14,17,23
 31:20,21 33:9 36:3,4
 40:6,24 41:12,13
 43:17,20,22 44:20,24
percentage 5:13 10:25
 14:8 29:6
percentages 11:6 28:17

29:1
period 9:13 17:23 18:22
 19:1 35:19 36:10
person 14:19 35:3
 37:20
PETE 2:2
phase 46:7
place 14:5 17:24 20:14
plan 12:23
played 28:2
player 27:19 39:19
please 11:2 14:13
pleasure 17:16
pledged 34:25
point 6:14 12:2 15:14
 19:25 36:2
police 9:10
polite 6:2
pop 18:23
position 18:7
prefer 15:13
prefers 17:25
prepare 9:21
present 1:20 2:1 8:16
presented 38:3
president 27:9
presiding 1:19
presume 17:4
pretty 24:20
previous 26:13 38:1
primarily 6:21
probably 9:20
problem 32:11 36:20
proceeding 13:17
 15:17
process 11:11 16:20
 17:22 20:21 45:17
processing 13:25
produced 15:15
professionals 10:16
proper 36:12
properly 6:25 7:12
 10:12,17 13:7
prosecutors 6:1
provide 13:20 19:4
 23:15
provided 15:3 17:17
 27:13 31:7
providing 32:21,24
 41:23
prudent 3:15 38:9
public 12:5 21:6,7
 22:24 38:11,23
publicly 38:15
publicly-traded 6:22
 9:14 12:8 21:20 43:14
pull 16:15
purchase 36:6

purchaser 21:2
purpose 11:22
pursuant 3:20
purview 22:25
put 6:2 36:12 37:15
 38:21 39:23,23 40:22
putting 24:12

Q

qualifications 23:17
qualified 9:12 11:25
 35:3,3
Queens 5:11
question 1:14 9:17
 20:25 23:11 36:23
 37:1
questions 3:19 20:17
 23:12 24:22 35:10,10
 37:7 41:24 42:1 44:24
 46:2
quickly 12:25 19:20
quite 10:19

R

radar 6:3
reacted 13:3
readily 28:25
reading 28:20
really 22:25 37:11
reason 14:11,12,13
 19:3 23:5
reasons 13:11 39:8,17
recite 29:1
record 3:4,16,23 4:8
 6:13 11:2 12:5 13:12
 15:14,14 16:21 17:3,4
 26:8 27:4,7 28:16
 33:12 37:16 38:22
 41:6 43:13 44:16,16
 46:3
records 5:14 6:9 7:1,13
 9:22,23 10:1,5 11:20
 13:8 16:17,23 25:22
 26:3,17,17,18,20,25
 27:2 30:12 32:4
reducing 14:8
Reeves 1:18
reflect 3:23 7:8 9:11,24
 11:20 26:9,20 30:12
 41:6
reflected 6:25 7:12 13:7
 23:7 25:21 26:24 27:1
regarding 3:12 4:1 36:3
 42:3
regret 10:11
regrettably 6:7
regular 20:15
regulations 35:20

40:13 45:3
related 34:20
relationships 22:12
remain 21:2 23:8 27:23
 28:4 32:24,25
remaining 3:25
removed 20:22
removing 38:19
renew 32:20
renewal 11:17 12:1,3
 13:12,19 31:5,9 40:7
renewals 31:7
renewed 6:17 7:5 12:24
renewing 11:18
report 30:22 31:21
represent 13:13,14,17
 19:16 30:16 41:16
representation 10:20
 24:23 41:9,10,15,20
 41:22
representations 45:15
representative 19:16
representing 24:3 41:2
 41:20
represents 26:10
required 9:11
requires 19:15 25:2
resolved 6:16
respect 3:16 15:2 16:3
 20:12 25:15 42:17
respond 36:23 46:2
responsibilities 20:4
responsible 6:8 34:15
Restaurant 36:5
result 6:23 16:1
resumed 27:4
Retailer 1:7,12
retain 45:16
retained 7:1
retaining 10:16
return 4:2
right 3:3,8 5:13 8:10,25
 10:18 11:6 12:16
 13:10,18 16:3,4,9
 19:24 22:3 24:1 25:10
 25:25 27:6,20 29:3
 30:5,11 35:25 41:2
 42:25 44:17 46:8
rights 42:10
Road 1:11
Room 1:18
routine 38:7
routinely 39:23
rule 36:11
rules 35:20 36:2 40:3
 40:12 45:3
running 22:6 42:22
runs 12:8

S

S 4:23
S.L.L.C 8:17,22 9:4
 29:21
safety 22:24
sale 6:19 12:4
saw 8:5 23:6
saying 11:10 17:13
 37:25 41:8 43:1 44:8
 45:7,9
says 31:24 32:1 45:2
se 22:16
second 16:13 43:2
 45:10
secondly 11:13
secret 12:6
security 22:23
see 9:22 26:19 31:3,25
 33:16 39:11,16,21
 40:11,25 42:6,13,16
seeing 31:2 39:5
seen 19:19 20:18 21:14
 22:1 34:2 39:18
sending 16:18
sense 18:9 38:18
series 16:25
shared 5:16 14:17
shares 29:6
Sheridan 8:19 29:20
 37:22
Short 1:22 23:13,14,20
 23:24 24:17 26:15
 35:7,8,15,18,24 36:9
 36:16,25 37:25 42:1,5
 42:24 43:25 44:4,7,10
shuffled 31:4
side 14:3
sign 39:22 40:13
signed 18:5
significant 18:22,25
 19:8
silent 22:5 45:11
Silver 12:9
Simultaneous 5:20
 24:18 36:24 44:13
sir 4:16,21 5:4 11:2
 28:1 29:15 30:4,23
 32:12,25 40:15 43:3
 45:23
sit 24:1
sits 45:1
sitting 45:6
situation 46:5
situations 19:19 20:14
six 29:23 30:3,4,7,9
 34:1
slightly 28:18
solves 21:12

somebody 36:20 38:5
 42:15
somewhat 37:12
sorry 4:15 9:21 10:2
 28:22 44:11
Soundcheck 1:6,6 3:9
 4:9,12,14,19 5:2,15
 6:20 7:20,25 12:13
 24:23 25:6,8 29:4
 38:16 40:18 43:4,5
speak 31:25
speaking 5:20 11:2
 24:18 36:24 44:13
specifically 3:19
spell 4:20 8:7 29:25
Spring 12:9
square 35:5
staff 7:7 13:2 16:22
stage 15:16 16:7
stake 20:23 28:3
stakes 5:16
start 4:5,7
started 7:4
state 26:18
status 40:9
step 12:1 16:13
stock 3:12
straight 6:9 35:5 38:22
straighten 11:23 13:6
straightened 11:19
Street 1:7,18
structure 11:13 43:10
 43:11
stuff 45:9
submit 32:20
submitted 25:11
subsequent 7:15 9:14
 13:1,9 23:19 46:1
substantial 20:13
Suite 1:18
summary 29:6
support 25:4
supposed 6:12 28:11
 30:22 39:13
sure 4:6,10 6:9 9:18
 10:16,20 13:6 26:11
 31:1 35:4 36:1,22
 37:17 39:21 42:12,16
 42:20 46:4
suspect 13:3 42:8,11
switched 28:24
systems 20:13

T

t/a 1:6,10
take 14:1,13 17:24 25:7
 26:19,21 32:2 46:9
talent 22:16,17
talk 4:8 6:21 25:10 26:1
talked 36:17
talking 7:9 27:23 28:17
tax 4:1,2 18:3
taxes 24:4
technical 25:17
technically 25:22
tell 19:18 24:1 26:7
 31:14 32:9 43:7
telling 33:21 34:9 41:7
tells 41:11,11
ten 13:21
tent 22:23
terms 15:6,21 17:9,15
 21:16 22:21,22 34:19
 35:5 42:17 43:13
Thank 46:8,11
thing 24:24 42:4 44:23
things 11:16 14:25 18:2
 36:17 41:2
think 6:3 12:6 17:17
 19:12,24 22:1 24:14
 24:15 25:15,16 27:20
 34:22 36:18 37:2,11
 37:21,24,25 38:2
 42:14 44:23
third 7:18
thought 3:15 28:19,23
 32:9 36:12 38:9
three 8:16 11:16 27:21
 28:14 30:19 31:20,20
 31:22 32:19
Thursday 1:15
time 6:5,18 7:12 11:6
 11:17 12:21 17:12,23
 18:22 19:1 22:9 34:8
 34:20,23 35:1,19 36:3
 36:7,10 37:2,5 41:8
 42:9 45:10
times 7:3 22:1 31:23
today 7:9,24 8:1,2,16
 10:13 13:6,16 21:23
 27:25 40:15,20
token 25:23
told 34:8 41:16
top 43:6,9
transaction 3:21 46:7
transactions 3:22 6:16
 38:12
transfer 3:12,20 7:16
 9:14 11:15 13:2,5,9
 13:25 14:4,10 15:25
 16:11,15,20 17:14,21
 17:22 18:4 20:19,21
 23:19 24:15 25:12,16
 25:23 37:10 38:10
 39:20 43:2
transferred 4:7

transferring 7:6 16:12
transfers 12:18,19,22
 27:18,19 32:14 33:10
 38:16
transition 9:13
transparency 3:22
transparent 15:8,9 17:3
 17:7 18:8 42:18
treasurer 27:10
true 7:8,10 31:16 32:10
 34:3
trust 33:4
trusted 36:19
try 37:12
trying 3:17 11:11 13:11
 25:2 27:7 34:7,16
Twenty-five 35:18
two 3:11 7:18 10:21
 13:17 14:25 16:21
 20:12 27:21 30:19
 31:14,19 33:3,5 35:9
 36:7 39:10
two-phased 35:10
two-step 11:11
type 32:23

U

U.S 6:1
ultimate 17:23
uncomfortable 17:12
understand 15:19 16:5
 24:7,19 28:5 31:13
 42:5
understandably 6:24
underway 6:19 15:17
unfortunate 18:15
 19:22 38:8 39:7
unfortunately 6:7 22:2
 34:5
updated 27:8
usually 22:22
Utrabar 36:6

V

vein 3:18
venue 12:9
venues 23:2
Veritas 4:11
view 14:9

W

W 1:19,21
wait 13:4
want 11:18,19,20 17:3,3
 24:24 29:1 31:25 41:4
 41:5,6,21 42:3,4
wanted 17:2,7
wants 17:2,18 42:6,16

Washington 1:18
wasn't 19:18 25:20,22
 34:4,24 45:13
waste 42:9
way 5:14 6:2 7:19 15:20
 16:5 17:6,19 18:17
we'll 15:9 17:1,16 42:6
 46:9
we're 3:4 6:21 11:14,17
 12:2 13:5 14:14,15
 16:7,18,23 17:13,16
 17:19,24 20:1,6 26:21
 27:6 28:16 31:7 37:19
 39:4,5,5 42:7 46:1
we've 7:3 15:8 17:17,22
 24:1 31:4 32:14 45:24
week 7:17
went 27:4
weren't 16:17
who've 5:25
Win 8:19
word 32:2
words 34:23
work 3:5 16:22 45:15
working 7:6 21:1
wouldn't 37:8
wrong 7:13

X

Y

year 12:2 32:19
years 10:22 18:3,6
 19:13 30:19 31:13
 32:19 35:13,15,17,18

Z

0

1

1:32 3:2
10 19:2 21:8,9 27:11
 30:14 31:20,21 36:3,4
 40:5
100 9:2
1420 1:7
14th 1:18
15 8:1,14 18:11 23:6
 28:12,12
17 7:23 29:17 33:9
1994 35:14,19

2

2:05 27:4
2:07 27:5
2:31 46:14
20 8:17,24 18:11 28:11

44:2,20,24
2000 1:18
20009 1:18
2006 35:23,24 36:4
2010 27:8
2012 27:14 30:17 31:5
2015 31:6
2018 31:6
2019 1:15 7:23
2135 1:11
22 29:21
25 35:17

3

4

40 12:3
400S 1:18
42 7:24 28:10
43 29:13

5

50 10:9 25:20 26:6,9,10
50-50 26:13
51 43:17,20,21

6

7

7 1:15

8

80 44:5

9

90 27:9 28:10 30:12,17
 30:23 41:12,13
90250 1:12 3:10
98536 1:8 3:10

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In the matter of: ABRA Hearing

Before: Alcoholic Beverage Control Board

Date: 11-07-19

Place: Washington, D.C.

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