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                   IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
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                      FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE
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    SWIRLATE IP LLC,
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              Plaintiff,
                                   ) C.A. No. 22-235-CFC
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      v.
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    QUANTELA, INC.,
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               Defendant.
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    SWIRLATE IP LLC,
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               Plaintiff,
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                                      C.A. No. 22-249-CFC
       v.
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    LANTRONIX, INC.,
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              Defendant.
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    WAVERLY LICENSING LLC,
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             Plaintiff,
                                     C.A. No. 22-420-CFC
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      v.
    AT&T MOBILITY LLC,
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               Defendant.
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    WAVERLY LICENSING LLC,
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               Plaintiff,
                                      C.A. No. 22-422-CFC
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      v.
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    GRANITE RIVER LABS INC.,
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              Defendant.
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3	Wednesday, January 17, 2024 1:06 p.m.
4	Hearing
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6	844 King Street Wilmington, Delaware
7	WIIMINGCOM, Delaware
8	BEFORE: THE HONORABLE COLM F. CONNOLLY United States District Court Judge
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11	APPEARANCES:
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13	CHONG LAW FIRM, PA BY: JIMMY C. CHONG, ESQ.
14	Counsel for the Plaintiffs
15	FINGER & SLANINA LLC
16	BY: DAVID L. FINGER, ESQ. Counsel for the Plaintiff Waverly
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18	BY: DAVID R. BENNETT, ESQ. Counsel for the Plaintiff Swirlate
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21	MORRIS NICHOLS ARSHT & TUNNELL BY: CAMERON CLARK, ESQ.
22	Counsel for the Defendants
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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 3 (Proceedings commenced in the courtroom beginning at 4 1:06 p.m.) 5 THE COURT: Please be seated. All right. 6 Let's begin with the Swirlate cases. We have counsel of 7 record for those two cases -- for these cases are 8 Mr. Chong and Mr. Bennett, correct? 9 MR. FINGER: Your Honor, I apologize. May I 10 address a housekeeping issue initially? 11 THE COURT: Sure. You are Mr. Finger, for the 12 record? 13 MR. FINGER: Yes. I'm David Finger on behalf 14 of Waverly. 15 I'm not sure how long this hearing is going to 16 go. I was supposed to pick up my stepson from school at 17 2:10, but if it's going to go beyond that, I request a 18 brief recess around 2:00, so can I make alternative plans. 19 THE COURT: Yeah. It's going to -- I don't 20 know the answer. I don't think it's going to go over, but 21 it just depends on how quickly it goes. We'll see. 22 MR. FINGER: I'm not pushing, Your Honor, 2.3 but --

MR. FINGER: Yes, that's correct.

THE COURT: But you represent Waverly only?

1 THE COURT: All right. Well, actually, I will 2 tell you what, then. To accommodate you, though, why 3 don't we do Waverly first. I don't have a problem with 4 that. 5 The only counsel of record for Waverly until 6 you entered an appearance yesterday was Mr. Chong, 7 correct? 8 MR. FINGER: That's correct, Your Honor. 9 THE COURT: All right. So my questions there 10 really are as follows. As I understand it, Waverly had a 11 sole owner and managing member who was required to 12 attend --13 MR. FINGER: Uh-huh. 14 THE COURT: -- an evidentiary hearing here, 15 correct? 16 MR. FINGER: I believe that's correct, Your 17 Honor. 18 THE COURT: Okay. And really the issue is 19 this, is I don't want to assume, but my sense is, based on 20 what I've seen in the other cases that I've written about, 21 that Mr. Chong probably had no discussions directly with 22 that person, and just for the record is it Son Nguyen? 23 How do you pronounce the name? Do you know, 24 Mr. Chong? 25 MR. CHONG: Sorry?

THE COURT: Do you know how to pronounce the 1 name of the individual, the sole owner and member? 2 3 MR. CHONG: Mr. Son Nguyen. 4 THE COURT: Nguyen. Okay. 5 Mr. Chong, did you have communications with 6 that person directly before you filed these cases? 7 MR. CHONG: I had communication with Waverly, 8 yes, Your Honor, through an agent. 9 THE COURT: That wasn't my question, Mr. Chong. 10 I said did you have -- Mr. Nguyen is --11 MR. FINGER: Nguyen. 12 THE COURT: Mr. Nguyen is the sole owner and 13 managing member of Waverly, correct? 14 MR. CHONG: That's correct. 15 THE COURT: Did you speak or have 16 communications directly with him before you filed these 17 lawsuits? 18 MR. CHONG: Mr. Nguyen is not my client; 19 Waverly is my client. 20 THE COURT: I didn't ask you that. I asked, 21 did you have any direct communications with Mr. Nguyen 22 before you filed these cases? 23 MR. CHONG: Yes, I had a signed agreement from 24 Mr. Nguyen prior to filing the cases. 25 THE COURT: So you conversed directly with him?

1 MR. CHONG: I had a signed agreement. I did not have a conversation with Mr. Nguyen, but I do have a 2 3 signed agreement. 4 THE COURT: Okay. So did you e-mail him before 5 you got that signed agreement? 6 MR. CHONG: I went through Mr. Nguyen's agent. 7 THE COURT: Okay. So --8 MR. CHONG: Or, I'm sorry. Waverly's agent. 9 THE COURT: So did you have any communications 10 directly with Mr. Nguyen, the sole owner and manager of 11 Waverly, before you filed these lawsuits in Waverly's 12 name? 13 MR. CHONG: I did not have -- there was an 14 in-between --15 **THE COURT:** It's a really easy question. 16 a yes-or-no question, and, frankly --MR. CHONG: But --17 18 THE COURT: I'm very surprised that you can't 19 answer that question. 20 MR. CHONG: I understand it's a yes-or-no 21 question; however, Mr. Nguyen is not my client; Waverly is 22 my client. 23 THE COURT: I didn't ask you who your client I asked you, and it's the last time I'm going to ask 24 25 Did you have direct communications with Mr. Nguyen

before you filed these lawsuits in Waverly's name? 1 MR. CHONG: I did not have direct communication 2 3 with Mr. Nguyen. 4 THE COURT: All right. How did you obtain 5 Waverly's consent, informed consent, to file these 6 lawsuits in its name? 7 MR. CHONG: Through Waverly's agent. THE COURT: How did you obtain Waverly's 8 9 consent to communicate with its putative agent? 10 How did you obtain that informed consent 11 directly from the client to negotiate and to obtain 12 directions from its agent? 13 MR. CHONG: From its agent, I had 14 communications. 15 THE COURT: All right. Do you have any -- this 16 is your opportunity, if you want to explain how you can do 17 that ethically, now is your platform. I've already 18 referred you to the Delaware Bar Disciplinary Counsel. 19 I'm going to do so here because our rules require that you 20 obtain the informed consent from the client in order for 21 you to engage and rely on these negotiations -- I should 22 say directions from a third party. 23 MR. CHONG: So I guess just to kind of -- I'm 24 here to assist the Court in any way. But you had stated

that you referred me to ODC, and at this point in time,

I -- Rule 13 of the Delaware Disciplinary Rule states 1 there needs to be confidentiality through these hearings. 2 I have Rule 13 here and --3 4 THE COURT: Through what hearings? 5 MR. CHONG: Through any -- if there's a -- you 6 referred me over to ODC. 7 THE COURT: Right. 8 MR. CHONG: And as the hearings -- ODC now has 9 it. And if that's taking place, then these topics have to 10 be confidential, per Rule 13. 11 THE COURT: Rule 13 is a rule you are telling 12 me that applies to the District Court, a United States 13 Federal Court? MR. CHONG: Well, you referred this to ODC, so 14 15 this is now an ODC matter. 16 THE COURT: When you say I referred this, 17 "this" meaning what? 18 MR. CHONG: Well, you just stated you're going 19 to refer this matter to the ODC. 20 THE COURT: I'm going to, yes. I'm going to. 21 That's right. I said that. I didn't say I have, and I certainly have not done it yet. I have referred you to 22 23 ODC in the other parallel cases. I've written opinions 24 about it. And so you're right. 25 What I was trying to do is, and I think we've

1 accomplished it here, is I wanted to make sure that I just didn't refer you to disciplinary counsel for your actions 2 3 in these cases without finding out whether, in fact, your 4 actions in these cases were exactly consistent with what 5 you had done in the other cases. It sounds like your 6 actions in this case are consistent with what you did in 7 the other cases. 8 MR. CHONG: So is this a rule to show cause 9 hearing? 10 THE COURT: This is just for me to find out 11 whether or not you had direct communications with the sole 12 owner and managing member of Waverly before you filed 13 these lawsuits. 14 I'm just trying to understand. MR. CHONG: 15 16 THE COURT: I don't know how you characterize

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Just for my understanding, the type of hearing this is.

it. A status hearing, you can do that. I don't think that's really consequential.

Why would it be important to know what the designation of the hearing is?

MR. CHONG: Well, just because, in your order that you keep referring to with the other cases, you mentioned that there is a disciplinary issue, there is a, you know, you referred there's a criminal issue.

I'm just trying to understand, is this part of,

you know, the investigation towards a criminal case or is 1 it a disciplinary case? I'm just trying to understand 2 3 what this is. 4 THE COURT: The sole purpose right now is for 5 me to ascertain whether or not you had direct 6 communications with Waverly before you filed the lawsuit. 7 And the answer you are telling me is no. And I'm telling 8 you that --9 MR. CHONG: I had --10 Therefore, I am going to refer you THE COURT: 11 to disciplinary counsel. And I don't actually need to 12 have you answer any other questions, but you are welcome 13 to, if you want to. But that suffices, in as far as your 14 appearance here in the Waverly cases. That's all I needed 15 to ascertain. 16 17 18 their agent. 19 20 "Direct" and "through" are --21 MR. CHONG: I'm sorry? 22

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MR. CHONG: But I did have direct communication. I had conversations to Waverly through THE COURT: I think you need to learn English, THE COURT: You need to learn to speak English, because "direct" and "through" can't be used in a sentence the way you have just used them. You're not having direct communications with a

principal if it's through their agent.

And, you know, look, I don't -- you are welcome to state your case. You have that opportunity, but what I'm saying is, based on that representation alone, I don't need any more information, and I do believe it's appropriate to refer your conduct in this case -- in these cases -- to disciplinary counsel. Because it's a fundamental proposition of ethical conduct of lawyers that they get the direct approval of a client to file a lawsuit. And they can, at times, rely on directions from a third party, but only after obtaining the, quote, "informed consent" of the client, and you are telling me you didn't do that here.

MR. CHONG: I did. I received a direct, signed agreement from Waverly, which is direct communication.

THE COURT: Right. Through an agent; through a third party. Through the third party whose direction you say you are relying on or you relied on to file these cases, correct?

MR. CHONG: Well, my client has told me he signed that, and that is a signed agreement. He did sign that agreement.

THE COURT: And when did you ascertain that through your client or from your client?

MR. CHONG: It's -- it was a signed agreement.

I don't -- it's direct communication, Your Honor. 1 2 I -- this is -- you are right, this is not a place to 3 arque it. So... 4 THE COURT: No. You are welcome to put it on 5 the record, whatever you want to put on the record. 6 MR. CHONG: That's all, Your Honor. 7 THE COURT: Okay. So then, in the Waverly 8 cases, I am going to refer Mr. Chong to disciplinary 9 counsel. And, really, he needs, it sounds like, to be 10 just educated about the fundamentals of agency principals, what a principal is versus an agent, what it means to 11 obtain informed consent, and he needs to apprise himself 12 13 better of the Rules of Professional Conduct in our 14 jurisdiction and that apply in this Court. 15 So that's what I'm going to do in Waverly. 16 Mr. Chong, before you sit down, let me just --17 well, is there anybody else from Waverly? 18 Mr. Finger, do you need to be heard? 19 MR. FINGER: No, Thank you, Your Honor. 20 THE COURT: Okay. That concludes the Waverly 21 matters. 22 THE COURT: Let's deal with Swirlate then. 23 Mr. Chong, on Swirlate, I am really going to 24 ask you the same question: Did you have any direct

communications with Dina Gamez, who is identified in the

disclosure statement filed by Swirlate as the sole owner 1 2 and managing partner of that entity? 3 MR. CHONG: Your Honor, on Swirlate, I am local 4 And here with me today is David Bennett, who is 5 lead counsel, and I had conversations with Mr. Bennett. 6 THE COURT: Okay. And let me just be clear on 7 Let's get the timing of it. Before you filed the 8 cases, had you communicated with Mr. Bennett? 9 MR. CHONG: Yes. 10 THE COURT: All right. So, basically, you 11 relied on Mr. Bennett, who was your cocounsel, and you 12 relied specifically on his communications with the client 13 in order to assure yourself that you were doing the 14 directions and following the directions of the client; is 15 that right? 16 MR. CHONG: I also had a signed agreement from 17 the client that is local counsel. 18 THE COURT: Okay. And did you obtain that 19 signed agreement before you filed the lawsuits? 20 MR. CHONG: Yes. 21 THE COURT: And did you obtain that agreement 22 through Mr. Bennett? 23 MR. CHONG: I believe so, yes. 24 THE COURT: All right. Have you ever spoken 25 directly with Ms. Gamez?

1 MR. CHONG: I cannot recall off the top of my 2 head. 3 THE COURT: But is it fair to say you are 4 certain that, before you took any action in court on 5 behalf of Swirlate, you communicated with Mr. Bennett and 6 relied on Mr. Bennett for ascertaining the wishes and the 7 intent of the client Swirlate; is that right? 8 MR. CHONG: That is correct. 9 THE COURT: All right. Thank you. Then, Mr. Bennett, could you come forward 10 11 please. 12 MR. BENNETT: Good afternoon, Your Honor. 13 THE COURT: Good afternoon, Mr. Bennett. 14 Mr. Bennett, simple question. Your name is on 15 various e-mails that were produced in some of the other 16 parallel litigations. By "parallel litigations," I am 17 referring to the Nimitz cases, and Backertop, Mellaconic. 18 You're familiar with those cases? 19 No, Your Honor. MR. BENNETT: 20 THE COURT: You are not familiar with those 21 cases at all? MR. BENNETT: No, Your Honor. I mean, other 22 23 than reading your opinion, at this time I don't believe I 24 was lead counsel in those cases. 25 **THE COURT:** Oh, really?

MR. BENNETT: So until I -- and I don't know 1 2 what was produced here to Your Honor, so I don't know what 3 the e-mails say or why they were sent. 4 So I honestly -- I can't -- I mean, it's 5 possible there was something I was brought in on, but I 6 don't recall at this moment. I would have to see the 7 e-mails from the other case. 8 THE COURT: I'm not sure it would be productive 9 to show the e-mails, but I'll just let you know that you 10 are -- well, actually, hold on one second. Let me grab 11 one of the e-mails. We can -- I can let you know about 12 it. 13 But, basically, the e-mail that I have in mind 14 is an e-mail involving you and lawyers from a number of 15 the cases that are cited in the Nimitz opinions. You're 16 familiar with the Nimitz opinions? 17 MR. BENNETT: Your Honor referred to it in this 18 case. 19 THE COURT: Are you a member of the Illinois 20 bar? 21 MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor. THE COURT: And in the e-mails, you discuss 22 23 with the other counsel in those other cases and with 24 Mr. Papool Chaudhari.

You're familiar with him?

1 MR. BENNETT: I believe so, Your Honor, yes. THE COURT: You are discussing how to respond 2 3 to the various orders I issued in these cases and other 4 cases in September of 2022. Does that ring any bell now? 5 MR. BENNETT: Not specifically. Maybe 6 generally, but not specifically. 7 THE COURT: I mean, what I'm just trying to 8 establish is your familiarity. You said you don't know 9 anything about these other parallel cases. And given --10 MR. BENNETT: At this time, I don't. I mean, 11 it's possible at some point, I had some familiarity with 12 them. I haven't dealt with this issue for at least a year 13 or so, so I'm not -- don't necessarily recall the details. 14 THE COURT: So here's an example. I'll just 15 give you one. This is an e-mail that comes from the e-mail address dbennett@directionIP.com. 16 17 Is that your e-mail address? 18 Yes, Your Honor. MR. BENNETT: 19 THE COURT: It's written to George Pazuniak, 20 who is the counsel in the Nimitz cases. 21 Do you know him? 22 MR. BENNETT: I have spoken to him. 23 THE COURT: Okay. So it's written to him, and 24 it's on an e-mail chain that includes Papool Chaudhari. 25 Do you know him?

1	MR. BENNETT: Assuming it's the same person,
2	yes.
3	THE COURT: Right. And it includes Andrew
4	Curfman. Do you know him?
5	MR. BENNETT: I know Andrew Curfman, yes.
6	THE COURT: And he is counsel in some of those
7	parallel cases I referenced; is that right?
8	MR. BENNETT: I think so. I don't recall which
9	one he is.
10	THE COURT: Ronald Burns is also on the
11	e-mails. Do you know Mr. Burns?
12	MR. BENNETT: I actually don't know if I have
13	ever spoken to him.
14	THE COURT: Okay. He, though, you're aware if
15	you've read the opinions, is also counsel in those
16	parallel cases; is that right?
17	MR. BENNETT: I don't recall what was in your
18	opinion.
19	THE COURT: Howard Wernow. He is explicitly
20	mentioned in some of those opinions in the parallel cases.
21	Are you familiar with him?
22	MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor. I do know
23	Howard.
24	THE COURT: You communicated with him as part
25	of this e-mail train; is that right?

MR. BENNETT: I don't have the e-mail in front 1 2 of me, so I don't know. 3 THE COURT: Linh Deitz from IP Edge is on the 4 Do you know who she is? e-mail train. 5 MR. BENNETT: I know a Linh Deitz, yes. 6 THE COURT: Mr. Chong is included in the e-mail 7 You know who he is, right? train. 8 MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor. 9 THE COURT: Gautham Bodepudi of IP Edge is on 10 the email train. 11 Do you know him? 12 MR. BENNETT: I do know Mr. Bodepudi. 13 THE COURT: And then there was a Brandon 14 LaPray, who I understand passed away, from IP Edge. 15 he was also included in these e-mails. 16 Do you know him or did you know him? 17 MR. BENNETT: I did know Mr. LaPray. 18 THE COURT: And so I don't know if that 19 refreshes your recollection, but there's a number of 20 e-mails dated here September 23, at 2:28 p.m. from you to 21 Mr. Pazuniak. September 23 at 1:49 p.m. from you to 22 Mr. Pazuniak, copying all of these individuals that I 23 referenced before. And there's an exchange of drafts 24 among the participants.

For instance, there's an e-mail dated

1 12:57 p.m. on September 23 from Andrew Curfman to Papool
Chaudhari, copying you, among all the other people I've
mentioned, attaching the latest draft for Mr. Papool
Chaudhari's final approval to file with me, to file with
this Court in the parallel cases.

Does that refresh your recollection about any of these parallel cases that you said you don't really know anything about?

MR. BENNETT: Not specifically, Your Honor, no.

THE COURT: No? All right.

Did you read any of the Nimitz opinions?

MR. BENNETT: Well, the one that you sent, that you referred to in your order for this hearing, I reviewed it.

THE COURT: Okay. So are you aware that I have referred Mr. Chong and other counsel who participated in the parallel cases to their respective disciplinary counsel?

MR. BENNETT: Other than what you've said in your order. I mean, I assume you did, but, Your Honor, I don't have any specific knowledge.

THE COURT: Okay. Well, as I explained in the opinion, and I alluded to earlier this afternoon, I made those referrals because it appears very clear that the counsel in those cases took action and specifically filed

lawsuits and settled lawsuits on behalf of their client without having any direct communication at any point prior to the settlements or filing of the lawsuits with the client. And instead, just communicating through Mavexar or IP Edge.

And what I'm trying to ascertain in your cases, because you filed a number of cases in this court, including these cases on behalf of Swirlate, is whether or not you also engaged in that type of conduct. In other words, you did not at any point obtain from the client the informed consent of the client to file the lawsuits and to settle the lawsuits.

MR. BENNETT: Respectfully, no, Your Honor. I did receive informed consent from the client.

THE COURT: Okay. So let's talk about -- and the client is Swirlate; is that right?

MR. BENNETT: Swirlate IP LLC.

THE COURT: And is it true that Dina Gamez is the sole owner and managing partner of Swirlate IP LLC?

MR. BENNETT: Yes.

THE COURT: Did you speak with Ms. Gamez before you filed these lawsuits?

MR. BENNETT: I don't specifically recall any conversation, but I don't -- this was several years ago. I don't specifically recall one way or the other.

1 THE COURT: Did you have any e-mails with 2 Ms. Gamez to get her permission to file on behalf of 3 Swirlate IP LLC lawsuits in this Court? 4 I received the agreement, or my MR. BENNETT: 5 engagement agreement, which gave me authority, signed by 6 Ms. Gamez. I don't specifically remember where that 7 e-mail came from. It would have included, definitely, their agents at Mavexar. But other than that, I don't 8 9 recall specifically who may have been included in any 10 e-mail chain. 11 THE COURT: All right. Did you -- what I'm 12 really just trying to get to the nub, as opposed to having 13 you produce documents, as I required in the other cases, is whether or not you relied exclusively on communications 14 15 with Mavexar to take actions in these cases on behalf of 16 Swirlate. 17 MR. BENNETT: No. I did not rely exclusively 18 on Mavexar. 19 THE COURT: How did you obtain Ms. Gamez's 20 informed consent to take directions from Mavexar? 21 MR. BENNETT: I would have received them 22 through Mavexar. 23 THE COURT: So you never communicated directly 24 with Ms. Gamez in the first instance to obtain her

informed consent to have Mavexar communicate with you as

her agent, or as Swirlate's agent, I should say? 1 MR. BENNETT: I'd have to look back at the 2 3 engagement agreement. I don't specifically recall. 4 THE COURT: All right. So what I'm going to 5 do, then, since you don't recall, I'm going to have you 6 have to produce that documentation so I can ascertain 7 whether, in fact, you comported with the rules of ethics 8 to obtain the informed consent of a client before filing 9 these lawsuits. All right? 10 MR. BENNETT: So, I'm sorry. What is Your 11 Honor requesting? 12 THE COURT: Well, I will draft an order that 13 will get at it. But, basically, what I need to assure 14 myself of is that -- because I'm not assured, based on the 15 answers you've given me, that you, in fact, obtained 16 informed consent of Swirlate to file these lawsuits. 17 MR. BENNETT: So this is an ethics

MR. BENNETT: So this is an ethics investigation?

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THE COURT: Well, I don't that I would use that term. But, you know, what I would say is that I'm assuring myself that you, whom I admitted pro hac, and who is now a practicing lawyer before this Court, have complied, as you are required to, with the Professional Rules of Conduct. And to that end, since you don't -- you can't represent to me with any assurances that you, in

fact, obtained the informed consent of the client to take directions from Mavexar, except through communications with Mavexar. And you said to me that you can't recall, you'd have to go back and look at certain documents.

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So what I'd like you to do is produce those documents, so we can ascertain that, and I can ascertain what, if any, action I need to do with respect to your conduct and your continued appearance in this Court. And so to that end, I'm going to have to require you to produce those documents.

MR. BENNETT: So, Your Honor, are you saying there's any violation of either a standing order or the District Court's local rules?

THE COURT: Well, if you're not -- if you did not obtain the informed consent of the sole owner and managing partner, Ms. Gamez, to file a lawsuit in this Court on behalf of Swirlate, then it would appear you violated the Rules of Professional Conduct because you did not obtain the informed consent. And if you relied exclusively on the directions of Mavexar or IP Edge or a third party to file the lawsuit or to dismiss the lawsuit on its behalf, then I don't how you didn't violate the Rules of Professional Conduct.

MR. BENNETT: Okay. Is there any local rule or standing order that Your Honor believes this information

is relevant to?

THE COURT: Well, our local rule requires that all the practitioners in the Court comply with the Model Rules of Professional Conduct.

MR. BENNETT: Okay.

THE COURT: And since you were admitted pro hac, you represented that you read the local rules. Did you do that?

MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Well, are you aware that our local rules require all the attorneys that appear in court to comply the Model Rules of Professional Conduct?

MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay. So it's those rules that I'm referring to.

MR. BENNETT: Okay. Well, I respectfully disagree with your characterization of the use of agents to communicate information in this case, and I think that the Third Circuit law holds that such communications are valid and not a breach of any professional responsibility.

THE COURT: All right. You want to show me or pass up a Third Circuit case that says that?

MR. BENNETT: Sure. It just has to do with attorney/client privilege, attorney work product as to being protected because they are communications that are

necessary for litigation.

If you want, I could just read off the cases and then Your Honor, you know, can review them or not review them. But I can tell you the locations.

There's In Re Grand Jury Investigation, 918

F.2d 374 at 386, Note 20, which talks about, you know, the presence of a third party does not vitiate the attorney/client privilege if the third party is the attorney's or clients agent or --

THE COURT: That's an uncontested principle of law. I don't -- how is that relevant here?

MR. BENNETT: What principle is Your Honor saying?

THE COURT: You see, in order to get a client's informed consent to take directions from a third party, you have to get the informed consent from the client.

That's what I'm trying to ascertain here. If you told me that you spoke with Ms. Gamez and — the sole owner and managing partner of Swirlate, and she gave you informed consent to communicate with her through Mavexar, that would be one thing, but you haven't said that.

You've said that your communications went through Mavexar, and -- or you said you just can't recall them, which is why I said, well, maybe we should get the documents produced, and we can ascertain that.

MR. BENNETT: So is it -- I guess, wouldn't the managing partner also just be an agent for Swirlate IP? I mean, because Swirlate IP is a legal entity, and so they could only communicate through their agents. THE COURT: No, actually, that's not true. Swirlate has a natural person associated with it as all entities do. It's got a sole owner and managing partner according to the disclosure that Swirlate filed with this Court, and that's Dina Gamez.

MR. BENNETT: So it's Your Honor's position that they cannot hire an agent to communicate information to the attorney?

THE COURT: No, it's in order for an attorney to rely on such communications with a third party, they need, under the Rules of Ethics, to obtain the informed consent of the client. And it appears that hasn't been done here.

MR. BENNETT: So informed consent, who would I have to speak to in the client's position?

THE COURT: In this case, there's only one natural person associated with the client, its sole owner and managing partner, that would be Dina Gamez.

MR. BENNETT: And then Ms. Gamez, it is impossible for her to delegate her authority to a registered agent?

all. But the Rules of Ethics, and, in particular, the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, require that you obtain the informed consent of a client.

THE COURT: I didn't say. I didn't say that at

MR. BENNETT: And is it not possible to provide the informed consent through an agent, is that Your Honor's --

THE COURT: I don't know how you can obtain the informed consent of a principal to follow the directions of the principal's agent except through the principal.

But look, you are free to submit anything you want in writing. I think what I'm hearing, though, is you are not, right now, sure whether or not you had direct communications with Ms. Gamez, and I think that needs to be ascertained.

No question, as I did in the other cases, if it turns out you did not have -- did not obtain the informed consent of Ms. Gamez and relied exclusively on communications with a third party, either Mavexar or IP Edge or any other entity, to take action in this Court on behalf of Swirlate, then I will refer you to the disciplinary authorities in Illinois, and our Court will also take note of that for any future actions or attempt by you to participate as a lawyer in our Court.

MR. BENNETT: Okay. So it does seem, Your

Honor, like this is an ethics -- you are seeking ethics information; is that correct?

THE COURT: I'm seeking information so that I can ascertain whether you've acted ethically as a lawyer in these cases, yes.

MR. BENNETT: So that's an ethics investigation; is that correct, Your Honor?

THE COURT: I don't know if I'd call it an ethics investigation. I mean, I guess I'm not sure what the designation of it is. I'm basically, what I'm trying to assure myself is that you have complied with the Model Rules of Professional Conduct in this Court in these proceedings. That's all. And that's the limited scope here.

So, yes, I'm going to -- I don't know how you want to deem it, how you want to call it. I'm not going to do anything in the first instance other than direct you to produce the communications or just to confirm, having looked at the communications, whether or not you filed and dismissed lawsuits -- these lawsuits I should say -- only after obtaining directions directly from the client or from somebody else after having obtained the informed consent of the client to proceed through the directions of the third party.

MR. BENNETT: And in terms of producing

documents, would Your Honor agree that they can be -- to the extent they are produced, that they would be kept confidential; and to the extent that Your Honor believes that they should not be kept confidential, that Swirlate would have the opportunity to appeal that before you made the information public?

THE COURT: I can't give you that guarantee,

no. I can't do that. I've never given -- I don't know of

a Court that would ever do that.

And, frankly, we could just short circuit this if you want, if you want to go back to your files and look at your files and send me a letter. And if you just confirmed, as I suspect, that you never had communications directly with Dina Gamez to obtain the informed consent of Swirlate to file these lawsuits in its name, and instead you relied exclusively on communications with a third party, i.e., Mavexar or IP Edge, that's really all the information I need.

At that point, I'm prepared to just refer you to the bar authorities in Illinois and let them do their job, and so it's kind of how you want to proceed. Your answers to my questions were noncommittal.

MR. BENNETT: Well, Your Honor, I did receive a signed communication from Ms. Gamez giving me permission and instructions to file the lawsuits.

1 THE COURT: And how did you obtain that signed 2 letter from Ms. Gamez? 3 MR. BENNETT: Through an agent, no different 4 than if it came through the mail. Right? If they put it 5 in the mail, how would I could necessarily guarantee it 6 was any different than it was e-mailed to me by an agent? 7 I would actually trust it more from an agent who I know 8 had communicated with Ms. Gamez. 9 THE COURT: Well, that sounds like the answer 10 to the question is, you did not ever deal directly with 11 Ms. Gamez; you always dealt with her through Mavexar. 12 you're not prepared to admit that. 13 MR. BENNETT: Respectfully, Your Honor, I have 14 a signed letter or agreement from Ms. Gamez, and I don't 15 think there's anything indirect about somebody sending me 16 a signed agreement. 17 THE COURT: And how did you obtain that signed 18 agreement? How did you get it? 19 Through their agent, Mavexar. MR. BENNETT: 20 THE COURT: Okay. So you did get it through 21 How did --Mavexar. 22 They didn't sign the agreement. MR. BENNETT: 23 I'm sorry? THE COURT: 24 MR. BENNETT: They didn't sign the agreement; 25 they just merely transported the agreement.

1 THE COURT: How did you -- this letter, did it 2 come from you in the first instance? 3 Yes. It's my engagement letter. MR. BENNETT: THE COURT: Okay. So how did you get the 4 5 letter to Ms. Gamez? 6 MR. BENNETT: I sent it through their agent. 7 **THE COURT:** Through Mavexar? MR. BENNETT: 8 Yes. 9 THE COURT: Okay. So then, really, it's fair 10 to say all of your communications with Ms. Gamez occurred 11 indirectly through Mavexar; is that fair? 12 MR. BENNETT: No, Your Honor. I would think 13 that directly -- it is a direct communication through 14 their agent, no different than if I sent it to -- I sent a 15 complaint to a registered agent in Delaware. 16 I mean, the registered agent -- it's -- sending 17 it to the registered agent is the same as sending it to 18 the company who uses that registered agent. So I'm not 19 sure why this would be any different that I'm sending it 20 to an agent of Swirlate in the other situations. 21 THE COURT: Right. So is it fair to say that 22 your position is that, in this case, you obtained the 2.3 informed consent of Swirlate for you to follow the 24 directions to file and dismiss lawsuits in this Court? 25 MR. BENNETT: Yes, I believe I did.

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THE COURT: Oh, you obtained that informed I didn't finish my question, but I was going to consent. Is it fair to say that you obtained that informed consent only through Mavexar; is that right?

MR. BENNETT: I obtained the consent through their agent, Mavexar, yes.

THE COURT: Okay. So then, you never obtained the informed consent directly from Swirlate?

Respectfully, Your Honor, no. MR. BENNETT: believe that is informed consent directly from Swirlate. I don't see why the agent in this situation is any different -- is functionally equivalent as an employee for Swirlate, and so just like if I went to a company and was talking to a manager of their business, and they wanted to hire me, and I never communicated with the CEO, who may sign documents, I don't see any different in this situation, where I am using an agent who is the functional equivalent of an employee, providing -- getting signed consent from somebody.

For example, when I do settlement agreements, I never actually receive -- talk to whoever signed the agreement on behalf of the defendant, right, I rely on the attorney.

THE COURT: You don't have a fiduciary relationship with that defendant. That's an adversary.

MR. BENNETT: But how do I authenticate the 1 2 signature on it, right, I receive a signature; I assume 3 it's proper and correct. And so I did in this situation 4 also, that the authority I received from Swirlate was a 5 properly signed document and that their agent provided me 6 with the authority to go ahead and do certain things, and 7 then I specifically recall -- at some later date, I do 8 recall a conversation with Ms. Gamez, where she said, "Yes." 9 10 THE COURT: She said, "Yes," what? 11 MR. BENNETT: That, yeah, Mavexar was working for her. 12 13 THE COURT: And she said -- and just so I'm 14 clear, you recall the conversation. When did that 15 conversation occur? Was it before or after you filed 16 these lawsuits? 17 MR. BENNETT: Well, the more I -- the more recent conversation I recall would have been after. 18 19 I'm saying I don't remember -- Ms. Gamez 20 engaged me, what, three, three and a half, four years ago, 21 I don't remember what. I don't remember that far back. 22 I do remember conversations, vaque 23 conversations that I've had in the past year and a half 24 that I had with Ms. Gamez.

THE COURT: All right. And that's where you've

injected into the -- into this proceeding kind of the vagueness and ambiguity that I think would require, in fairness to you, a production of documents.

2.3

I thought you might be prepared to come in here and say, "I never spoke with Ms. Gamez before I filed these lawsuits; I never spoke with her before I settled these lawsuits; I never communicated with her; and I communicated through Mavexar to obtain my directions."

But it sounds like you think you may have actually spoken with her, and that's important.

Because if you spoke with her and you obtained her informed consent to follow the directions of Mavexar, that's one thing. But if you only communicated through Mavexar and you never communicated with Swirlate before you filed or settled these lawsuits, then we have a problem about informed consent.

So let's do this, I'll issue a short order just requiring the production of these documents when you were first retained, and I'll frame the order along the lines that I did in the other cases.

And if it turns out that your conduct is no different than Mr. Chong's or the other counsel that I addressed in the Nimitz opinion, then it seems to me you have not obtained informed consent. And that's really the issue.

You can't obtain informed consent of a principal to follow the directions of an agent through the agent. I mean, it just guts the whole definition of what informed consent of the principal means. It makes the rule and the requirement of informed consent to be absolutely meaningless. The whole point on the rule is to make sure that the client is giving the informed consent.

So I will issue that order. How long would you like just to pull these documents together?

MR. BENNETT: I mean, typically when a defendant asks me, I say 30 days.

THE COURT: All right. That's fine.

MR. BENNETT: Does Your Honor have any, I guess, either opinions or decisions to explain your interpretation of what "informed consent" means in terms of --

THE COURT: There's actually -- I quote it in the opinion. You can find it in the model rules, I think that will take care of it.

MR. BENNETT: Okay.

THE COURT: There will be no such thing, under your concept of informed consent. It guts the whole principle of getting informed consent of a principal for the third party to act as its agent. So...

MR. BENNETT: So wouldn't you think it would be

more -- I mean, if Your Honor isn't sure one way or the other at this point whether there is a violation of professional responsibility rules, wouldn't it be more appropriate to just refer me at this point to the Illinois Registration Disciplinary Commission and allow them to do their own investigation?

2.3

THE COURT: I'd be happy to do that. But in fairness to you, this is the thing, at least twice during this colloquy you have suggested, or at least intimated, that you, in fact, may have had communications directly with Ms. Gamez before you filed the lawsuit, and that she may have said yes, Mavexar is my agent, and you can deal with me through Mavexar.

But you've kind of not addressed that directly and you've left open that door. And if, in fact, you can show me, through your communications with Ms. Gamez, that you obtained her informed consent, well, then, I don't think you've acted in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Now, that applies to both filing and settling the lawsuits, but you need informed consent of the client.

MR. BENNETT: Okay. So, I mean, I would be fine if right now, because this is a professional responsibility issue, if you just referred it to the Illinois State Bar, and I could provide them with

whatever -- if they think any information is needed, I can provide them with that information and have them investigate it.

THE COURT: So you are effectively stipulating that you never spoke with her directly before you filed these lawsuits?

MR. BENNETT: Respectfully, no, Your Honor.

What I'm saying is that if there's an ethics violation
asserted, that it should be addressed by the disciplinary
commission.

THE COURT: Well, it's yes and no, and here's why. Because this Court, by way of its local rules, could decide to institute formal disciplinary proceedings without waiting for what the Illinois bar does.

But at least in my experience, it makes more sense to wait in the first instance for the state bar authorities to act.

So by just merely referring you, when I don't know for sure and you don't know for sure whether you obtained the informed consent directly from the client, it seems to me that that's premature.

If you want to say to me: Look, Judge, no question, I didn't communicate with Gamez; I didn't think I needed to. I'm good with I sent my engagement letter to Mavexar, and Mavexar does all the communications with the

clients, and that's the way we operate with Mavexar.

2.3

That's consistent with what the attorneys did in the other cases, but you seem to be equivocating, and I can't tell.

MR. BENNETT: Your Honor, I don't specifically remember in this case, and I don't know what the attorneys do in the other cases.

THE COURT: All right. So let's find that out because I don't want to refer you to the disciplinary authority if it turned out you got the informed consent.

And because it also affects your good standing or whether you have good standing in this Court, it's not something I can just, you know, punt.

But that's why I'm saying I will give you 30 days, whatever you want, for you to ascertain or if you want to -- if you go back and you look at your records, and you want to write a letter and just confirm for me that, in fact, you did not communicate directly with Ms. Gamez before you filed and settled these lawsuits and that you relied exclusively on communications that involve Mavexar -- not involved, that were through Mavexar, well, then yeah. If that's the case, I don't need the documents.

MR. BENNETT: Okay. And is it Your Honor's position that a signed document from Ms. Gamez is not a

1	direct communication?
2	THE COURT: It depends on how it was obtained.
3	MR. BENNETT: I'm sorry. In what ways would a
4	signed document not be valid?
5	THE COURT: I don't really understand the
6	question.
7	MR. BENNETT: Well, you seem to be saying it's
8	an invalid communication if it goes through Mavexar. So
9	I'm trying to figure out, is it your position
10	THE COURT: I didn't use the word an "invalid
11	communication."
12	MR. BENNETT: But then, I mean, if I received a
13	signed document from Ms. Gamez
14	THE COURT: How did you know it was Ms. Gamez
15	who signed the document?
16	MR. BENNETT: Because she signed the document
17	and I had somebody the agent said that they know her,
18	and she signed document.
19	THE COURT: Because you relied exclusively on
20	the agent, it sounds like.
21	MR. BENNETT: There's no evidence and
22	Ms. Gamez agrees that she signed the document. I don't
23	understand what the issue is.
24	THE COURT: Ms. Gamez agrees when did you
25	make that determination?

1 MR. BENNETT: Well, as I said, I don't remember 2 three years ago. 3 THE COURT: Right. So that's what --4 MR. BENNETT: That --5 THE COURT: Let's just ascertain that. I will 6 have you --7 MR. BENNETT: Certainly. 8 THE COURT: And I will issue an order just for 9 you to produce the communications you had with her before 10 you filed and dismissed these lawsuits, and then I will go 11 from there. All right? That's how I will do it. 12 So you want 30 days? 13 MR. BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor. 14 THE COURT: All right. It will be 30 days from 15 whenever I issue you the order, and I will do that in 16 short order, and then we will go from there. 17 Anything else? 18 Mr. Finger. 19 MR. FINGER: Nothing. Thank you. 20 THE COURT: All right. Thank you very much. 21 We are adjourned. 22 (The proceedings concluded at 1:53 p.m.) 23 24

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript from my stenographic notes in the proceeding.

/s/ Bonnie R. Archer
Bonnie R. Archer
Official Court Reporter
U.S. District Court

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