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U.S. COURT OF APPEALS

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

In re: X-TREME BULLETS, INC.; et al.,

Debtors,

J. MICHAEL ISSA, as Trustee of the
HMT Liquidating Trust,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

CAPITAL CARTRIDGE, LLC,

Defendant-Appellant.

No. 22-16141

D.C. No. 3:21-cv-00060-MMD

MEMORANDUM*

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the District of Nevada
Miranda M. Du, Chief District Judge, Presiding

Submitted October 5, 2023**
Las Vegas, Nevada

* This disposition is not appropriate for publication and is not precedent except as provided by Ninth Circuit Rule 36-3.

** The panel unanimously concludes this case is suitable for decision without oral argument. *See* Fed. R. App. P. 34(a)(2).

Before: RAWLINSON and OWENS, Circuit Judges, and PREGERSON,^{***}
District Judge.

Capital Cartridge, LLC, (Capital Cartridge) appeals from the decision of the district court reversing the bankruptcy court's dismissal for lack of standing in an adversary proceeding to avoid transfers to Capital Cartridge, to recover property from Capital Cartridge, and to disallow claims. Reviewing *de novo*, we affirm the decision of the district court. *See Educ. Credit Mgmt. Corp. v. Coleman (In re Coleman)*, 560 F.3d 1000, 1003 (9th Cir. 2009).

The adversary proceeding was brought by the Committee of Unsecured Creditors (Committee), which was appointed by the United States Trustee "to represent all unsecured creditors of the Debtors pursuant to [Section] 1102 of the Bankruptcy Code." The Debtors "consent[ed] to the grant of derivative standing . . . to assert, on behalf of the Debtors' estates, the Derivative Causes of Action." The derivative standing was approved by the bankruptcy court.

Capital Cartridge moved to dismiss the adversary proceeding on the basis that J. Michael Issa, the Liquidating Trust Trustee,¹ lacked standing. Capital

^{***} The Honorable Dean D. Pregerson, United States District Judge for the Central District of California, sitting by designation.

¹The Committee ceased to exist as of the effective date of the Chapter 11 Plan. As a result, the adversary proceeding and all other causes of action "transferred to and vest[ed] in the Liquidating Trust[] for the benefit of Creditors."

Cartridge also sought reconsideration of the grant of derivative standing to the Committee. The bankruptcy court summarily granted Capital Cartridge's motion. Issa appealed the dismissal to the district court. The district court reversed the bankruptcy court's order granting the motion to dismiss and vacated the order denying reconsideration.

We review the decision of the bankruptcy court with no deference to the district court decision. *See Tillman v. Warfield (In re Tillman)*, 53 F.4th 1160, 1166 (9th Cir. 2022). "We apply the same standard of review to the bankruptcy court decision as does the district court: findings of fact are reviewed under the clearly erroneous standard, and conclusions of law, de novo. . . ." *In re Coleman*, 560 F.3d at 1003 (citation and alteration omitted).

1. We are not persuaded by Capital Cartridge's argument that the grant of derivative standing to the Committee violated the Bankruptcy Code. "Although the Bankruptcy Code contains no explicit authorization for the initiation of an adversary proceeding by a creditors' committee, a qualified implied authorization exists under 11 U.S.C. § 1103(c)(5)." *Official Unsecured Creditors Comm. v. U.S. Nat'l Bank of Or. (In re Sufolla, Inc.)*, 2 F.3d 977, 979 n.1 (9th Cir. 1993) (citation omitted). "So long as the bankruptcy court exercises its judicial oversight and verifies that the litigation is indeed necessary and beneficial, allowing a creditors'

committee to represent the estate presents no undue concerns.” *Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v. Official Unsecured Creditors’ Comm. (In re Spaulding Composites Co., Inc.)*, 207 B.R. 899, 904 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1997) (citation omitted).

In *Avalanche Maritime, Ltd. v. Parekh (In re Parmetex, Inc.)*, we rejected the proposition that creditors “have no standing to sue because only the . . . trustee has authority to bring adversary proceedings under” the Bankruptcy Code. 199 F.3d 1029, 1030 (9th Cir. 1999). We held that “where the trustee stipulated that the Creditors could sue on his behalf and the bankruptcy court approved that stipulation[,] the Creditors had standing to bring the suit.” *Id.* at 1031 (citations omitted). Thus, the Committee had derivative standing pursuant to the stipulation between it and the Debtors, as approved by the bankruptcy court. The authority granted to the United States Trustee under Sections 323(a) and (b) of the Bankruptcy Code did not preclude the grant of derivative standing to the Committee. *See* 11 U.S.C. §§ 323(a)-(b); *see also id.* § 1103(c)(5) (authorizing a “committee appointed under section 1102” to “perform such other services as are in the interest of those represented”).

2. The Committee was not required to establish Article III standing. The Committee “filed suit . . . on behalf of the estate,” and “[c]onsequently . . . assert[ed] derivative standing[,]” obviating the requirement that the Committee

demonstrate Article III standing “in its own right.” *In re Spaulding Composites Co., Inc.*, 207 B.R. at 903; *see also In re Parmetex, Inc.*, 199 F.3d at 1031 (holding that creditors had standing to pursue claims on behalf of the estate pursuant to a stipulation approved by the Bankruptcy Court).

AFFIRMED.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

* * *

IN RE X-TREME BULLETS, INC.,
Debtor.

J. MICHAEL ISSA, *as Trustee of the
HMT Liquidating Trust*,
Appellant,
v.
CAPITAL CARTRIDGE, LLC,
Appellee.

Case No. 3:21-cv-00060-MMD
Bankruptcy Case No. 18-50609
Adversary No. 20-05018-BTB

ORDER

I. SUMMARY

This bankruptcy appeal is before the Court for review on the merits. Appellant J. Michael Issa, HMT Liquidating Trust Trustee, argues that the Bankruptcy Court erred by rescinding a previously approved derivative standing stipulation and granting adversary-defendant and now Appellee Capital Cartridge’s motion to dismiss. (ECF No. 10.) Issa likewise appeals the denial of adversary-plaintiff’s motion for reconsideration. (*Id.*) Capital Cartridge asserts that the Bankruptcy Court properly granted its motion to dismiss because the adversary was brought by the unsecured creditor’s committee (the “Committee”), a party which lacked standing to assert the adversary claims, and consequently the denial of the motion to reconsider was also proper.¹ (ECF No. 28.) Because the Court finds that the Bankruptcy Court either abused its discretion by rescinding the derivative standing stipulation or ruled contrary to law by finding the Bankruptcy Court lacked the authority to approve a derivative standing stipulation, the Court will reverse the Bankruptcy Court’s order granting Capital Cartridge’s motion to

¹Issa filed a reply. (ECF No. 34.)

1 dismiss the Adversary and vacate the order denying the Committee's motion for
2 reconsideration.

3 **II. BACKGROUND**

4 This appeal arises from an adversary proceeding ("Adversary") related to a
5 Chapter 11 bankruptcy case.² On June 8, 2018, eight companies in the business of
6 manufacturing, assembling, and selling small arms ammunition (collectively, "Debtors")
7 filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy petitions.³ Although the Debtors are separate companies,
8 one individual—David C. Howell—was the principal of each Debtor.⁴ (Exh. 9, ECF No.
9 10-2 at 161.) While the bankruptcy proceedings were not consolidated, the Debtors
10 coordinated extensively throughout their respective cases. Aspects of that coordination
11 gave rise to the issues underlying this appeal, as explained below.

12 **A. Chief Restructuring Officer and the Unsecured Creditors' Committee**

13 Approximately three weeks after the Debtors' petitions were filed, the Debtors filed
14 a motion to engage J. Michael Issa as their Chief Restructuring Officer ("CRO") (Exh. 9,
15 ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 69]), which the Bankruptcy Court later approved. (Exh. 10, ECF
16 No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 127].) As CRO, Issa would be "responsible for overseeing the operations
17 of the Debtors and for supervising the administration of the Debtors' Chapter 11 cases."
18 (ECF No. 10-2 at 158.) The debtors' motion to engage Issa further clarified that Issa
19 would:

20 supervise the operations of the Debtors' businesses and all aspects of the
21 Debtors' financial affairs, assist the Debtors to fulfill their reporting
obligations under the Bankruptcy Code and to the Office of the United

22 ²This appeal arises from the same bankruptcy proceeding as another appeal
23 pending before the Court, *Issa v. Royal Metal Industries, Inc.*, 3:21-cv-00062-MMD. The
24 orders giving rise to both appeals were argued together before the Bankruptcy Court, and
both appeals present the same legal questions.

25 ³The Debtors are X-Treme Bullets, Inc.; Howell Munitions & Technology, Inc.;
26 Ammo Load Worldwide, Inc.; Clearwater Bullet, Inc.; Howell Machine, Inc.; Freedom
Munitions, LLC; Lewis-Clark Ammunition Components, LLC; Components Exchange,
LLC.

27 ⁴Howell owned 95% of the issued and outstanding stock of Debtor Howell
28 Munitions & Technology, Inc., which in turn was the sole shareholder of four of the
Debtors and the complete or majority membership interest owner of the other three
Debtors. (Exh. 9, ECF No. 10-2 at 161.)

1 States Trustee[]; **identify, and pursue recovery from the disposition of,**
2 **assets of the Debtors' estates;** address and resolve disputed claims
3 asserted against the Debtors; and provide business plan analysis and
4 assistance to the Debtors' counsel with respect to the formulation and
5 preparation of a plan of reorganization and accompanying disclosure
6 statement.

7 (*Id.* at 162 (emphasis added).) Issa's engagement was intended to "help to ensure that
8 the cases are administered in a fair and competent manner, for the benefit of Debtors'
9 creditors." (*Id.*) In addition to Issa's enumerated responsibilities, the motion to engage
10 Issa included an umbrella consideration that he may perform "such other services as may
11 be mutually agreed upon by the Debtors and [his firm] in furtherance of a resolution of
12 these cases." (*Id.* at 165.)

13 On July 23, 2018, the U.S. Trustee filed a notice in the Bankruptcy Court appointing
14 an official Committee of Unsecured Creditors (the "Committee"), pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §
15 1102(a).⁵ Issa describes that the Committee and the Debtors worked collaboratively on
16 many issues during the pendency of the bankruptcy litigation, including closing a
17 contested sale of the Debtors' operating assets. (ECF No. 10 at 9.)

18 **B. The Derivative Standing Stipulation**

19 On June 1, 2020, Issa entered into a stipulated agreement (the "Stipulation") with
20 the Committee which purported to grant the Committee derivative standing to commence,
21 prosecute, and resolve certain claims and causes of action on behalf of the Debtors. (Exh.
22 4, ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 921].) The Stipulation granted the Committee the authority to
23 pursue claims relating to certain pre-petition transactions between certain Debtors and a
24 list of third-party targets. (*Id.* at 28-29.) One third-party target named in the Stipulation
25 was Capital Cartridge. (*Id.* at 29.)

26 The Bankruptcy Court approved the Stipulation two days later and entered an
27 order granting the Committee derivative standing according to the Stipulation's terms (the
28 "Stipulation Order"). (Exh. 5, ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 923].) The Stipulation Order, which

⁵The notice appointing the Committee was submitted by Capital Cartridge as an exhibit attached to its motion to dismiss. (ECF No. 11-5 [Bk. DE 107].)

1 the Committee's Counsel prepared, stated that the Court would approve the Stipulation
2 "having determined that good cause exists for [its] approval." (*Id.* at 33.) The Committee
3 commenced the Adversary two days after the Stipulation Order issued. (Exh. 6, ECF No.
4 10-2 [Adv. DE 1].) In the Adversary complaint, the Committee explained that the
5 Bankruptcy Court had approved the derivative standing stipulation which authorized the
6 Committee to assert the claims on behalf of the Debtors' estates. (*Id.* at 37-38.)

7 **C. The Adversary and the Dismissal Order**

8 The Adversary sought to avoid transfers and recover previously transferred
9 property under 11 U.S.C. §§ 544, 548, and 550, and further sought to disallow claims
10 under 11 U.S.C. § 502(d). (Exh. 6, ECF No. 10-2 at 36.) The Committee sought avoidance
11 and turnover of more than \$300,000 in fraudulent transfers from Debtor Howell Munitions
12 & Technology to Capital Cartridge. (*Id.* at 45-49.)

13 Capital Cartridge filed a motion to dismiss the Adversary complaint on September
14 2, 2020, based in large part on the Committee's standing to bring the claims in the
15 Adversary. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE 6].) In that motion, Capital Cartridge argued:
16 (1) the Committee lacked Article III standing to bring the Adversary; (2) the Committee
17 lacked otherwise Congressionally granted statutory authority to maintain an action on the
18 claims alleged against Capital Cartridge; and (3) neither the Bankruptcy Court, nor Issa,
19 nor the Debtors were able to authorize the Committee to pursue the claims in the
20 Adversary complaint without express Congressional authorization. (*Id.* at 123-140.)
21 Capital Cartridge further contended that the Stipulation did not confer standing on the
22 Committee, arguing:

23 there was no hearing held; no notice given; no opportunity for objection;
24 unclear which causes of action, exactly, might be pursued by the Committee
25 and against which listed potential defendant; no discussion that any causes
26 of action were colorable or viable; no analysis of the cost of pursuing the
27 causes of action verses the potential recovery; no indication of how
28 Committee counsel would get paid for pursuing the suits (contingency,
hourly, special rate); and no discussion as to whether or not the Debtor had
looked into the potential claims, whether the Committee made demand on
the Debtor to file suit against Capital, or whether the Debtor refused to file
suit despite a demand.

1 (*Id.* at 132.) Capital Cartridge went on to cite several out-of-circuit opinions discussing
2 that the trustee is the only person with authority to pursue claims on behalf of the estate,
3 but did not cite to any cases from this circuit or any other that noted that derivative
4 standing stipulations are commonly accepted and have been for more than 20 years. (*Id.*
5 at 133-34.) Indeed, Capital Cartridge wrote “[t]here is no Ninth Circuit precedent as to
6 whether a trustee, or debtor in possession, can grant an unsecured creditors’ committee
7 derivative standing to pursue claims under Sections 544, 548, and 550 of the Bankruptcy
8 Code.” (*Id.* at 137.)

9 The Bankruptcy Court held a hearing on October 13, 2020, on Capital Cartridge’s
10 motion to dismiss the Adversary complaint. (Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE 54].) Capital
11 Cartridge stated at the hearing that its motion implicated the Stipulation Order, and
12 requested that its arguments also be considered a motion for reconsideration of the
13 Stipulation Order. (*Id.* at 203-04.) Specifically, Capital Cartridge argued that the
14 Bankruptcy Court should reconsider its Stipulation Order under Rule 60(b)(4) of the
15 Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because it was “entered in violation of law.” (*Id.* at 204.)
16 At the conclusion of argument, the Bankruptcy Court ruled orally, stating “I’m granting
17 your motion to dismiss the complaint.” (*Id.* at 239.) The Bankruptcy Court did not orally
18 acknowledge the request that the Court reconsider its Stipulation Order, but did order the
19 parties to prepare an order in compliance with its ruling granting the motion to dismiss.
20 (*Id.*)

21 Ten days later, the Bankruptcy Court entered an order granting Capital Cartridge’s
22 motion to dismiss the Adversary (the “Dismissal Order”). (Exh. 1, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE
23 14].) The Dismissal Order granted the motion to dismiss and also granted Capital
24 Cartridge’s oral request for relief from the Stipulation Order. (*Id.* at 4.) Nothing in the
25 hearing transcript nor in the Dismissal Order explained the reasoning for the Bankruptcy
26 Court’s changed ruling.

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D. The Reconsideration Order

1 **D. The Reconsideration Order**
2 On October 27, 2020, the Committee filed a motion for reconsideration of the
3 Dismissal Order. (Exh. 13, ECF No. 10-3 [Adv. DE 17].) The Committee argued that not
4 only had the weight of caselaw favored denying the motion to dismiss, but furthermore
5 dismissing the Adversary created a manifest injustice to the Debtors' estates. (*Id.* at 6.)
6 The Debtors had relied upon the Stipulation Order and presumed that the Committee
7 would be able to prosecute the claims in the Adversary on the Debtors' behalf; upon the
8 reversal of the Stipulation Order, the Debtors were unable to prosecute the claims against
9 Capital Cartridge because they were time-barred. (*Id.*) Had the Bankruptcy Court not
10 approved the Stipulation, the Debtors would have brought those claims themselves. (*Id.*)
11 The Committee further argued that there was no cause to reconsider the Stipulation Order
12 and, because Capital Cartridge had moved orally for the Bankruptcy Court to reconsider
13 it, the Committee had not had an adequate opportunity to respond. (*Id.* at 15.) The
14 Debtors, who were not a named party in the Adversary, filed a motion to join in the
15 Committee's motion for reconsideration. (Exh. 14, ECF No. 10-3 [Adv. DE 25].) Issa,
16 writing both as the former CRO and present Trustee, submitted a declaration stating that
17 "[b]ut for the Stipulation, approved by this Court's Stipulated Order, the Debtors
18 themselves would have prosecuted avoidance claims against Capital Cartridge." (Exh.
19 15, ECF No. 10-3 at 26.) Capital Cartridge opposed the motion for reconsideration of the
20 Dismissal Order. (Exh. A, ECF No. 29 [Adv. DE 24])

21 The Bankruptcy Court held a hearing on the motion for reconsideration on January
22 7, 2021. (Exh. C, ECF No. 29 [Adv. DE 45].) At the hearing, Capital Cartridge orally moved
23 to strike the joinder motion on the grounds that the Debtors were not a party in the
24 Adversary. (*Id.* at 53-66.) The Bankruptcy Court orally denied the motion for
25 reconsideration and entered a written order on January 22, 2021 ("Reconsideration
26 Order").⁶ (Exh. 17, ECF No. 10-4 [Adv. DE 30].)

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28 ⁶The Bankruptcy Court did not make any express ruling on the joinder issues,
instead simply denying the motion for reconsideration.

1 Issa filed a notice of appeal of the Dismissal Order and the Reconsideration Order.⁷

2 **E. The Plan and This Appeal**

3 The Debtors filed their First Amended Joint Plan (the “Plan”) on July 17, 2020.
4 (Exh. 18, ECF No. 10-4 [Bk. DE 973].) Per the Plan’s terms, all of the Debtors’ assets,
5 including any avoidance causes of action, would be transferred to and vested in a
6 liquidating trust (the “Trust”) upon the Plan’s effective date. (*Id.* at 41-54.) The Trust would
7 be administered by J. Michael Issa, as Trustee, who would become responsible for
8 prosecuting or settling avoidance causes of action for each Debtor, and otherwise
9 oversee the Trust for the benefit of each Debtor’s creditors. (*Id.*) Moreover, upon the
10 Plan’s effective date, Issa would become the legal representative of each Debtor’s estate.
11 (*Id.* at 45.) Specifically, the Plan states:

12 as the representative of each Debtor’s Estate, the Liquidating Trust Trustee
13 shall succeed to all of the rights and powers of each Debtor and its Estate
14 with respect to all Causes of Action of the Debtor, and shall be substituted
for, and shall replace, the Debtor as the party-in-interest in all such litigation
pending as of the Effective Date.

15 (*Id.*) The Plan further states that all right to and interest in any cause of action would
16 automatically transfer to Issa upon the Plan’s effective date. (*Id.* at 47-48.) The
17 Bankruptcy Court entered an order confirming the Plan on October 1, 2020 (“Confirmation
18 Order”).⁸ The Plan became effective on October 26, 2020. (ECF No. 11-10 [Bk. DE
19 1066].)

20 Issa now appeals—through the Committee—the Dismissal Order and
21 Reconsideration Order as trustee of the Liquidating Trust and successor-in-interest to the
22 Committee.⁹ (ECF No. 1 at 2.) Capital Cartridge moved to dismiss the appeal, arguing

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24 ⁷Issa’s initial notice of appeal was filed January 22, 2021 (ECF No. 11-20 [Adv. DE
25 28]), and appealed only the Dismissal Order. Issa filed an amended notice of appeal on
February 4, 2021 (ECF No. 11-24 [Adv. DE 50]), which appealed both the Dismissal and
Reconsideration Orders.

26 ⁸ Capital Cartridge submitted the Confirmation Order as an exhibit attached to its
27 motion to dismiss. (ECF No. 11-9 [Bk. DE 1058].)

28 ⁹Issa states that the Committee may maintain the litigation under Federal Rule of
Civil Procedure 25(c), which provides: “If an interest is transferred, the action may be

1 alternatively that Issa either lacks standing because he is not the successor-in-interest to
2 the Committee, or that Issa waived and forfeited the right to appeal the Dismissal and
3 Reconsideration Orders because he did not appear in the underlying Adversary. (ECF
4 No. 11 at 9-12.) The Court denied Capital Cartridge’s motion to dismiss, finding that the
5 Committee was acting on behalf of the Debtor when the Adversary was filed, that Issa
6 was the appropriate successor-in-interest to the causes of action in the Adversary, and
7 that the Debtor had not forfeited its right to appeal the claims. (ECF No. 26.) The Court
8 now addresses the merits of the appeal.

9 III. LEGAL STANDARD

10 A bankruptcy court’s conclusions of law are reviewed de novo, “including its
11 interpretation of the Bankruptcy Code,” and its factual findings are reviewed for clear
12 error. *In re Rains*, 428 F.3d 893, 900 (9th Cir. 2005); *see also In re Salazar*, 430 F.3d
13 992, 994 (9th Cir. 2005). In reviewing a bankruptcy court’s decision, this Court ignores
14 harmless errors. *See In re Mbunda*, 484 B.R. 344, 355 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2012). “Decisions
15 committed to the bankruptcy court’s discretion will be reversed only if ‘based on an
16 erroneous conclusion of law or when the record contains no evidence on which [the
17 bankruptcy court] rationally could have based that decision.’” *In re Conejo Enter., Inc.*, 96
18 F.3d 346, 351 (9th Cir. 1996) (citation omitted). “Denial of a motion for relief under Civil
19 Rules 59 and 60 is reviewed for abuse of discretion.” *In re Mellem*, 625 B.R. 172, 177
20 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2021). “To determine whether the bankruptcy court has abused its
21 discretion, we conduct a two-step inquiry: (1) we review de novo whether the bankruptcy
22 court “identified the correct legal rule to apply to the relief requested” and (2) if it did, we
23 consider whether the bankruptcy court’s application of the legal standard was illogical,
24 implausible, or without support in inferences that may be drawn from the facts in the
25 record.” *In re Open Medicine Institute, Inc.*, ---B.R.---, 2022 WL 1711774, at *6 (B.A.P.

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continued by or against the original party unless the court, on motion, orders the
transferee to be substituted in the action or joined with the original party.”

1 9th Cir. 2022) (quoting *United States v. Hinkson*, 585 F.3d 1247, 1262 (9th Cir. 2009) (en
2 banc).

3 In addition, the Court need not address arguments not raised in the trial court but
4 “may do so to (1) prevent a miscarriage of justice or to preserve the integrity of the judicial
5 process, (2) when a change of law during the pendency of the appeal raises a new issue,
6 or (3) when the issue is purely one of law.” *In re Lakhany*, 538 B.R. 555, 560 (B.A.P. 9th
7 Cir. 2015).

8 **IV. DISCUSSION**

9 Each argument in this appeal turns on the propriety of a debtor granting “derivative
10 standing” to another for the purpose of pursuing adversary claims. Here, the Debtors
11 purported to grant derivative standing to the Committee to pursue certain claims against
12 target third parties as part of a coordinated effort to protect the estate’s assets. The
13 Stipulation was submitted to the Bankruptcy Court and approved. Capital Cartridge
14 argues that this grant of derivative standing was improper because it failed to confer
15 Article III standing on the Committee and exceeded the scope of the Debtors’ and the
16 Bankruptcy Court’s authority under the Bankruptcy Code.

17 The Court previously found that the Stipulation authorized the Committee to bring
18 the Debtors’ claims on the Debtors’ behalf and for the benefit of the Debtors’ estates.
19 (ECF No. 26.) Long-established Ninth Circuit and Ninth Circuit BAP precedent authorizes
20 a debtor-in-possession to stipulate to derivative standing for unsecured creditors’
21 committees, subject to a bankruptcy judge’s approval. *See, e.g., Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v.*
22 *Official Unsecured Creditors’ Comm. Of Spaulding Composites Co. (In re Spaulding*
23 *Composites Co., Inc.)*, 207 B.R. 899, 903 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1997). Because the Bankruptcy
24 Court had approved the Stipulation, the Committee had standing to pursue the claims in
25 the Adversary at the time the Adversary was commenced. The Bankruptcy Court’s later
26 decision to reconsider the Stipulation Order, rescind the Stipulation, and grant Capital
27 Cartridge’s motion to dismiss the Adversary was not explained in the hearing transcript
28 or in the subsequent Dismissal Order.

1 Because the Bankruptcy Court did not explain its reasoning, the standard for
2 review is somewhat unclear. Courts that have addressed the issue review a bankruptcy
3 court's decision to rescind a derivative standing stipulation for abuse of discretion. See
4 *Official Comm. of Equity Security Holders of Adelphia Commc'ns Corp. v. Official Comm.*
5 *of Unsecured Creditors of Adelphia Commc'ns Corp. (In re Adelphia Commc'ns Corp.)*,
6 544 F.3d 420, 424 (2d Cir. 2008). On the other hand, a decision finding that case law or
7 the Bankruptcy Code prohibit the formation of such agreements is a question of law, which
8 is reviewed de novo. See *In re Rains*, 428 F.3d at 900. As explained further below, the
9 Court finds that the decision to dismiss the Adversary for lack of standing was reversible
10 under either standard. In sum, whether the Bankruptcy Court (1) chose to rescind the
11 Stipulation then grant the motion to dismiss because, absent the Stipulation, the
12 Committee would lack standing; or (2) agreed with Capital Cartridge that the law did not
13 permit derivative standing stipulations, thus electing to reconsider the Stipulation Order
14 and grant the motion to dismiss, the result is reversible error. The Ninth Circuit caselaw
15 clearly permits derivative standing agreements, and, under the circumstances,
16 withdrawing the Stipulation constituted an abuse of discretion because it unfairly
17 prejudiced the debtors' estates.

18 The Court first examines the law governing derivative standing stipulations, then
19 turns to the Bankruptcy Court's decision to grant Capital Cartridge's motion to dismiss.
20 Because the Court reverses the Dismissal Order, the Reconsideration Order will be
21 vacated.

22 **A. Derivative Standing Agreements**

23 In the Ninth Circuit, "[i]t is well settled that in appropriate situations the bankruptcy
24 court may allow a party other than the trustee or debtor-in-possession to pursue the
25 estate's litigation." *Spaulding Composites*, 207 B.R. at 903. Such situations arise either
26 when the debtor-in-possession is unwilling or unable to prosecute claims on behalf of the
27 estate, or when the debtor-in-possession consents to another party litigating on behalf of
28 the estate. See *id.* at 904 (recognizing that stipulated derivative standing was then a

1 newer practice and “the setting for derivative litigation often involves a debtor-in-
2 possession . . . who is hostile to proposed litigation.”). When derivative standing
3 stipulations were first considered, the Ninth Circuit reasoned, “[s]o long as the bankruptcy
4 court exercises its judicial oversight and verifies that the litigation is indeed necessary
5 and beneficial, allowing a creditors’ committee to represent the estate presents no undue
6 concerns.” *Id.* In the years since *Spaulding Composites*, the Ninth Circuit has reiterated
7 its approval of derivative standing stipulations. See *Avalanche Mar., Ltd. v. Parekh (In re*
8 *Parmetex, Inc.)*, 199 F.3d 1029, 1030-31 (9th Cir. 1999) (finding that creditors had
9 standing to sue on behalf of the estate in a Chapter 7 adversary); see also *Estate of*
10 *Spirtos v. One San Bernardino Cnty. Superior Ct. Case Numbers SPR 02211*, 443 F.3d
11 1172, 1176 (9th Cir. 2006) (disclaiming any change to the court’s holding in *Parmetex*).

12 By and large, other circuit courts have adopted the reasoning in *Spaulding*
13 *Composites* and permit derivative standing stipulations in a variety of bankruptcy
14 proceedings. See *Commodore Int’l Ltd. v. Gould (In re Commodore Int’l Ltd.)*, 262 F.3d
15 96, 99 (2d Cir. 2001) (adopting the reasoning in *Spaulding Composites*); *Official Comm.*
16 *Of Unsecured Creditors of Cybergenics Corp. ex rel. Cybergenics Corp. v. Chinery*, 330
17 F.3d 548, 580 (3d Cir. 2003) (“[W]e are satisfied that bankruptcy courts can authorize
18 creditors’ committees to sue derivatively to avoid fraudulent transfers for the benefit of the
19 estate.”); *In re Blasingame*, 920 F.3d 384, 389 (6th Cir. 2019) (considering the bankruptcy
20 trustee’s right to confer derivative standing on a creditor a “well-established practice”); *In*
21 *re Racing Servs., Inc.*, 540 F.3d 892, 902-03 (8th Cir. 2008) (adopting the reasoning in
22 *Spaulding Composites* and *Commodore International*). Some circuits, however, have not
23 yet ruled on the question directly, or consider that derivative standing stipulations are
24 permissible in more narrow circumstances than those allowable in the Ninth Circuit. See
25 *In re Baltimore Emerg. Servs. II, Corp.*, 432 F.3d 557, 562-63 (4th Cir. 2005) (declining
26 to resolve whether parties may stipulate to derivative standing); *In re Cleveland Imaging*
27 *and Surgical Hosp., L.L.C.*, 26 F.4th 285, 297 (5th Cir. 2022) (reasoning that a bankruptcy
28 court’s decision to confer derivative standing on a creditors’ committee “generally’

1 requires “that the debtor-in-possession ha[s] refused unjustifiably to pursue the claim”) (citation omitted); *In re Consolidated Indus.*, 360 F.3d 712, 716-17 (7th Cir. 2004) (reasoning “a creditor must show that the trustee has unjustifiably refused the creditor’s demand to pursue a colorable claim and obtain leave from the bankruptcy court to proceed” before derivative standing may be granted). No circuit has found that derivative standing stipulations are per se impermissible.

7 When it adopted the reasoning in *Spaulding Composites*, the Second Circuit 8 further required the bankruptcy court to find that conferring derivative standing on a 9 creditors’ committee is “(a) in the best interest of the bankruptcy estate, and (b) is 10 ‘necessary and beneficial’ to the fair and efficient resolution of the bankruptcy 11 proceedings.” *In re Commodore Int’l Ltd.*, 262 F.3d at 99 (quoting *Spaulding Composites*, 12 207 B.R. at 904). The Eighth Circuit has since adopted that requirement as well. See *In 13 re Racing Servs.*, 540 F.3d at 902 (“We emphasize, however, that compared to situations 14 in which a creditor seeks derivative standing because the trustee acts unjustifiably, a 15 creditor will typically face a comparatively greater burden to establish derivative standing 16 when the trustee consents.”). As a correlated concern, the Second Circuit has also 17 established that “a court may withdraw a committee’s derivative standing and transfer the 18 management of its claims, even in the absence of that committee’s consent, if the court 19 concludes that such a transfer is in the best interests of the bankruptcy estate.” *In re 20 Adelphia Commc’ns Corp.*, 544 F.3d 420, 423 (2d Cir. 2008).

21 The Ninth Circuit has not expressly adopted the two-part test articulated in 22 *Commodore International*, nor has it directly considered when a derivative standing 23 stipulation may be withdrawn. However, the language requiring that conferring derivative 24 standing be “necessary and beneficial” to the “fair and efficient” resolution of the 25 proceedings—the source of both the two-part test and the Second Circuit’s analysis for 26 revoking a stipulation—is derived from *Spaulding Composites*. *In re Commodore Int’l, 27 Ltd.*, 262 F.3d at 99; see also *In re Consolidated Nev. Corp.*, 778 F. App’x 432, 435-36 28 (9th Cir. 2019) (“Other parties may pursue estate claims if the trustee consents . . . or

1 abandons the claims.”). Because the Ninth Circuit has not directly spoken to the question,
2 but the Second Circuit’s standards are derived from Ninth Circuit precedent, the Court will
3 adopt the Second Circuit’s reasoning here.

4 No circuit has found that amendments to the bankruptcy code or developments in
5 Supreme Court caselaw have changed the long-accepted practice of conferring derivative
6 standing on unsecured creditors’ committees. In a recent unpublished decision, however,
7 the Ninth Circuit noted in a footnote:

8 Because we conclude that the bankruptcy court did not err in denying
9 appellants’ motion for derivative standing under any standard, we need not
10 decide whether a bankruptcy court has authority under section 105 to grant
11 standing to bring the estate’s claims to a party other than the trustee after
12 *Law v. Siegel*, 571 U.S. 415, 420–21, 134 S.Ct. 1188, 188 L.Ed.2d 146
13 (2014) (“It is hornbook law that § 105(a) does not allow the bankruptcy court
14 to override explicit mandates of other sections of the Bankruptcy Code”
15 (internal quotation marks omitted)).

16 *In re Consolidated Nev. Corp.*, 778 F. App’x at 435 n.1. The Supreme Court held in *Law*,
17 a Chapter 7 bankruptcy case, that “a bankruptcy court may not contravene specific
18 statutory provisions” when exercising its authority under 11 U.S.C. § 105 or its inherent
19 powers. 571 U.S. at 421. The one court that has squarely addressed whether *Law* alters
20 the propriety of derivative standing stipulations found it does not. See *In re SGK Ventures*,
21 *LLC*, 521 B.R. 842, 848 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2014) (“There is no provision of the Bankruptcy
22 Code prohibiting a grant of derivative trustee standing, and so *Law* has no bearing here.”).

23 **B. The Dismissal Order**

24 The Bankruptcy Court rescinded the Stipulation and granted Capital Cartridge’s
25 motion to dismiss the Adversary without explanation. Accordingly, the standard of this
26 Court’s review is somewhat unclear. If the Bankruptcy Court elected to reconsider the
27 Stipulation Order and rescind the Stipulation as an equitable matter, the Bankruptcy
28 Court’s decision is reviewed for abuse of discretion. On the other hand, if the Bankruptcy
Court was persuaded that the Committee lacked Article III standing or that the Bankruptcy
Code prohibits a court from conferring derivative standing on an unsecured creditors’
committee, then the decision turns on a question of law that is reviewed de novo.

1 Because the Bankruptcy Court does not explain its reasoning, the Court will
2 consider each possible basis. The Court finds that in either case, the Bankruptcy Court
3 erred by rescinding the Stipulation and by granting the motion to dismiss, and will explain
4 its reasoning in turn.

5 **1. Rescission of the Stipulation**

6 First, the Court will review the Bankruptcy Court's decision to rescind the
7 Stipulation, thereby depriving the Committee of standing to pursue the claims in the
8 Adversary on behalf of the Debtors' estates. As part of the Dismissal Order, the
9 Bankruptcy Court granted Capital Cartridge's oral motion to amend the Stipulation Order
10 "consistent with this order and Defendant's positions in its Motion to Dismiss." (Exh. 1,
11 ECF No. 10-2 at 4.) Nothing in the hearing transcript or the Dismissal Order explains the
12 Bankruptcy Court's reasoning.

13 Although the Ninth Circuit does not appear to have addressed the standards for
14 rescinding a previously approved derivative standing stipulation, the Second Circuit has
15 concluded "a court may withdraw a committee's derivative standing and transfer the
16 management of its claims, even in the absence of that committee's consent, if the court
17 concludes that such a transfer is in the best interests of the bankruptcy estate." *In re*
18 *Adelphia Commc'ns Corp.*, 544 F.3d at 423. The Court agrees with the Second Circuit
19 that, just as approval of a derivative standing agreement is committed to the discretion of
20 the bankruptcy court to determine whether conferring standing on a creditors' committee
21 is in the best interest of the estate, so too would revocation of a derivative standing
22 agreement be a matter of the bankruptcy court's discretion. *See id.* at 425 (reviewing the
23 transfer of claims from a creditors' committee to a litigation trust for abuse of discretion).
24 The Court therefore considers whether the Bankruptcy Court abused its discretion by
25 rescinding the Stipulation. The Court finds that it was.

26 The Bankruptcy Court's decision to amend the Stipulation Order and rescind the
27 Stipulation was an abuse of discretion because it was unexplained and jeopardized the
28 estate's ability to bring the claims against Capital Cartridge after the Committee and the

1 Debtors had relied on the Stipulation Order. First, the Bankruptcy Court offered no
2 reasoning on the record why rescinding the Stipulation would benefit the Debtors' estates.
3 Unlike in *Adelphia Communications*, where the bankruptcy court "conducted a reasonable
4 analysis of the costs and benefits" of the committee's continued management of the
5 claims, see *id.* at 425, the Bankruptcy Court here did not reveal any reasoning about
6 whether the Committee was adequately managing the Debtors' claims against Capital
7 Cartridge. Moreover, the Bankruptcy Court did not appear to choose a more suitable party
8 to manage the claims, as the bankruptcy court in *Adelphia Communications* determined
9 when it transferred the claims to a litigation trust, see *id.* at 426; instead, the Bankruptcy
10 Court dismissed the Adversary without identifying another party that was more suitable
11 to bring the claims.

12 Although the decision to rescind the Stipulation without expressing any reasoning
13 may not alone constitute an abuse of discretion, the circumstances of the case clearly
14 show that it was. As the Committee explained in its response to the motion to dismiss,
15 the Debtors and the Committee agreed to share administration of the estates' claims
16 because of the impending expiration of many claims' two-year statute of limitations. (Exh.
17 8, ECF No. 10-2 at 143.) Capital Cartridge argues both in the motion to dismiss and at
18 the hearing that the Debtors could have pursued the claims against it had they felt that
19 the claims were valuable. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 134; Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 210.)
20 But as Issa explained in his declaration in support of Debtors' joinder to the motion for
21 reconsideration, "[b]ut for the Stipulation, approved by [the Bankruptcy Court's Stipulation
22 Order], the Debtors themselves would have prosecuted avoidance claims against Capital
23 Cartridge." (Exh. 15, ECF No. 10-3 at 26.) Indeed, Issa notes that the Debtors acted "[i]n
24 reliance upon the [Stipulation Order]" to preserve their claims. (*Id.* at 27.) The Court is
25 therefore persuaded by Issa's argument in this appeal that the Committee had reasonably
26 relied on the Bankruptcy Court's order conferring derivative standing upon it, and that as
27 a result, the estate will suffer the loss of the claims and the potential value to the estate
28 for any claims on which the statute of limitations has run. (ECF No. 10 at 24.)

1 These facts were knowable to the Bankruptcy Court at the time it issued the
2 Dismissal Order and expressly known at the time of the Reconsideration Order. Not only
3 did the Bankruptcy Court fail to find that rescinding the Stipulation was in the best interest
4 of the Debtors' estates, but it further failed to consider that the estates' claims may be lost
5 if the Debtors were required to refile in their own name. Because there is no given reason
6 why rescinding the Stipulation would be in the best interests of the Debtors' estates and,
7 in fact, reconsidering the Stipulation Order would harm the estates' interests, rescinding
8 the Stipulation Order was an abuse of discretion.

9 **2. Dismissal of the Adversary**

10 The Court will also consider whether the Bankruptcy Court's decision to grant the
11 motion to dismiss, and thereafter amend the Stipulation Order in conformity with its
12 reasoning, was correct as a matter of law. The Court reviews the Bankruptcy Court's
13 decision de novo, because whether the Committee lacked standing to pursue the
14 Adversary and whether the Bankruptcy Court lacked authority to confer derivative
15 standing on the Committee are both questions of law. As explained further below, the
16 Bankruptcy Court's decision must be reversed because each of Capital Cartridge's
17 arguments lacked merit.

18 **a. The Committee's Direct Article III Standing**

19 The Committee's lack of direct Article III standing was an irrelevant consideration
20 because the Committee brought the Adversary on behalf of the Debtors estates. Issa
21 admits that absent the Stipulation, the Committee would have lacked Article III standing
22 to bring the claims in the Adversary. (ECF No. 34 at 7.) Whether the Committee suffered
23 an injury-in-fact is therefore irrelevant, Issa argues, because the Committee brought the
24 Adversary not on its own behalf, but on behalf of the Debtors. (*Id.*) Because Capital
25 Cartridge does not argue the Debtors lacked constitutional standing to pursue an
26 avoidance claim, the Committee had standing to pursue the Debtors' claims on their
27 behalf. (*Id.*) The Court agrees with Issa.

28 ///

1 Capital Cartridge’s representations in its motion to dismiss were misleading at best
2 and flatly incorrect at worst. Framing the issue before the Bankruptcy Court as a novel
3 issue presenting unprecedented fairness concerns without citing to *Spaulding*
4 *Composites* deprived the Bankruptcy Court of a complete understanding of Ninth Circuit
5 law. Focusing on the Committee’s lack of injury created further confusion, particularly
6 because that question was squarely rejected by the *Spaulding Composites* court as
7 irrelevant when there is a derivative standing stipulation:

8 Whether a creditor has direct standing under § 362 poses an interesting
9 question, but we need not address the issue in this case. The Committee
10 filed suit, not in its own right, but on behalf of the estate. Consequently, it
11 asserts derivative standing. Derivative standing poses distinct
12 considerations.

13 207 B.R. at 903.¹⁰ These “distinct considerations” do not require finding that the
14 Committee has direct standing to sue on its own behalf, *see id.*, yet Capital Cartridge
15 continued to insist that the Adversary must be dismissed because the Committee lacked
16 Article III standing. The appropriate inquiry is whether the Debtors would have had
17 standing to bring the claims, not whether the Committee had suffered an injury-in-fact.
18 Capital Cartridge’s arguments distract from the relevant questions and appear to contrive
19 a problem where none exists.

20 Despite being aware that the Ninth Circuit and the BAP have both established that
21 a committee need not show direct standing when bringing claims under a derivative
22 standing agreement, Capital Cartridge continued to focus on the Committee’s lack of
23 Article III standing at the hearing on the motion to dismiss. Capital Cartridge reiterated
24 that “[t]he Ninth Circuit has never addressed constitutional Article III standing of an
25 unsecured creditors’ committee. That issue has not come before the Ninth Circuit,”
26 arguing that consequently, conferring standing via a derivative standing stipulation is “not
27 okay” and “can’t be done.” (Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 209.) This representation is
28 misleading, as the Ninth Circuit BAP expressly rejected in *Spaulding Composites* that the

¹⁰Capital Cartridge rejected the applicability of *Spaulding Composites* in its reply
in support of its motion to dismiss on the grounds that BAP decisions are not precedential.
(Exh. 11, ECF No. 10-2 at 194.)

1 constitutional standing of an unsecured creditors' committee had any relevance when
2 there was a derivative standing stipulation. See 207 B.R. at 903; see also *Parmetex*, 199
3 F.3d at 1031 (considering whether creditors had Article III standing as a jurisdictional
4 matter and finding that the derivative standing agreement satisfied the requirement).

5 Capital Cartridge's representations to the Bankruptcy Court were therefore simply
6 untrue. Consequently, if the Bankruptcy Court was persuaded by Capital Cartridge's
7 argument that the Committee lacked Article III standing to pursue the Adversary, that
8 error is reversible.

9 **b. The Committee's Direct Statutory Authority**

10 For similar reasons as those explained in the previous section, Capital Cartridge's
11 arguments that the Committee lacks authority under the Bankruptcy Code to pursue the
12 Adversary's claims fail because the Committee is not pursuing the claims in its own right.
13 In its motion to dismiss and at the hearing, Capital Cartridge argued that the Bankruptcy
14 Code authorizes only the debtor-in-possession or the trustee to assert claims on behalf
15 of the estate, and therefore the Committee may not pursue those claims as a matter of
16 law. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 126-31.) Again, the Committee states explicitly in the
17 Adversary that it is not pursuing the claims on its own behalf, but rather "on behalf of the
18 Debtors' estates," as agents of the debtors-in-possession. (Exh. 6, ECF No. 10-2 at 37-
19 38.) The Committee was therefore acting in the shoes of the debtors-in-possession, and
20 did have statutory authority to pursue the claims against Capital Cartridge due to the
21 Stipulation. Indeed, the Ninth Circuit expressly rejected Capital Cartridge's reasoning in
22 *Parmetex* over 20 years ago:

23 Although Defendants are correct that a trustee must generally file an
24 avoidance action . . . we hold that under these particular circumstances—
25 where the trustee stipulated that the Creditors could sue on his behalf and
the bankruptcy court approved that stipulation—the Creditors had standing
to bring the suit.

26 199 F.3d at 1031. Because the Bankruptcy Court had approved the Stipulation, the
27 Committee had statutory authority to bring the claims in the Adversary on behalf of the
28 Debtors' estates.

1 **c. The Stipulation's Validity**

2 Approximately half of Capital Cartridge's motion to dismiss focused on whether the
3 Stipulation validly conferred standing on the Committee. Despite Capital Cartridge's duty
4 to disclose controlling authority adverse to its position, it did not reference *Parmetex* in its
5 motion to dismiss. Instead, Capital Cartridge argued that "the [Bankruptcy Court] cannot
6 confer standing, authority, or capacity upon the Committee where none exists." (Exh. 7,
7 ECF No. 10-2 at 134.) Even after the Committee introduced *Parmetex* and *Spaulding*
8 *Composites* in its opposition to the motion to dismiss, Capital Cartridge continued to argue
9 that the law had changed since those cases were decided, urging the Bankruptcy Court
10 to reject the Stipulation and dismiss the Adversary. For the reasons explained below,
11 Capital Cartridge's arguments misstated current Ninth Circuit law and failed to justify that
12 a change in the law was warranted.

13 Capital Cartridge did not disclose controlling authority adverse to its position,
14 despite its duty to do so.¹¹ Although *Parmetex* was a Chapter 7 case, it is a Ninth Circuit
15 decision addressing the precise Code provisions at issue in the Adversary, holding that a
16 creditors' committee had standing to assert claims derivatively on behalf of the trustee
17 under an agreement between the committee and the trustee. See 199 F.3d at 1031.
18 Moreover, the Ninth Circuit has since reaffirmed that *Parmetex* creates an exception to
19 the general rule that trustees are the "exclusive parties" that may sue on behalf of the
20 estate. See *Estate of Spirtos*, 443 F.3d at 1175 (citing *Parmetex* and explaining "[w]e
21 have held that under some circumstances, the trustee may authorize others to bring suit").
22 *Parmetex* has been cited favorably—and recently—by the Ninth Circuit BAP, as well as

23 _____
24 ¹¹Both the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct and the Nevada Rules of
25 Professional Conduct stipulate that "[a] lawyer shall not knowingly . . . [f]ail to disclose to
26 the tribunal legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction known to the lawyer to be directly
27 adverse to the position of the client and not disclosed by opposing counsel." Nevada
28 Rules of Prof'l Conduct R. 3.3(a)(2); Model Rules of Prof'l Conduct R. 3.3(a)(2). Moreover,
the Federal Rules of Civil and Bankruptcy Procedure both provide that, by filing a brief,
the attorney certifies "to the best of [their] knowledge . . . formed after an inquiry
reasonable under the circumstances" that "the claims, defenses, and other legal
contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the
extension, modification, or reversal of existing law." Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9011(b)(2); Fed. R.
Civ. P. 11(b)(2).

1 by district and bankruptcy courts within the circuit.¹² The decision to omit these cases,
2 binding or otherwise, is perplexing, and may well have created confusion.

3 Adding to the confusion, Capital Cartridge further argued that the validity of
4 derivative standing agreements is a matter of first impression in the Ninth Circuit. Despite
5 the authorities cited above, Capital Cartridge represented that “the Ninth Circuit has not
6 issued an opinion as to whether a debtor in possession can grant derivative standing to
7 an unsecured creditor’s committee” and encouraged the Bankruptcy Court to “find,
8 consistent with the Supreme Court’s statutory interpretation in *Lexmark*, the Ninth Circuit
9 in *Estate of Spirtos* and *Ahcom*, and the Tenth Circuit in *Fox*, that the plain language of
10 the Bankruptcy Code does not authorize it.” (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 140.) The Court
11 finds that none of these cases support the Bankruptcy Court’s decision to grant the motion
12 to dismiss the Adversary.

13 Even if the validity of derivative standing agreements were a matter of first
14 impression, which it is not, the cases Capital Cartridge cites to either do not support its
15 position or are outlier opinions that have been rejected by the majority view. For example,
16 *Lexmark* was a Lanham Act case in which the Supreme Court examined whether the
17 respondent was within the zone-of-interest to have standing to bring a false advertising
18 claim. See 572 U.S. at 125-37. The reasoning in *Lexmark* is not even indirectly applicable,

19
20 ¹²Just two years ago, a BAP reaffirmed *Parmetex*. See *In re Liu*, BAP No. CC-19-
21 1101-StaL, 2020 WL 718072, at *4 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. Feb. 11, 2020) (“The Ninth Circuit has
22 recognized an exception to [the rule that only the trustee has standing to assert legal
23 claims and defenses of the estate], which permits a creditor, with the trustee’s agreement
24 and the court’s approval, to pursue actions on behalf of the estate.”) (citing *Parmetex*,
25 199 F.3d at 1031). Several district courts have done the same. See *In re*
26 *Databaseusa.com LLC*, Case No. 2:20-CV-01925-JCM, 2022 WL 1137877, at *3 (D. Nev.
27 Apr. 15, 2022) (“A creditor may be able to bring a derivative suit . . . [h]owever, the suit
28 first belongs to the debtor-in-possession.”) (citing *Parmetex* and *Estate of Spirtos*); *DBD*
Credit Funding LLC v. Silicon Labs., Inc., Case No. 16-CV-05111-LHK, 2017 WL
4150344, at *11 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 19, 2017) (denying standing because, unlike in
Parmetex, the creditor had not obtained derivative standing by consent of the trustee);
Kirschner v. Blixseth, Case No. CV 11-08283 GAF (SPx), 2012 WL 12885070, at *7 (C.D.
Cal. Feb. 24, 2012) (noting “[t]he Ninth and other Circuits have expressly approved
standing under these circumstances,” referring to a situation where the trustee and
creditors have agreed to confer standing). Moreover, just this year, another bankruptcy
court in this circuit recognized *Parmetex* and *Estate of Spirtos* as controlling precedent.
See *In re Grail Semiconductor Sedgwick Fundingco, LLC v. Newdelman*, Case No. 15-
29890-A-7, 2022 WL 194384, at *28 (Bankr. E.D. Cal. Jan. 20, 2022).

1 as the issues before the Court there involved whether a party had prudential standing to
2 sue on its own behalf, not derivative standing to sue on behalf of a party that
3 unquestionably had direct statutory standing. See *id.* at 127-32. Moreover, Capital
4 Cartridge's selective quotations from *Ahcom, Ltd. v. Smeding*, 623 F.3d 1248 (9th Cir.
5 2010), and *Estate of Spirtos* do not accurately represent those cases' holdings. Although
6 *Ahcom* does state "[w]hen the trustee does have standing to assert a debtor's claim, that
7 standing is exclusive and divests all creditors of the power to bring the claim," the *Ahcom*
8 court was considering whether a claim rightfully belonged to a creditor or a trustee in the
9 first instance, not whether the trustee could authorize a creditor to bring a claim on its
10 behalf. 623 F.3d at 1250 (citing *Estate of Spirtos*, 443 F.3d at 1176). As noted above,
11 *Estate of Spirtos* explicitly reaffirmed that the Ninth Circuit recognizes that "under some
12 circumstances, the trustee may authorize others to bring suit." 443 F.3d at 1176. These
13 cases did not overturn *Parmetex*, nor did they invite reconsideration of its holding.¹³

14 The only case Capital Cartridge cites that did find derivative standing agreements
15 were impermissible under the Bankruptcy Code is *United Phosphorous, Ltd. v. Fox (In re*
16 *Fox)*, 305 B.R. 912, 914 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2004). In *Fox*, the Tenth Circuit BAP disallowed
17 derivative standing agreements based on the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Hartford*
18 *Underwriters Insurance Company v. Union Planters Bank, N.A.*, 530 U.S. 1 (2000). See
19 *Fox*, 305 B.R. at 914-15. Although the Court in *Hartford* interpreted § 506(c) of the
20 Bankruptcy Code as vesting a right in the trustee, exclusive to all other parties, to seek
21 recovery from property securing an allowed secured claim, it further recognized that many
22 courts had permitted creditors and creditors' committees to pursue claims on behalf of

24 ¹³Capital Cartridge additionally argues that cases decided prior to the 2005
25 BAPCPA amendments to the Bankruptcy Code are no longer good law because the
26 amendments granted "sole authority" to the trustee or debtor-in-possession. (Exh. 7, ECF
27 No. 10-2 at 192.) But as the Committee noted at the hearing on the motion to dismiss, the
28 BAPCPA amendments did not amend any provisions that would affect standing, nor did
they prohibit derivative standing agreements which several circuits had since been
approving. (Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 225.) Because the Ninth Circuit has continued to
recognize the validity of derivative standing agreements post-2005, see, e.g., *Estate of*
Spirtos, 443 F.3d at 1176, the Court is unpersuaded that the BAPCPA amendments can
be read as changing the law.

1 debtors' estates and expressly excluded such practices from its holding. See 530 U.S. at
2 13 n.5. ("We do not address whether a bankruptcy court can allow other interested parties
3 to act in the trustee's stead in pursuing recovery under § 506(c)."). Despite this caveat,
4 the Tenth Circuit BAP concluded that the language in *Hartford* was "so clear and
5 compelling" that the Court's reasoning would likely apply equally to exclude suits brought
6 under derivative standing agreements. *Id.* at 915. This reasoning not only has not been
7 adopted by the Ninth Circuit, but other bankruptcy courts—even those within the Tenth
8 Circuit—have rejected the conclusion in *Fox*, deeming it as a "tiny minority" opinion. See,
9 *e.g.*, *In re Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe*, 621 B.R. 502, 506-07
10 (Bankr. D.N.M. 2020) (noting further that "[e]very circuit court that has ruled on the
11 question of derivative standing after *Hartford* has allowed it" and "[a]lmost all bankruptcy
12 courts, BAPs, and district courts have ruled the same way").

13 Without a clear account explaining the decision to depart from the clearly
14 established practice in the Ninth Circuit permitting derivative standing agreements, the
15 Court must conclude that the Bankruptcy Court incorrectly applied the law. Because
16 circuit precedent permitted the Debtors to confer derivative standing on the Committee
17 via the Stipulation, and the Bankruptcy Court approved the Stipulation, the Committee
18 had standing to pursue the claims in the Adversary on behalf of the Debtors' estates.
19 Capital Cartridge's motion to dismiss should have been denied, and the Court therefore
20 reverses the Dismissal Order.

21 **V. CONCLUSION**

22 The Court notes that the parties made several arguments and cited to several
23 cases not discussed above. The Court has reviewed these arguments and cases and
24 determines that they do not warrant discussion as they do not affect the outcome of the
25 issues before the Court.

26 It is therefore ordered that the Bankruptcy Court's order granting the motion to
27 dismiss is reversed.

28 ///

28a

1 It is further ordered that the Bankruptcy Court's order denying the motion for
2 reconsideration is vacated.

3 This case is remanded to the Bankruptcy Court for further proceedings consistent
4 with this order.

5 The Clerk of Court is directed enter judgment in accordance with this order and
6 close this case.

7 DATED THIS 14th Day of June 2022.

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11 MIRANDA M. DU
12 CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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Bruce T Beesley

Honorable Bruce T. Beesley
United States Bankruptcy Judge



Entered on Docket
October 23, 2020

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Attorney for Capital Cartridge, LLC

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

In Re:

Jointly Administered under

- Affects X-Treme Bullets, Inc.
- Affects Howell Munitions & Technology, Inc.
- Affects Ammo Load Worldwide, Inc.
- Affects Clearwater Bullet, Inc.
- Affects Howell Machine, Inc.
- Affects Freedom Munitions, LLC
- Affects Lewis-Clark Ammunition Components, LLC
- Affects Components Exchange, LLC
- Affects all Debtors

Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB with
Case Nos. 18-50610-BTB; 18-50611-BTB;
18-50613-BTB; 18-50614-BTB; 18-
50615-BTB; 18-50616-BTB; and 18-
50617-BTB

Chapter 11

Adv. No. 20-05018-BTB

Debtors.

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE OF
UNSECURED CREDITORS OF
X-TREME BULLETS, INC. *et. al.*,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CAPITAL CARTRIDGE, LLC,

Defendant.

**ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO
DISMISS COMPLAINT, AND ORDER
GRANTING MOTION TO ALTER,
AMEND, CORRECT COURT'S
PRIOR ORDER AND/OR FOR
RELIEF FROM COURT'S PRIOR
ORDER**

Hearing Date: October 13, 2020
Hearing Time: 9:00 a.m.

1 The matters of the Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid Transfers
2 Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11
3 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 6] (the
4 “Motion to Dismiss”), and the Defendant’s Oral Motion for: (1) New Trial or to Alter or
5 Amend the Bankruptcy Court’s Order Approving Stipulation Granting Derivative
6 Standing to the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors to Commence, Prosecute and
7 Resolve Certain Claims and Causes of Action [Bk DE 923] (the “Stipulation Order”) filed
8 on the docket in the Jointly Administered Debtors’ lead case of X-TREME BULLETS,
9 INC. Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 59
10 incorporated by reference through Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9023; and (2)
11 Relief from the Stipulation Order under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 60 incorporated
12 by reference through Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9024 (the “Oral Motion”)
13 came before the court for hearing on October 13, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. The Defendant
14 appeared by and through its counsel, Holly E. Estes, Esq., of Estes Law, P.C., Plaintiff
15 appeared by and through its counsel, Thomas R. Fawkes, Esq., of Tucker Ellis LLP.

16 The Court having considered the Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11
17 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and
18 to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 1], Motion to Dismiss [Adv
19 DE 6], Notice of Hearing with Certificate of Service on Motion to Dismiss [Adv DE 7],
20 the Response to Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11 U.S.C.
21 §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and to
22 Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 12] (“Response to Motion to
23 Dismiss”), Reply to Response to Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid Transfers
24 Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11
25 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 13]
26 (“Reply”), the Stipulation Granting Derivative Standing to the Official Committee of
27 Unsecured Creditors to Commence, Prosecute and Resolve Certain Claims and Causes of
28 Action [Bk DE 921] filed on the docket in the Jointly Administered Debtors’ lead case of

1 X-TREME BULLETS, INC. Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB, the Stipulation Order, the
2 Defendant's Oral Motion, Plaintiff's response to Defendant's Oral Motion, Defendant's
3 reply to Plaintiff's response to Oral Motion, the pleadings, papers, and other documents
4 on file in the Debtors' underlying jointly administered Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases, the
5 representations and arguments of counsel at the hearing on the Motion to Dismiss and the
6 Defendant's Oral Motion, and for good cause shown, the court hereby finds as follows:

7 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss, Plaintiff's Response to Motion to Dismiss,
8 Defendant's Reply, Defendant's Oral Motion, Plaintiff's response, and Defendant's reply
9 were made timely. The Court finds that proper notice of the Motion to Dismiss and Oral
10 Motion was given and that the parties had an opportunity to be heard on the Motion to
11 Dismiss and Oral Motion at the hearing held on October 13, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

12 Based upon the foregoing and for good cause show,

13 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Defendant's Motion to Dismiss is granted in
14 its entirety, and the Adversary Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544
15 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow
16 Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) and the adversary case are hereby dismissed.

17 IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the Defendant's Oral Motion is
18 granted. The Court hereby alters, amends, and corrects its prior Stipulation Order as to
19 this Plaintiff and Defendant consistent with this order and Defendant's positions in its
20 Motion to Dismiss. Further, the Court hereby relieves Defendant of the Stipulation Order
21 pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 60(b).

22 IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that this order shall be and hereby is the
23 Court's order governing Plaintiff's standing in the above captioned adversary proceeding,
24 and to the extent this order conflicts with the Court's Stipulation Order, this order shall
25 control.

26 IT IS SO ORDERED.

27 ///

28 ///

1 In accordance with LR 9021, an attorney submitting this document certifies as
2 follows (check one):

3 The court has waived the requirement set forth in LR 9021(b)(1).

4 No party appeared at the hearing or filed an objection to the motion.

5 I have delivered a copy of this proposed order to all attorneys who appeared at the
6 hearing, and each has approved or disapproved the order, or failed to respond, as
indicated below [list each party and whether the party has approved, disapproved, or
failed to respond to the document]:

7 **NO RESPONSE**

8
9 _____
10 Thomas R. Fawkes, Esq.,
11 Tucker Ellis LLP
Attorney for the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors

12 I certify that this is a case under chapter 7 or 13, that I have served a copy of this
13 order with the motion pursuant to LR 9014(g), and that no party has objected to the form
or content of the order.

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FILED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

JAN 31 2024

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

MOLLY C. DWYER, CLERK
U.S. COURT OF APPEALS

In re: X-TREME BULLETS, INC.;
HOWELL MUNITIONS &
TECHNOLOGY INC.; AMMO LOAD
WORLDWIDE INC.; CLEARWATER
BULLET, INC.; HOWELL MACHINE,
INC.; FREEDOM MUNITIONS, LLC;
LEWIS-CLARK AMMUNITION
COMPONENTS, LLC; COMPONENTS
EXCHANGE, LLC,

Debtors.

J. MICHAEL ISSA, as Trustee of the
HMT Liquidating Trust,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

CAPITAL CARTRIDGE, LLC,

Defendant-Appellant.

No. 22-16141

D.C. No. 3:21-cv-00060-MMD
District of Nevada,
Reno

ORDER

Before: RAWLINSON and OWENS, Circuit Judges, and PREGERSON,* District
Judge.

* The Honorable Dean D. Pregerson, United States District Judge for
the Central District of California, sitting by designation.

Judges Rawlinson and Owens voted to deny, and Judge Pregerson recommended denying, the Petition for Rehearing En Banc.

The full court has been advised of the Petition for Rehearing En Banc, and no judge of the court has requested a vote.

Appellant's Petition for Rehearing En Banc, filed January 7, 2024, is DENIED.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

FILED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FEB 28 2024

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

MOLLY C. DWYER, CLERK
U.S. COURT OF APPEALS

In re: X-TREME BULLETS, INC.; et al.,

No. 22-16143

Debtors,

D.C. No. 3:21-cv-00062-MMD

J. MICHAEL ISSA, as Trustee of the HMT
Liquidating Trust,

MEMORANDUM*

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

ROYAL METAL INDUSTRIES, INC.,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the District of Nevada
Miranda M. Du, Chief District Judge, Presiding

Submitted October 5, 2023**
Las Vegas, Nevada

* This disposition is not appropriate for publication and is not precedent except as provided by Ninth Circuit Rule 36-3.

** The panel unanimously concludes this case is suitable for decision without oral argument. See Fed. R. App. P. 34(a)(2).

Before: RAWLINSON and OWENS, Circuit Judges, and PREGERSON,^{***}
District Judge.

Royal Metal Industries, Inc. (Royal Metal) appeals the decision of the district court reversing the bankruptcy court's dismissal for lack of standing in an adversary proceeding to avoid transfers to Royal Metal, to recover property from Royal Metal, and to disallow claims. Reviewing *de novo*, we affirm the decision of the district court. See *Educ. Credit Mgmt. Corp. v. Coleman (In re Coleman)*, 560 F.3d 1000, 1003 (9th Cir. 2009).

The adversary proceeding was brought by the Committee of Unsecured Creditors (Committee), which was appointed by the United States Trustee "to represent all unsecured creditors of the Debtors pursuant to [Section] 1102 of the Bankruptcy Code." The Debtors "consent[ed] to the grant of derivative standing . . . to assert, on behalf of the Debtors' estates, the Derivative Causes of Action." The derivative standing was approved by the bankruptcy court.

Royal Metal moved to dismiss the adversary proceeding on the basis that J. Michael Issa ("Issa"), the Liquidating Trust Trustee,¹ lacked standing. Royal

^{***} The Honorable Dean D. Pregerson, United States District Judge for the Central District of California, sitting by designation.

¹The Committee ceased to exist as of the effective date of the Chapter 11 Plan. As a result, the adversary proceeding and all other causes of action "transferred to and vest[ed] in the Liquidating Trust[] for the benefit of Creditors."

Metal also sought reconsideration of the grant of derivative standing to the Committee. The bankruptcy court summarily granted Royal Metal's motion. Issa appealed the dismissal to the district court. The district court reversed the bankruptcy court's order granting the motion to dismiss and vacated the order denying reconsideration.

We review the decision of the bankruptcy court with no deference to the district court decision. *See Tillman v. Warfield (In re Tillman)*, 53 F.4th 1160, 1166 (9th Cir. 2022). "We apply the same standard of review to the bankruptcy court decision as does the district court: findings of fact are reviewed under the clearly erroneous standard, and conclusions of law, de novo" *In re Coleman*, 560 F.3d at 1003 (citation and alteration omitted).

1. We are not persuaded by Royal Metal's argument that the grant of derivative standing to the Committee violated the Bankruptcy Code. "Although the Bankruptcy Code contains no explicit authorization for the initiation of an adversary proceeding by a creditors' committee, a qualified implied authorization exists under 11 U.S.C. § 1103(c)(5)." *Off. Unsecured Creditors Comm. v. U.S. Nat'l Bank of Or. (In re Suffolla, Inc.)*, 2 F.3d 977, 979 n.1 (9th Cir. 1993) (citation omitted). "So long as the bankruptcy court exercises its judicial oversight and verifies that the litigation is indeed necessary and beneficial, allowing a creditors' committee to represent the estate presents no undue concerns." *Liberty Mut. Ins.*

Co. v. Off. Unsecured Creditors' Comm. (In re Spaulding Composites Co., Inc.), 207 B.R. 899, 904 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1997) (citation omitted).

In *Avalanche Maritime, Ltd. v. Parekh (In re Parmetex, Inc.)*, we rejected the proposition that creditors “have no standing to sue because only the . . . trustee has authority to bring adversary proceedings under” the Bankruptcy Code. 199 F.3d 1029, 1030 (9th Cir. 1999). We held that, “where the trustee stipulated that the Creditors could sue on his behalf and the bankruptcy court approved that stipulation[,] the Creditors had standing to bring the suit.” *Id.* at 1031 (citations omitted). Thus, the Committee had derivative standing pursuant to the stipulation between it and the Debtors, as approved by the bankruptcy court. The authority granted to the United States Trustee under Sections 323(a) and (b) of the Bankruptcy Code did not preclude the grant of derivative standing to the Committee. *See* 11 U.S.C. §§323(a)–(b); *see also id.* § 1103(c)(5) (authorizing a “committee appointed under section 1102” to “perform such other services as are in the interest of those represented”).

2. The Committee was not required to establish Article III standing. The Committee “filed suit . . . on behalf of the estate,” and “[c]onsequently . . . assert[ed] derivative standing[,]” obviating the requirement that the Committee demonstrate Article III standing “in its own right.” *In re Spaulding Composites Co., Inc.*, 207 B.R. at 903; *see also In re Parmetex, Inc.*, 199 F.3d at 1031 (holding

that creditors had standing to pursue claims on behalf of the estate pursuant to a stipulation approved by the Bankruptcy Court).

AFFIRMED.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

* * *

IN RE X-TREME BULLETS, INC.,

Debtor.

J. MICHAEL ISSA, *as Trustee of the
HMT Liquidating Trust*,

Appellant,

v.

ROYAL METAL INDUSTRIES, INC.,

Appellee.

Case No. 3:21-cv-00062-MMD

Bankruptcy Case No. 18-50609

Adversary No. 20-05019-BTB

ORDER

I. SUMMARY

This bankruptcy appeal is before the Court for review on the merits. Appellant J. Michael Issa, HMT Liquidating Trust Trustee, argues that the Bankruptcy Court erred by rescinding a previously approved derivative standing stipulation and granting adversary-defendant and now Appellee Royal Metal Industries’ (“Royal Metal”) motion to dismiss. (ECF No. 10.) Issa likewise appeals the denial of adversary-plaintiff’s motion for reconsideration. (*Id.*) Royal Metal asserts that the Bankruptcy Court properly granted its motion to dismiss because the adversary was brought by the unsecured creditor’s committee (the “Committee”), a party which lacked standing to assert the adversary claims, and consequently the denial of the motion to reconsider was also proper.¹ (ECF No. 30.) Because the Court finds that the Bankruptcy Court either abused its discretion by rescinding the derivative standing stipulation or ruled contrary to law by finding the Bankruptcy Court lacked the authority to approve a derivative standing stipulation, the

¹Issa filed a reply. (ECF No. 35.)

1 Court will reverse the Bankruptcy Court's order granting Royal Metal's motion to dismiss
2 the Adversary and vacate the order denying the Committee's motion for reconsideration.

3 **II. BACKGROUND**

4 This appeal arises from an adversary proceeding ("Adversary") related to a
5 Chapter 11 bankruptcy case.² On June 8, 2018, eight companies in the business of
6 manufacturing, assembling, and selling small arms ammunition (collectively, "Debtors")
7 filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy petitions.³ Although the Debtors are separate companies,
8 one individual—David C. Howell—was the principal of each Debtor.⁴ (Exh. 9, ECF No.
9 10-2 at 161.) While the bankruptcy proceedings were not consolidated, the Debtors
10 coordinated extensively throughout their respective cases. Aspects of that coordination
11 gave rise to the issues underlying this appeal, as explained below.

12 **A. Chief Restructuring Officer and the Unsecured Creditors' Committee**

13 Approximately three weeks after the Debtors' petitions were filed, the Debtors filed
14 a motion to engage J. Michael Issa as their Chief Restructuring Officer ("CRO") (Exh. 9,
15 ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 69]), which the Bankruptcy Court later approved. (Exh. 10, ECF
16 No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 127].) As CRO, Issa would be "responsible for overseeing the operations
17 of the Debtors and for supervising the administration of the Debtors' Chapter 11 cases."
18 (Exh. 9, ECF No. 10-2 at 145.) The Debtors' motion to engage Issa further clarified that
19 Issa would:

20 supervise the operations of the Debtors' businesses and all aspects of the
21 Debtors' financial affairs, assist the Debtors to fulfill their reporting
obligations under the Bankruptcy Code and to the Office of the United

22 ²This appeal arises from the same bankruptcy proceeding as another appeal
23 pending before the Court, *Issa v. Capital Cartridge, LLC*, 3:21-cv-00060-MMD. The orders
24 giving rise to both appeals were argued together before the Bankruptcy Court, and both
appeals present the same legal questions.

25 ³The Debtors are X-Treme Bullets, Inc.; Howell Munitions & Technology, Inc.;
26 Ammo Load Worldwide, Inc.; Clearwater Bullet, Inc.; Howell Machine, Inc.; Freedom
Munitions, LLC; Lewis-Clark Ammunition Components, LLC; Components Exchange,
LLC.

27 ⁴Howell owned 95% of the issued and outstanding stock of Debtor Howell
28 Munitions & Technology, Inc., which in turn was the sole shareholder of four of the
Debtors and the complete or majority membership interest owner of the other three
Debtors. (Exh. 9, ECF No. 10-2 at 148.)

1 States Trustee[]; **identify, and pursue recovery from the disposition of,**
2 **assets of the Debtors' estates;** address and resolve disputed claims
3 asserted against the Debtors; and provide business plan analysis and
4 assistance to the Debtors' counsel with respect to the formulation and
5 preparation of a plan of reorganization and accompanying disclosure
6 statement.

7 (*Id.* at 149 (emphasis added).) Issa's engagement was intended to "help to ensure that
8 the cases are administered in a fair and competent manner, for the benefit of Debtors'
9 creditors." (*Id.*) In addition to Issa's enumerated responsibilities, the motion to engage
10 Issa included an umbrella consideration that he may perform "such other services as may
11 be mutually agreed upon by the Debtors and [his firm] in furtherance of a resolution of
12 these cases." (*Id.* at 152.)

13 On July 23, 2018, the U.S. Trustee filed a notice in the Bankruptcy Court appointing
14 an official Committee of Unsecured Creditors (the "Committee"), pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §
15 1102(a).⁵ Issa describes that the Committee and the Debtors worked collaboratively on
16 many issues during the pendency of the bankruptcy litigation, including closing a
17 contested sale of the Debtors' operating assets. (ECF No. 10 at 9.)

18 **B. The Derivative Standing Stipulation**

19 On June 1, 2020, Issa entered into a stipulated agreement (the "Stipulation") with
20 the Committee which purported to grant the Committee derivative standing to commence,
21 prosecute, and resolve certain claims and causes of action on behalf of the Debtors. (Exh.
22 4, ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 921].) The Stipulation granted the Committee the authority to
23 pursue claims relating to certain pre-petition transactions between certain Debtors and a
24 list of third-party targets. (*Id.* at 28-29.) One third-party target named in the Stipulation
25 was Royal Metal. (*Id.* at 29.)

26 The Bankruptcy Court approved the Stipulation two days later and entered an
27 order granting the Committee derivative standing according to the Stipulation's terms (the
28 "Stipulation Order"). (Exh. 5, ECF No. 10-2 [Bk. DE 923].) The Stipulation Order, which

⁵The notice appointing the Committee was submitted by Royal Metal as an exhibit attached to its motion to dismiss. (ECF No. 11-5 [Bk. DE 107].)

1 the Committee's Counsel prepared, stated that the Court would approve the Stipulation
2 "having determined that good cause exists for [its] approval." (*Id.* at 33.) The Committee
3 commenced the Adversary two days after the Stipulation Order issued. (Exh. 6, ECF No.
4 10-2 [Adv. DE 1].) In the Adversary complaint, the Committee explained that the
5 Bankruptcy Court had approved the derivative standing stipulation which authorized the
6 Committee to assert the claims on behalf of the Debtors' estates. (*Id.* at 37.)

7 **C. The Adversary and the Dismissal Order**

8 The Adversary sought to avoid transfers and recover previously transferred
9 property under 11 U.S.C. §§ 544, 548, and 550, and further sought to disallow claims
10 under 11 U.S.C. § 502(d). (Exh. 6, ECF No. 10-2 at 36.) The Committee sought avoidance
11 and turnover of more than \$300,000 in fraudulent transfers from Debtor Howell Munitions
12 & Technology to Royal Metal. (*Id.* at 45-49.)

13 Royal Metal filed a motion to dismiss the Adversary complaint on September 2,
14 2020, based in large part on the Committee's standing to bring the claims in the
15 Adversary. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE 7].) In that motion, Royal Metal argued: (1)
16 the Committee lacked Article III standing to bring the Adversary; (2) the Committee lacked
17 otherwise Congressionally granted statutory authority to maintain an action on the claims
18 alleged against Royal Metal; and (3) neither the Bankruptcy Court, nor Issa, nor the
19 Debtors were able to authorize the Committee to pursue the claims in the Adversary
20 complaint without express Congressional authorization. (*Id.* at 109-127.) Royal Metal
21 further contended that the Stipulation did not confer standing on the Committee, arguing:

22 there was no hearing held; no notice given; no opportunity for objection;
23 unclear which causes of action, exactly, might be pursued by the Committee
24 and against which listed potential defendant; no discussion that any causes
25 of action were colorable or viable; no analysis of the cost of pursuing the
26 causes of action verses the potential recovery; no indication of how
27 Committee counsel would get paid for pursuing the suits (contingency,
28 hourly, special rate); and no discussion as to whether or not the Debtor had
looked into the potential claims, whether the Committee made demand on
the Debtor to file suit against Royal, or whether the Debtor refused to file
suit despite a demand.

1 (*Id.* at 119.) Royal Metal went on to cite several out-of-circuit opinions discussing that the
2 trustee is the only person with authority to pursue claims on behalf of the estate, but did
3 not cite to any cases from this circuit or any other that noted that derivative standing
4 stipulations are commonly accepted and have been for more than 20 years. (*Id.* at 120-
5 27.) Indeed, Royal Metal wrote “[t]here is no Ninth Circuit precedent as to whether a
6 trustee, or debtor in possession, can grant an unsecured creditors’ committee derivative
7 standing to pursue claims under Sections 544, 548, and 550 of the Bankruptcy Code.”
8 (*Id.* at 124.)

9 The Bankruptcy Court held a hearing on October 13, 2020, on Royal Metal’s
10 motion to dismiss the Adversary complaint. (Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE 56].) Royal
11 Metal stated at the hearing that its motion implicated the Stipulation Order, and requested
12 that its arguments also be considered a motion for reconsideration of the Stipulation
13 Order. (*Id.* at 190-91.) Specifically, Royal Metal argued that the Bankruptcy Court should
14 reconsider its Stipulation Order under Rule 60(b)(4) of the Federal Rules of Civil
15 Procedure because it was “entered in violation of law.” (*Id.* at 191.) At the conclusion of
16 argument, the Bankruptcy Court ruled orally, stating “I’m granting your motion to dismiss
17 the complaint.” (*Id.* at 226.) The Bankruptcy Court did not orally acknowledge the request
18 that the Court reconsider its Stipulation Order, but did order the parties to prepare an
19 order in compliance with its ruling granting the motion to dismiss. (*Id.*)

20 Ten days later, the Bankruptcy Court entered an order granting Royal Metal’s
21 motion to dismiss the Adversary (the “Dismissal Order”). (Exh. 1, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE
22 16].) The Dismissal Order granted the motion to dismiss and also granted Royal Metal’s
23 oral request for relief from the Stipulation Order. (*Id.* at 4.) Nothing in the hearing transcript
24 nor in the Dismissal Order explained the reasoning for the Bankruptcy Court’s changed
25 ruling.

26 **D. The Reconsideration Order**

27 On October 27, 2020, the Committee filed a motion for reconsideration of the
28 Dismissal Order. (Exh. 13, ECF No. 10-2 [Adv. DE 19].) The Committee argued that not

1 only had the weight of caselaw favored denying the motion to dismiss, but furthermore
2 dismissing the Adversary created a manifest injustice to the Debtors' estates. (*Id.* at 235-
3 36.) The Debtors had relied upon the Stipulation Order and presumed that the Committee
4 would be able to prosecute the claims in the Adversary on the Debtors' behalf; upon the
5 reversal of the Stipulation Order, the Debtors were unable to prosecute the claims against
6 Royal Metal because they were time-barred. (*Id.*) Had the Bankruptcy Court not approved
7 the Stipulation, the Debtors would have brought those claims themselves. (*Id.*) The
8 Committee further argued that there was no cause to reconsider the Stipulation Order
9 and, because Royal Metal had moved orally for the Bankruptcy Court to reconsider it, the
10 Committee had not had an adequate opportunity to respond. (*Id.* at 242.) The Debtors,
11 who were not a named party in the Adversary, filed a motion to join in the Committee's
12 motion for reconsideration. (Exh. 14, ECF No. 10-3 [Adv. DE 26].) Issa, writing both as
13 the former CRO and present Trustee, submitted a declaration stating that "[b]ut for the
14 Stipulation, approved by this Court's Stipulated Order, the Debtors themselves would
15 have prosecuted avoidance claims against [Royal Metal]." (Exh. 15, ECF No. 10-3 at 4.)
16 Royal Metal opposed the motion for reconsideration of the Dismissal Order. (Exh. A, ECF
17 No. 31 [Adv. DE 25].)

18 The Bankruptcy Court held a hearing on the motion for reconsideration on January
19 7, 2021. (Exh. C, ECF No. 31 [Adv. DE 47].) At the hearing, Royal Metal orally moved to
20 strike the joinder motion on the grounds that the Debtors were not a party in the
21 Adversary. (*Id.* at 53-66.) The Bankruptcy Court orally denied the motion for
22 reconsideration and entered a written order on January 22, 2021 ("Reconsideration
23 Order").⁶ (Exh. 17, ECF No. 10-4 [Adv. DE 31].)

24 Issa filed a notice of appeal of the Dismissal Order and the Reconsideration Order.⁷

26 ⁶The Bankruptcy Court did not make any express ruling on the joinder issues,
27 instead simply denying the motion for reconsideration.

28 ⁷Issa's initial notice of appeal was filed January 22, 2021 (ECF No. 11-20 [Adv. DE
29]), and appealed only the Dismissal Order. Issa filed an amended notice of appeal on

1 **E. The Plan and This Appeal**

2 The Debtors filed their First Amended Joint Plan (the “Plan”) on July 17, 2020.
3 (Exh. 18, ECF No. 10-4 [Bk. DE 973].) Per the Plan’s terms, all of the Debtors’ assets,
4 including any avoidance causes of action, would be transferred to and vested in a
5 liquidating trust (the “Trust”) upon the Plan’s effective date. (*Id.* at 41-54.) The Trust would
6 be administered by J. Michael Issa, as Trustee, who would become responsible for
7 prosecuting or settling avoidance causes of action for each Debtor, and otherwise
8 oversee the Trust for the benefit of each Debtor’s creditors. (*Id.*) Moreover, upon the
9 Plan’s effective date, Issa would become the legal representative of each Debtor’s estate.
10 (*Id.* at 45.) Specifically, the Plan states:

11 as the representative of each Debtor’s Estate, the Liquidating Trust Trustee
12 shall succeed to all of the rights and powers of each Debtor and its Estate
13 with respect to all Causes of Action of the Debtor, and shall be substituted
 for, and shall replace, the Debtor as the party-in-interest in all such litigation
 pending as of the Effective Date.

14 (*Id.*) The Plan further states that all right to and interest in any cause of action would
15 automatically transfer to Issa upon the Plan’s effective date. (*Id.* at 47-48.) The
16 Bankruptcy Court entered an order confirming the Plan on October 1, 2020 (“Confirmation
17 Order”).⁸ The Plan became effective on October 26, 2020. (ECF No. 11-10 [Bk. DE
18 1066].)

19 Issa now appeals—through the Committee—the Dismissal Order and
20 Reconsideration Order as trustee of the Liquidating Trust and successor-in-interest to the
21 Committee.⁹ (ECF No. 1 at 2.) Royal Metal moved to dismiss the appeal, arguing
22 alternatively that Issa either lacks standing because he is not the successor-in-interest to
23

24 February 4, 2021 (ECF No. 11-24 [Adv. DE 52]), which appealed both the Dismissal and
25 Reconsideration Orders.

26 ⁸ Royal Metal submitted the Confirmation Order as an exhibit attached to its motion
 to dismiss. (ECF No. 11-9 [Bk. DE 1058].)

27 ⁹ Issa states that the Committee may maintain the litigation under Federal Rule of
28 Civil Procedure 25(c), which provides: “If an interest is transferred, the action may be
 continued by or against the original party unless the court, on motion, orders the
 transferee to be substituted in the action or joined with the original party.”

1 the Committee, or that Issa waived and forfeited the right to appeal the Dismissal and
2 Reconsideration Orders because he did not appear in the underlying Adversary. (ECF
3 No. 11 at 9-12.) The Court denied Royal Metal’s motion to dismiss, finding that the
4 Committee was acting on behalf of the Debtor when the Adversary was filed, that Issa
5 was the appropriate successor-in-interest to the causes of action in the Adversary, and
6 that the Debtor had not forfeited its right to appeal the claims. (ECF No. 28.) The Court
7 now addresses the merits of the appeal.

8 III. LEGAL STANDARD

9 A bankruptcy court’s conclusions of law are reviewed de novo, “including its
10 interpretation of the Bankruptcy Code,” and its factual findings are reviewed for clear
11 error. *In re Rains*, 428 F.3d 893, 900 (9th Cir. 2005); see also *In re Salazar*, 430 F.3d
12 992, 994 (9th Cir. 2005). In reviewing a bankruptcy court’s decision, this Court ignores
13 harmless errors. See *In re Mbunda*, 484 B.R. 344, 355 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2012). “Decisions
14 committed to the bankruptcy court’s discretion will be reversed only if ‘based on an
15 erroneous conclusion of law or when the record contains no evidence on which [the
16 bankruptcy court] rationally could have based that decision.’” *In re Conejo Enter., Inc.*, 96
17 F.3d 346, 351 (9th Cir. 1996) (citation omitted). “Denial of a motion for relief under Civil
18 Rules 59 and 60 is reviewed for abuse of discretion.” *In re Mellem*, 625 B.R. 172, 177
19 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2021). “To determine whether the bankruptcy court has abused its
20 discretion, we conduct a two-step inquiry: (1) we review de novo whether the bankruptcy
21 court “identified the correct legal rule to apply to the relief requested” and (2) if it did, we
22 consider whether the bankruptcy court’s application of the legal standard was illogical,
23 implausible, or without support in inferences that may be drawn from the facts in the
24 record.” *In re Open Medicine Institute, Inc.*, ---B.R.---, 2022 WL 1711774, at *6 (B.A.P.
25 9th Cir. 2022) (quoting *United States v. Hinkson*, 585 F.3d 1247, 1262 (9th Cir. 2009) (en
26 banc).

27 In addition, the Court need not address arguments not raised in the trial court but
28 “may do so to (1) prevent a miscarriage of justice or to preserve the integrity of the judicial

1 process, (2) when a change of law during the pendency of the appeal raises a new issue,
2 or (3) when the issue is purely one of law.” *In re Lakhany*, 538 B.R. 555, 560 (B.A.P. 9th
3 Cir. 2015).

4 **IV. DISCUSSION**

5 Each argument in this appeal turns on the propriety of a debtor granting “derivative
6 standing” to another for the purpose of pursuing adversary claims. Here, the Debtors
7 purported to grant derivative standing to the Committee to pursue certain claims against
8 target third parties as part of a coordinated effort to protect the estate’s assets. The
9 Stipulation was submitted to the Bankruptcy Court and approved. Royal Metal argues that
10 this grant of derivative standing was improper because it failed to confer Article III
11 standing on the Committee and exceeded the scope of the Debtors’ and the Bankruptcy
12 Court’s authority under the Bankruptcy Code.

13 The Court previously found that the Stipulation authorized the Committee to bring
14 the Debtors’ claims on the Debtors’ behalf and for the benefit of the Debtors’ estates.
15 (ECF No. 28.) Long-established Ninth Circuit and Ninth Circuit BAP precedent authorizes
16 a debtor-in-possession to stipulate to derivative standing for unsecured creditors’
17 committees, subject to a bankruptcy judge’s approval. *See, e.g., Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v.*
18 *Official Unsecured Creditors’ Comm. Of Spaulding Composites Co. (In re Spaulding*
19 *Composites Co., Inc.)*, 207 B.R. 899, 903 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 1997). Because the Bankruptcy
20 Court had approved the Stipulation, the Committee had standing to pursue the claims in
21 the Adversary at the time the Adversary was commenced. The Bankruptcy Court’s later
22 decision to reconsider the Stipulation Order, rescind the Stipulation, and grant Royal
23 Metal’s motion to dismiss the Adversary was not explained in the hearing transcript or in
24 the subsequent Dismissal Order.

25 Because the Bankruptcy Court did not explain its reasoning, the standard for
26 review is somewhat unclear. Courts that have addressed the issue review a bankruptcy
27 court’s decision to rescind a derivative standing stipulation for abuse of discretion. *See*
28 *Official Comm. of Equity Security Holders of Adelpia Commc’ns Corp. v. Official Comm.*

1 of *Unsecured Creditors of Adelpia Commc'ns Corp. (In re Adelpia Commc'ns Corp.)*,
2 544 F.3d 420, 424 (2d Cir. 2008). On the other hand, a decision finding that case law or
3 the Bankruptcy Code prohibit the formation of such agreements is a question of law, which
4 is reviewed de novo. See *In re Rains*, 428 F.3d at 900. As explained further below, the
5 Court finds that the decision to dismiss the Adversary for lack of standing was reversible
6 under either standard. In sum, whether the Bankruptcy Court (1) chose to rescind the
7 Stipulation then grant the motion to dismiss because, absent the Stipulation, the
8 Committee would lack standing; or (2) agreed with Royal Metal that the law did not permit
9 derivative standing stipulations, thus electing to reconsider the Stipulation Order and
10 grant the motion to dismiss, the result is reversible error. The Ninth Circuit caselaw clearly
11 permits derivative standing agreements, and, under the circumstances, withdrawing the
12 Stipulation constituted an abuse of discretion because it unfairly prejudiced the debtors'
13 estates.

14 The Court first examines the law governing derivative standing stipulations, then
15 turns to the Bankruptcy Court's decision to grant Royal Metal's motion to dismiss.
16 Because the Court reverses the Dismissal Order, the Reconsideration Order will be
17 vacated.

18 **A. Derivative Standing Agreements**

19 In the Ninth Circuit, "[i]t is well settled that in appropriate situations the bankruptcy
20 court may allow a party other than the trustee or debtor-in-possession to pursue the
21 estate's litigation." *In re Spaulding Composites*, 207 B.R. at 903. Such situations arise
22 either when the debtor-in-possession is unwilling or unable to prosecute claims on behalf
23 of the estate, or when the debtor-in-possession consents to another party litigating on
24 behalf of the estate. See *id.* at 904 (recognizing that stipulated derivative standing was
25 then a newer practice and "the setting for derivative litigation often involves a debtor-in-
26 possession . . . who is hostile to proposed litigation."). When derivative standing
27 stipulations were first considered, the Ninth Circuit reasoned, "[s]o long as the bankruptcy
28 court exercises its judicial oversight and verifies that the litigation is indeed necessary

1 and beneficial, allowing a creditors' committee to represent the estate presents no undue
2 concerns." *Id.* In the years since *Spaulding Composites*, the Ninth Circuit has reiterated
3 its approval of derivative standing stipulations. See *Avalanche Mar., Ltd. v. Parekh (In re*
4 *Parmetex, Inc.)*, 199 F.3d 1029, 1030-31 (9th Cir. 1999) (finding that creditors had
5 standing to sue on behalf of the estate in a Chapter 7 adversary); see also *Estate of*
6 *Spirtos v. One San Bernardino Cnty. Superior Ct. Case Numbers SPR 02211*, 443 F.3d
7 1172, 1176 (9th Cir. 2006) (disclaiming any change to the court's holding in *Parmetex*).

8 By and large, other circuit courts have adopted the reasoning in *Spaulding*
9 *Composites* and permit derivative standing stipulations in a variety of bankruptcy
10 proceedings. See *Commodore Int'l Ltd. v. Gould (In re Commodore Int'l Ltd.)*, 262 F.3d
11 96, 99 (2d Cir. 2001) (adopting the reasoning in *Spaulding Composites*); *Official Comm.*
12 *of Unsecured Creditors of Cybergenics Corp. ex rel. Cybergenics Corp. v. Chinery*, 330
13 F.3d 548, 580 (3d Cir. 2003) ("[W]e are satisfied that bankruptcy courts can authorize
14 creditors' committees to sue derivatively to avoid fraudulent transfers for the benefit of the
15 estate."); *In re Blasingame*, 920 F.3d 384, 389 (6th Cir. 2019) (considering the bankruptcy
16 trustee's right to confer derivative standing on a creditor a "well-established practice"); *In*
17 *re Racing Servs., Inc.*, 540 F.3d 892, 902-03 (8th Cir. 2008) (adopting the reasoning in
18 *Spaulding Composites* and *Commodore International*). Some circuits, however, have not
19 yet ruled on the question directly, or consider that derivative standing stipulations are
20 permissible in more narrow circumstances than those allowable in the Ninth Circuit. See
21 *In re Baltimore Emerg. Servs. II, Corp.*, 432 F.3d 557, 562-63 (4th Cir. 2005) (declining
22 to resolve whether parties may stipulate to derivative standing); *In re Cleveland Imaging*
23 *and Surgical Hosp., L.L.C.*, 26 F.4th 285, 297 (5th Cir. 2022) (reasoning that a bankruptcy
24 court's decision to confer derivative standing on a creditors' committee "generally"
25 requires "that the debtor-in-possession ha[s] refused unjustifiably to pursue the claim")
26 (citation omitted); *In re Consolidated Indus.*, 360 F.3d 712, 716-17 (7th Cir. 2004)
27 (reasoning "a creditor must show that the trustee has unjustifiably refused the creditor's
28 demand to pursue a colorable claim and obtain leave from the bankruptcy court to

1 proceed” before derivative standing may be granted). No circuit has found that derivative
2 standing agreements are per se impermissible.

3 When it adopted the reasoning in *Spaulding Composites*, the Second Circuit
4 further required the bankruptcy court to find that conferring derivative standing on a
5 creditors’ committee is “(a) in the best interest of the bankruptcy estate, and (b) is
6 ‘necessary and beneficial’ to the fair and efficient resolution of the bankruptcy
7 proceedings.” *In re Commodore Int’l Ltd.*, 262 F.3d at 99 (quoting *Spaulding Composites*,
8 207 B.R. at 904). The Eighth Circuit has since adopted that requirement as well. *See In*
9 *re Racing Servs.*, 540 F.3d at 902 (“We emphasize, however, that compared to situations
10 in which a creditor seeks derivative standing because the trustee acts unjustifiably, a
11 creditor will typically face a comparatively greater burden to establish derivative standing
12 when the trustee consents.”). As a correlated concern, the Second Circuit has also
13 established that “a court may withdraw a committee’s derivative standing and transfer the
14 management of its claims, even in the absence of that committee’s consent, if the court
15 concludes that such a transfer is in the best interests of the bankruptcy estate.” *In re*
16 *Adelphia Commc’ns*, 544 F.3d 420, 423 (2d Cir. 2008).

17 The Ninth Circuit has not expressly adopted the two-part test articulated in
18 *Commodore International*, nor has it directly considered when a derivative standing
19 stipulation may be withdrawn. However, the language requiring that conferring derivative
20 standing be “necessary and beneficial” to the “fair and efficient” resolution of the
21 proceedings—the source of both the two-part test and the Second Circuit’s analysis for
22 revoking a stipulation—is derived from *Spaulding Composites*. *In re Commodore Int’l*,
23 *Ltd.*, 262 F.3d at 99; *see also In re Consolidated Nev. Corp.*, 778 F. App’x 432, 435-36
24 (9th Cir. 2019) (“Other parties may pursue estate claims if the trustee consents . . . or
25 abandons the claims.”). Because the Ninth Circuit has not directly spoken to the question,
26 but the Second Circuit’s standards are derived from Ninth Circuit precedent, the Court will
27 adopt the Second Circuit’s reasoning here.

28 ///

1 No circuit has found that amendments to the bankruptcy code or developments in
2 Supreme Court caselaw have changed the long-accepted practice of conferring derivative
3 standing on unsecured creditors' committees. In a recent unpublished decision, however,
4 the Ninth Circuit noted in a footnote:

5 Because we conclude that the bankruptcy court did not err in denying
6 appellants' motion for derivative standing under any standard, we need not
7 decide whether a bankruptcy court has authority under section 105 to grant
8 standing to bring the estate's claims to a party other than the trustee after
9 *Law v. Siegel*, 571 U.S. 415, 420–21, 134 S.Ct. 1188, 188 L.Ed.2d 146
(2014) ("It is hornbook law that § 105(a) does not allow the bankruptcy court
to override explicit mandates of other sections of the Bankruptcy Code"
(internal quotation marks omitted)).

10 *In re Consolidated Nev. Corp.*, 778 F. App'x at 435 n.1. The Supreme Court held in *Law*,
11 a Chapter 7 bankruptcy case, that "a bankruptcy court may not contravene specific
12 statutory provisions" when exercising its authority under 11 U.S.C. § 105 or its inherent
13 powers. 571 U.S. at 421. The one court that has squarely addressed whether *Law* alters
14 the propriety of derivative standing stipulations found it does not. See *In re SGK Ventures*,
15 *LLC*, 521 B.R. 842, 848 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2014) ("There is no provision of the Bankruptcy
16 Code prohibiting a grant of derivative trustee standing, and so *Law* has no bearing here.").

17 **B. The Dismissal Order**

18 The Bankruptcy Court rescinded the Stipulation and granted Royal Metal's motion
19 to dismiss the Adversary without explanation. Accordingly, the standard of this Court's
20 review is somewhat unclear. If the Bankruptcy Court elected to reconsider the Stipulation
21 Order and rescind the Stipulation as an equitable matter, the Bankruptcy Court's decision
22 is reviewed for abuse of discretion. On the other hand, if the Bankruptcy Court was
23 persuaded that the Committee lacked Article III standing or that the Bankruptcy Code
24 prohibits a court from conferring derivative standing on an unsecured creditors'
25 committee, then the decision turns on a question of law that is reviewed de novo.

26 Because the Bankruptcy Court does not explain its reasoning, the Court will
27 consider each possible basis. The Court finds that in either case, the Bankruptcy Court
28

1 erred by rescinding the Stipulation and by granting the motion to dismiss, and will explain
2 its reasoning in turn.

3 1. Rescission of the Stipulation

4 First, the Court will review the Bankruptcy Court's decision to rescind the
5 Stipulation, thereby depriving the Committee of standing to pursue the claims in the
6 Adversary on behalf of the Debtors' estates. As part of the Dismissal Order, the
7 Bankruptcy Court granted Royal Metal's oral motion to amend the Stipulation Order
8 "consistent with this order and Defendant's positions in its Motion to Dismiss." (Exh. 1,
9 ECF No. 10-2 at 4.) Nothing in the hearing transcript or the Dismissal Order explains the
10 Bankruptcy Court's reasoning.

11 Although the Ninth Circuit does not appear to have addressed the standards for
12 rescinding a previously approved derivative standing stipulation, the Second Circuit has
13 concluded "a court may withdraw a committee's derivative standing and transfer the
14 management of its claims, even in the absence of that committee's consent, if the court
15 concludes that such a transfer is in the best interests of the bankruptcy estate." *In re*
16 *Adelphia Commc'ns*, 544 F.3d at 423. The Court agrees with the Second Circuit that, just
17 as approval of a derivative standing agreement is committed to the discretion of the
18 bankruptcy court to determine whether conferring standing on a creditors' committee is in
19 the best interest of the estate, so too would revocation of a derivative standing agreement
20 be a matter of the bankruptcy court's discretion. *See id.* at 425 (reviewing the transfer of
21 claims from a creditors' committee to a litigation trust for abuse of discretion). The Court
22 therefore considers whether the Bankruptcy Court abused its discretion by rescinding the
23 Stipulation. The Court finds that it was.

24 The Bankruptcy Court's decision to amend the Stipulation Order and rescind the
25 Stipulation was an abuse of discretion because it was unexplained and jeopardized the
26 estate's ability to bring the claims against Royal Metal after the Committee and the
27 Debtors had relied on the Stipulation Order. First, the Bankruptcy Court offered no
28 reasoning on the record why rescinding the Stipulation would benefit the Debtors' estates.

1 Unlike in *Adelphia Communications*, where the bankruptcy court “conducted a reasonable
2 analysis of the costs and benefits” of the committee’s continued management of the
3 claims, see *id.* at 425, the Bankruptcy Court here did not reveal any reasoning about
4 whether the Committee was adequately managing the Debtors’ claims against Royal
5 Metal. Moreover, the Bankruptcy Court did not appear to choose a more suitable party to
6 manage the claims, as the bankruptcy court in *Adelphia Communications* determined
7 when it transferred the claims to a litigation trust, see *id.* at 426; instead, the Bankruptcy
8 Court dismissed the Adversary without identifying another party that was more suitable
9 to bring the claims.

10 Although the decision to rescind the Stipulation without expressing any reasoning
11 may not alone constitute an abuse of discretion, the circumstances of the case clearly
12 show that it was. As the Committee explained in its response to the motion to dismiss,
13 the Debtors and the Committee agreed to share administration of the estates’ claims
14 because of the impending expiration of many claims’ two-year statute of limitations. (Exh.
15 8, ECF No. 10-2 at 130.) Royal Metal argues both in the motion to dismiss and at the
16 hearing that the Debtors could have pursued the claims against it had they felt that the
17 claims were valuable. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 121; Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 197.) But
18 as Issa explained in his declaration in support of Debtors’ joinder to the motion for
19 reconsideration, “[b]ut for the Stipulation, approved by [the Bankruptcy Court’s Stipulation
20 Order], the Debtors themselves would have prosecuted avoidance claims against Royal
21 Metal.” (Exh. 15, ECF No. 10-3 at 4.) Indeed, Issa notes that the Debtors acted “[i]n
22 reliance upon the [Stipulation Order]” to preserve their claims. (*Id.* at 5.) The Court is
23 therefore persuaded by Issa’s argument in this appeal that the Committee had reasonably
24 relied on the Bankruptcy Court’s order conferring derivative standing upon it, and that as
25 a result, the estate will suffer the loss of the claims and the potential value to the estate
26 for any claims on which the statute of limitations has run. (ECF No. 10 at 24.)

27 These facts were knowable to the Bankruptcy Court at the time it issued the
28 Dismissal Order and expressly known at the time of the Reconsideration Order. Not only

1 did the Bankruptcy Court fail to find that rescinding the Stipulation was in the best interest
2 of the Debtors' estates, but it further failed to consider that the estates' claims may be lost
3 if the Debtors were required to refile in their own name. Because there is no given reason
4 why rescinding the Stipulation would be in the best interests of the Debtors' estates and,
5 in fact, reconsidering the Stipulation Order would harm the estates' interests, rescinding
6 the Stipulation Order was an abuse of discretion.

7 **2. Dismissal of the Adversary**

8 The Court will also consider whether the Bankruptcy Court's decision to grant the
9 motion to dismiss, and thereafter amend the Stipulation Order in conformity with its
10 reasoning, was correct as a matter of law. The Court reviews the Bankruptcy Court's
11 decision de novo, because whether the Committee lacked standing to pursue the
12 Adversary and whether the Bankruptcy Court lacked authority to confer derivative
13 standing on the Committee are both questions of law. As explained further below, the
14 Bankruptcy Court's decision must be reversed because each of Royal Metal's arguments
15 lacked merit.

16 **a. The Committee's Direct Article III Standing**

17 The Committee's lack of direct Article III standing was an irrelevant consideration
18 because the Committee brought the Adversary on behalf of the Debtors estates. Issa
19 admits that absent the Stipulation, the Committee would have lacked Article III standing
20 to bring the claims in the Adversary. (ECF No. 35 at 7.) Whether the Committee suffered
21 an injury-in-fact is therefore irrelevant, Issa argues, because the Committee brought the
22 Adversary not on its own behalf, but on behalf of the Debtors. (*Id.*) Because Royal Metal
23 does not argue the Debtors lacked constitutional standing to pursue an avoidance claim,
24 the Committee had standing to pursue the Debtors' claims on their behalf. (*Id.*) The Court
25 agrees with Issa.

26 Royal Metal's representations in its motion to dismiss were misleading at best and
27 flatly incorrect at worst. Framing the issue before the Bankruptcy Court as a novel issue
28 presenting unprecedented fairness concerns without citing to *Spaulding Composites*

1 deprived the Bankruptcy Court of a complete understanding of Ninth Circuit law. Focusing
2 on the Committee's lack of injury created further confusion, particularly because that
3 question was squarely rejected by the *Spaulding Composites* court as irrelevant when
4 there is a derivative standing stipulation:

5 Whether a creditor has direct standing under § 362 poses an interesting
6 question, but we need not address the issue in this case. The Committee
7 filed suit, not in its own right, but on behalf of the estate. Consequently, it
8 asserts derivative standing. Derivative standing poses distinct
9 considerations.

10 207 B.R. at 903.¹⁰ These "distinct considerations" do not require finding that the
11 Committee has direct standing to sue on its own behalf, *see id.*, yet Royal Metal continued
12 to insist that the Adversary must be dismissed because the Committee lacked Article III
13 standing. The appropriate inquiry is whether the Debtors would have had standing to bring
14 the claims, not whether the Committee had suffered an injury-in-fact. Royal Metal's
15 arguments distract from the relevant questions and appear to contrive a problem where
16 none exists.

17 Despite being aware that the Ninth Circuit and the BAP have both established that
18 a committee need not show direct standing when bringing claims under a derivative
19 standing agreement, Royal Metal continued to focus on the Committee's lack of Article III
20 standing at the hearing on the motion to dismiss. Royal Metal reiterated that "[t]he Ninth
21 Circuit has never addressed constitutional Article III standing of an unsecured creditors'
22 committee. That issue has not come before the Ninth Circuit," arguing that consequently,
23 conferring standing via a derivative standing stipulation is "not okay" and "can't be done."
24 (Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 196.) This representation is misleading, as the Ninth Circuit
25 BAP expressly rejected in *Spaulding Composites* that the constitutional standing of an
26 unsecured creditors' committee had any relevance when there was a derivative standing
27 stipulation. *See* 207 B.R. at 903; *see also In re Parmetex*, 199 F.3d at 1031 (considering

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¹⁰Royal Metal rejected the applicability of *Spaulding Composites* in its reply in support of its motion to dismiss on the grounds that BAP decisions are not precedential. (Exh. 11, ECF No. 10-2 at 194.)

1 whether creditors had Article III standing as a jurisdictional matter and finding that the
2 derivative standing agreement satisfied the requirement).

3 Royal Metal’s representations to the Bankruptcy Court were therefore simply
4 untrue. Consequently, if the Bankruptcy Court was persuaded by Royal Metal’s argument
5 that the Committee lacked Article III standing to pursue the Adversary, that error is
6 reversible.

7 **b. The Committee’s Direct Statutory Authority**

8 For similar reasons as those explained in the previous section, Royal Metal’s
9 arguments that the Committee lacks authority under the Bankruptcy Code to pursue the
10 Adversary’s claims fail because the Committee is not pursuing the claims in its own right.
11 In its motion to dismiss and at the hearing, Royal Metal argued that the Bankruptcy Code
12 authorizes only the debtor-in-possession or the trustee to assert claims on behalf of the
13 estate, and therefore the Committee may not pursue those claims as a matter of law.
14 (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 113-18.) Again, the Committee states explicitly in the Adversary
15 that it is not pursuing the claims on its own behalf, but rather “on behalf of the Debtors’
16 estates,” as agents of the debtors-in-possession. (Exh. 6, ECF No. 10-2 at 37.) The
17 Committee was therefore acting in the shoes of the debtors-in-possession, and did have
18 statutory authority to pursue the claims against Royal Metal due to the Stipulation. Indeed,
19 the Ninth Circuit expressly rejected Royal Metal’s reasoning in *Parmetex* over 20 years
20 ago:

21 Although Defendants are correct that a trustee must generally file an
22 avoidance action . . . we hold that under these particular circumstances—
23 where the trustee stipulated that the Creditors could sue on his behalf and
the bankruptcy court approved that stipulation—the Creditors had standing
to bring the suit.

24 199 F.3d at 1031. Because the Bankruptcy Court had approved the Stipulation, the
25 Committee had statutory authority to bring the claims in the Adversary on behalf of the
26 Debtors’ estates.

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1 **c. The Stipulation’s Validity**

2 Approximately half of Royal Metal’s motion to dismiss focused on whether the
3 Stipulation validly conferred standing on the Committee. Despite Royal Metal’s duty to
4 disclose controlling authority adverse to its position, it did not reference *Parmetex* in its
5 motion to dismiss. Instead, Royal Metal argued that “the [Bankruptcy Court] cannot confer
6 standing, authority, or capacity upon the Committee where none exists.” (Exh. 7, ECF No.
7 10-2 at 121.) Even after the Committee introduced *Parmetex* and *Spaulding Composites*
8 in its opposition to the motion to dismiss, Royal Metal continued to argue that the law had
9 changed since those cases were decided, urging the Bankruptcy Court to reject the
10 Stipulation and dismiss the Adversary. For the reasons explained below, Royal Metal’s
11 arguments misstated current Ninth Circuit law and failed to justify that a change in the law
12 was warranted.

13 Royal Metal did not disclose controlling authority adverse to its position, despite its
14 duty to do so.¹¹ Although *Parmetex* was a Chapter 7 case, it is a Ninth Circuit decision
15 addressing the precise Code provisions at issue in the Adversary, holding that a creditors’
16 committee had standing to assert claims derivatively on behalf of the trustee under an
17 agreement between the committee and the trustee. See 199 F.3d at 1031. Moreover, the
18 Ninth Circuit has since reaffirmed that *Parmetex* creates an exception to the general rule
19 that trustees are the “exclusive parties” that may sue on behalf of the estate. See *Estate*
20 *of Spirtos*, 443 F.3d at 1175 (citing *Parmetex* and explaining “[w]e have held that under
21 some circumstances, the trustee may authorize others to bring suit”). *Parmetex* has been
22 cited favorably—and recently—by the Ninth Circuit BAP, as well as by district and

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24 ¹¹Both the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct and the Nevada Rules of
25 Professional Conduct stipulate that “[a] lawyer shall not knowingly . . . [f]ail to disclose to
26 the tribunal legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction known to the lawyer to be directly
27 adverse to the position of the client and not disclosed by opposing counsel.” Nevada
28 Rules of Prof’l Conduct R. 3.3(a)(2); Model Rules of Prof’l Conduct R. 3.3(a)(2). Moreover,
the Federal Rules of Civil and Bankruptcy Procedure both provide that, by filing a brief,
the attorney certifies “to the best of [their] knowledge . . . formed after an inquiry
reasonable under the circumstances” that “the claims, defenses, and other legal
contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the
extension, modification, or reversal of existing law.” Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9011(b)(2); Fed. R.
Civ. P. 11(b)(2).

1 bankruptcy courts within the circuit.¹² The decision to omit these cases, binding or
2 otherwise, is perplexing, and may well have created confusion.

3 Adding to the confusion, Royal Metal further argued that the validity of derivative
4 standing agreements is a matter of first impression in the Ninth Circuit. Despite the
5 authorities cited above, Royal Metal represented that “the Ninth Circuit has not issued an
6 opinion as to whether a debtor in possession can grant derivative standing to an
7 unsecured creditor’s committee” and encouraged the Bankruptcy Court to “find,
8 consistent with the Supreme Court’s statutory interpretation in *Lexmark*, the Ninth Circuit
9 in *Estate of Spiritos* and *Ahcom*, and the Tenth Circuit in *Fox*, that the plain language of
10 the Bankruptcy Code does not authorize it.” (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at 127.) The Court
11 finds that none of these cases support the Bankruptcy Court’s decision to grant the motion
12 to dismiss the Adversary.

13 Even if the validity of derivative standing agreements were a matter of first
14 impression, which it is not, the cases Royal Metal cites to either do not support its position
15 or are outlier opinions that have been rejected by the majority view. For example, *Lexmark*
16 was a Lanham Act case in which the Supreme Court examined whether the respondent
17 was within the zone-of-interest to have standing to bring a false advertising claim. See
18 572 U.S. at 125-37. The reasoning in *Lexmark* is not even indirectly applicable, as the

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20 ¹²Just two years ago, a BAP reaffirmed *Parmetex*. See *In re Liu*, BAP No. CC-19-
21 1101-StaL, 2020 WL 718072, at *4 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. Feb. 11, 2020) (“The Ninth Circuit has
22 recognized an exception to [the rule that only the trustee has standing to assert legal
23 claims and defenses of the estate], which permits a creditor, with the trustee’s agreement
24 and the court’s approval, to pursue actions on behalf of the estate.”) (citing *Parmetex*,
25 199 F.3d at 1031). Several district courts have done the same. See *In re*
26 *Databaseusa.com LLC*, Case No. 2:20-CV-01925-JCM, 2022 WL 1137877, at *3 (D. Nev.
27 Apr. 15, 2022) (“A creditor may be able to bring a derivative suit . . . [h]owever, the suit
28 first belongs to the debtor-in-possession.”) (citing *Parmetex* and *Estate of Spiritos*); *DBD*
Credit Funding LLC v. Silicon Labs., Inc., Case No. 16-CV-05111-LHK, 2017 WL
4150344, at *11 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 19, 2017) (denying standing because, unlike in
Parmetex, the creditor had not obtained derivative standing by consent of the trustee);
Kirschner v. Blixseth, Case No. CV 11-08283 GAF (SPx), 2012 WL 12885070, at *7 (C.D.
Cal. Feb. 24, 2012) (noting “[t]he Ninth and other Circuits have expressly approved
standing under these circumstances,” referring to a situation where the trustee and
creditors have agreed to confer standing). Moreover, just this year, another bankruptcy
court in this circuit recognized *Parmetex* and *Estate of Spiritos* as controlling precedent.
See *In re Grail Semiconductor Sedgwick Fundingco, LLC v. Newdelman*, Case No. 15-
29890-A-7, 2022 WL 194384, at *28 (Bankr. E.D. Cal. Jan. 20, 2022).

1 issues before the Court there involved whether a party had prudential standing to sue on
2 its own behalf, not derivative standing to sue on behalf of a party that unquestionably had
3 direct statutory standing. See *id.* at 127-32. Moreover, Royal Metal’s selective quotations
4 from *Ahcom, Ltd. v. Smeding*, 623 F.3d 1248 (9th Cir. 2010), and *Estate of Spirtos* do not
5 accurately represent those cases’ holdings. Although *Ahcom* does state “[w]hen the
6 trustee does have standing to assert a debtor’s claim, that standing is exclusive and
7 divests all creditors of the power to bring the claim,” the *Ahcom* court was considering
8 whether a claim rightfully belonged to a creditor or a trustee in the first instance, not
9 whether the trustee could authorize a creditor to bring a claim on its behalf. 623 F.3d at
10 1250 (citing *Estate of Spirtos*, 443 F.3d at 1176). As noted above, *Estate of Spirtos*
11 explicitly reaffirmed that the Ninth Circuit recognizes that “under some circumstances, the
12 trustee may authorize others to bring suit.” 443 F.3d at 1176. These cases did not overturn
13 *Parmetex*, nor did they invite reconsideration of its holding.¹³

14 The only case Royal Metal cites that did find derivative standing agreements were
15 impermissible under the Bankruptcy Code is *United Phosphorous, Ltd. v. Fox (In re Fox)*,
16 305 B.R. 912, 914 (B.A.P. 10th Cir. 2004). In *Fox*, the Tenth Circuit BAP disallowed
17 derivative standing agreements based on the Supreme Court’s reasoning in *Hartford*
18 *Underwriters Insurance Company v. Union Planters Bank, N.A.*, 530 U.S. 1 (2000). See
19 *In re Fox*, 305 B.R. at 914-15. Although the Court in *Hartford* interpreted § 506(c) of the
20 Bankruptcy Code as vesting a right in the trustee, exclusive to all other parties, to seek
21 recovery from property securing an allowed secured claim, it further recognized that many
22 courts had permitted creditors and creditors’ committees to pursue claims on behalf of

24 ¹³Royal Metal additionally argues that cases decided prior to the 2005 BAPCPA
25 amendments to the Bankruptcy Code are no longer good law because the amendments
26 granted “sole authority” to the trustee or debtor-in-possession. (Exh. 7, ECF No. 10-2 at
27 192.) But as the Committee noted at the hearing on the motion to dismiss, the BAPCPA
28 amendments did not amend any provisions that would affect standing, nor did they
prohibit derivative standing agreements which several circuits had since been approving.
(Exh. 12, ECF No. 10-2 at 225.) Because the Ninth Circuit has continued to recognize the
validity of derivative standing agreements post-2005, see, e.g., *Estate of Spirtos*, 443
F.3d at 1176, the Court is unpersuaded that the BAPCPA amendments can be read as
changing the law.

1 debtors' estates and expressly excluded such practices from its holding. See 530 U.S. at
2 13 n.5. ("We do not address whether a bankruptcy court can allow other interested parties
3 to act in the trustee's stead in pursuing recovery under § 506(c)."). Despite this caveat,
4 the Tenth Circuit BAP concluded that the language in *Hartford* was "so clear and
5 compelling" that the Court's reasoning would likely apply equally to exclude suits brought
6 under derivative standing agreements. *Id.* at 915. This reasoning not only has not been
7 adopted by the Ninth Circuit, but other bankruptcy courts—even those within the Tenth
8 Circuit—have rejected the conclusion in *Fox*, deeming it as a "tiny minority" opinion. See,
9 e.g., *In re Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe*, 621 B.R. 502, 506-07
10 (Bankr. D.N.M. 2020) (noting further that "[e]very circuit court that has ruled on the
11 question of derivative standing after *Hartford* has allowed it" and "[a]lmost all bankruptcy
12 courts, BAPs, and district courts have ruled the same way").

13 Without a clear account explaining the decision to depart from the clearly
14 established practice in the Ninth Circuit permitting derivative standing agreements, the
15 Court must conclude that the Bankruptcy Court incorrectly applied the law. Because
16 circuit precedent permitted the Debtors to confer derivative standing on the Committee
17 via the Stipulation, and the Bankruptcy Court approved the Stipulation, the Committee
18 had standing to pursue the claims in the Adversary on behalf of the Debtors' estates.
19 Royal Metal's motion to dismiss should have been denied, and the Court therefore
20 reverses the Dismissal Order.

21 **V. CONCLUSION**

22 The Court notes that the parties made several arguments and cited to several
23 cases not discussed above. The Court has reviewed these arguments and cases and
24 determines that they do not warrant discussion as they do not affect the outcome of the
25 issues before the Court.

26 It is therefore ordered that the Bankruptcy Court's order granting the motion to
27 dismiss is reversed.

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It is further ordered that the Bankruptcy Court's order denying the motion for reconsideration is vacated.

This case is remanded to the Bankruptcy Court for further proceedings consistent with this order.

The Clerk of Court is directed enter judgment in accordance with this order and close this case.

DATED THIS 14th Day of June 2022.



MIRANDA M. DU
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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Bruce T Beesley

Honorable Bruce T. Beesley
United States Bankruptcy Judge



Entered on Docket
October 21, 2020

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Attorney for Royal Metal Industries, Inc.

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

In Re:

Jointly Administered under

- Affects X-Treme Bullets, Inc.
- Affects Howell Munitions & Technology, Inc.
- Affects Ammo Load Worldwide, Inc.
- Affects Clearwater Bullet, Inc.
- Affects Howell Machine, Inc.
- Affects Freedom Munitions, LLC
- Affects Lewis-Clark Ammunition Components, LLC
- Affects Components Exchange, LLC
- Affects all Debtors

Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB with
Case Nos. 18-50610-BTB; 18-50611-BTB;
18-50613-BTB; 18-50614-BTB; 18-
50615-BTB; 18-50616-BTB; and 18-
50617-BTB

Chapter 11

Adv. No. 20-05019-BTB

Debtors.

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE OF
UNSECURED CREDITORS OF
X-TREME BULLETS, INC. *et. al.*,

Plaintiff,

vs.

ROYAL METAL INDUSTRIES, INC.,

Defendant.

**ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO
DISMISS COMPLAINT, AND ORDER
GRANTING MOTION TO ALTER,
AMEND, CORRECT COURT'S
PRIOR ORDER AND/OR FOR
RELIEF FROM COURT'S PRIOR
ORDER**

Hearing Date: October 13, 2020
Hearing Time: 9:00 a.m.

1 The matters of the Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid Transfers
 2 Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11
 3 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 7] (the
 4 “Motion to Dismiss”), and the Defendant’s Oral Motion for: (1) New Trial or to Alter or
 5 Amend the Bankruptcy Court’s Order Approving Stipulation Granting Derivative
 6 Standing to the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors to Commence, Prosecute and
 7 Resolve Certain Claims and Causes of Action [Bk DE 923] (the “Stipulation Order”) filed
 8 on the docket in the Jointly Administered Debtors’ lead case of X-TREME BULLETS,
 9 INC. Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 59
 10 incorporated by reference through Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9023; and (2)
 11 Relief from the Stipulation Order under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 60 incorporated
 12 by reference through Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9024 (the “Oral Motion”)
 13 came before the court for hearing on October 13, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. The Defendant
 14 appeared by and through its counsel, Holly E. Estes, Esq., of Estes Law, P.C., Plaintiff
 15 appeared by and through its counsel, Thomas R. Fawkes, Esq., of Tucker Ellis LLP.

16 The Court having considered the Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11
 17 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and
 18 to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 1], Motion to Dismiss [Adv
 19 DE 7], Notice of Hearing with Certificate of Service on Motion to Dismiss [Adv DE 8],
 20 the Response to Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11 U.S.C.
 21 §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and to
 22 Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv DE 13] (“Response to Motion to
 23 Dismiss”), Amended Reply to Response to Motion to Dismiss Complaint to Avoid
 24 Transfers Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred
 25 Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) [Adv
 26 DE 15] (“Amended Reply”), the Stipulation Granting Derivative Standing to the Official
 27 Committee of Unsecured Creditors to Commence, Prosecute and Resolve Certain Claims
 28 and Causes of Action [Bk DE 921] filed on the docket in the Jointly Administered

1 Debtors’ lead case of X-TREME BULLETS, INC. Case No. BK-N-18-50609-BTB, the
2 Stipulation Order, the Defendant’s Oral Motion, Plaintiff’s response to Defendant’s Oral
3 Motion, Defendant’s reply to Plaintiff’s response to Oral Motion, the pleadings, papers,
4 and other documents on file in the Debtors’ underlying jointly administered Chapter 11
5 bankruptcy cases, the representations and arguments of counsel at the hearing on the
6 Motion to Dismiss and the Defendant’s Oral Motion, and for good cause shown, the court
7 hereby finds as follows:

8 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss, Plaintiff’s Response to Motion to Dismiss,
9 Defendant’s Amended Reply, Defendant’s Oral Motion, Plaintiff’s response, and
10 Defendant’s reply were made timely. The Court finds that proper notice of the Motion to
11 Dismiss and Oral Motion was given and that the parties had an opportunity to be heard on
12 the Motion to Dismiss and Oral Motion at the hearing held on October 13, 2020 at 9:00
13 a.m.

14 Based upon the foregoing and for good cause show,

15 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss is granted in
16 its entirety, and the Adversary Complaint to Avoid Transfers Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§544
17 and 548, to Recover Property Transferred Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §550, and to Disallow
18 Claims Pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §502(d) and the adversary case are hereby dismissed.

19 IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the Defendant’s Oral Motion is
20 granted. The Court hereby alters, amends, and corrects its prior Stipulation Order as to
21 this Plaintiff and Defendant consistent with this order and Defendant’s positions in its
22 Motion to Dismiss. Further, the Court hereby relieves Defendant of the Stipulation Order
23 pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 60(b).

24 IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that this order shall be and hereby is the
25 Court’s order governing Plaintiff’s standing in the above captioned adversary proceeding,
26 and to the extent this order conflicts with the Court’s Stipulation Order, this order shall
27 control.

28 IT IS SO ORDERED.

1 In accordance with LR 9021, an attorney submitting this document certifies as
2 follows (check one):

3 The court has waived the requirement set forth in LR 9021(b)(1).

4 No party appeared at the hearing or filed an objection to the motion.

5 I have delivered a copy of this proposed order to all attorneys who appeared at the
6 hearing, and each has approved or disapproved the order, or failed to respond, as
indicated below [list each party and whether the party has approved, disapproved, or
failed to respond to the document]:

7 **NO RESPONSE**

8
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10 _____
11 Thomas R. Fawkes, Esq.,
12 Tucker Ellis LLP
13 Attorney for the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors

14 I certify that this is a case under chapter 7 or 13, that I have served a copy of this
15 order with the motion pursuant to LR 9014(g), and that no party has objected to the form
16 or content of the order.

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