# STATE OF NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRY DIVISION OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA IN THE MATTER OF: Advisors Capital Trust Company In Formation, Applicant. FINDINGS OF FACT, **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DECISION** 

#### INTRODUCTION

This matter comes before the undersigned independent hearing officer on Advisors Capital Trust Company's (in formation) ("Advisors Capital") request for a hearing in response to the Nevada Division of Financial Institutions' refusal to issue Advisors Capital a license to operate a retail trust company in Nevada. The matter was heard on June 26 and 27, 2023 pursuant to notice duly given. Closing briefs were filed July 14, 2023 and closing arguments were presented July 21, 2023.

The Nevada Division of Financial Institutions, a division of the Department of Business and Industry, a political subdivision of the State of Nevada ("Division"), is represented by Nevada Attorney General Aaron D. Ford and his Senior Deputy Attorney General, Louis V. Csoka. Advisors Capital and its principal John Hurry are represented by William Peterson and Clark Knobel of Snell & Wilmer L.L.P.

There were no objections to jurisdiction nor to the undersigned's appointment as the independent hearing officer.

Evidence admitted during the hearing included testimony by the witnesses identified below; as well as the exhibits and judicially noticed matters which are also described below.

#### Advisors' witnesses:

- Maranda E. Fritz counsel for John Hurry and entities owned by John Hurry
- John Hurry the proposed president, director and 100% beneficial owner of Advisors Capital.

Currently, Mr. Hurry is the administrator and management trustee for the Hurry Family Trusts and the beneficial owner of several businesses.

- Diane Imbach a proposed director of Advisors Capital as well as its proposed senior trust officer and office manager. Currently, Ms. Imbach is an employee of the Hurry Family Trust.
- Darrel Michael Cruz a proposed director of Advisors Capital. Currently, Mr. Cruz is the General
   Counsel for SCA Clearing, LLC which is the holding company of Alpine Securities Corporation, a
   company 100% indirectly owned by John Hurry.
- James Aaron Cosman a proposed director for Advisors Capital. Currently, Mr. Cosman is the
   Senior Accountant for Alpine Securities Corporation.
- Raymond J. Maratea a proposed director for Advisors Capital. Currently, Mr. Maratea is the chief executive officer of Alpine Securities Corporation.

#### **Division witness:**

Julie Hanevold, a Supervisory Examiner for the Division

#### Exhibits:

- Advisors Capital's Exhibits 1 through 16
- Division's Exhibits A through I

There were no objections to the admission into evidence of the above-referenced exhibits.

#### **Matters Judicially Noticed**

 Information regarding the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ("FINRA") set forth on its webpage <u>finra.org/about</u>.

#### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

Pursuant to NRS 233B.125, except in cases where there is an informal disposition and the parties waive findings of fact and conclusions of law, a final decision in a contested administrative matter *must* include findings of fact and conclusions of law, separately stated. The "[f]indings of fact and decisions must be based upon a preponderance of the evidence." NRS 233B.125. Accordingly, set forth below are the findings of fact, conclusions of law and decision in the above-captioned matter.

#### **Advisors Capital's Retail Trust Company Application**

- John Hurry ("Mr. Hurry"), a Nevada resident, businessman and the administrator and management trustee of the Hurry Family Trust, desires to establish a retail trust company in the Stateline/Lake Tahoe area of Douglas County, Nevada.
- On or about February 8, 2022, Mr. Hurry, on behalf of Advisors Capital, filed with the Division an
   *Application for Licensing Retail Trust Company*, a Business Plan and other documents required to
   be submitted in connection therewith.
- 3. On or about April 21, 2022, Mr. Hurry filed with the Division a revised *Application for Licensing Retail Trust Company*, a *Revised Business Plan* and other supplemental documents (collectively referred to herein as the "Application").

#### **Division's Investigation and Notice of Denial**

- 4. After investigating the Application, on July 29, 2022, the Division issued a *Notice of Denial of an Application to Establish a Retail Trust Company in Nevada ("Notice of Denial")* and served the same on Advisors Capital's counsel by certified mail.
- 5. The *Notice of Denial* summarized what the Division identified as deficiencies in the Application and outlined the process for curing them and resubmitting the application for approval.
- 6. The deficiencies in Advisors Capital's Application were described as follows:
  - a. "The applicant has failed to provide proof satisfactory to the Commissioner that the officers and directors of the trust [company] have the experience and sufficient trustworthiness, integrity and reputation to justify a belief that the proposed trust company will operate in compliance with the law."
  - b. "Mr. Hurry, proposed President and Director for the applicant, is included in an ongoing legal matter with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ("FINRA"). According to FINRA's Department of Enforcement, Mr. Hurry had control and involvement in matters that ultimately led to the expulsion of Alpine Securities Corporation from FINRA."
  - c. "John Hurry is currently under investigation by FINRA."
  - d. "Mr. Hurry failed to comply with the 2019 Temporary Cease and Desist Order issued by FINRA."
  - e. "The applicant has indicated that Diane Imbach is the Senior Trust Officer for the proposed trust company. Ms. Imbach has extensive banking experience but no experience in administering trusts as required by NRS 669.083."

26

27

28

f. "The applicant's president has experience in administering family trusts but no experience in the management and administration of trusts for those outside the family."

## Advisors Capital's Election Not to Cure and the Division's Entry of an Order Refusing to Issue Trust Company License

- 7. Advisors Capital elected not to cure the alleged deficiencies and did not resubmit an application for approval.
- 8. Consequently, and in accordance with NRS 669.160(3), on September 22, 2022, the Division's Commissioner ("Commissioner") issued a Notice of Entry of Order Refusing to Issue Trust Company License ("Notice of Order Refusing Licensure") and served the same on Advisors Capital's counsel by certified mail.
- The Notice of Order Refusing Licensure set forth the deficiencies identified in the Notice of Denial
  and outlined additional deficiencies all of which the Commissioner deemed to be grounds for
  denying Advisors Capital's Application.
- 10. Specifically, the *Notice of Order Refusing Licensure* outlined the following deficiencies to licensure:
  - a. None of the proposed officers or directors have any trust company experience;
  - b. As to John Hurry and entities for which he is the beneficial owner.
    - i. No trust company experience
    - ii. Mr. Hurry's failure to disclose his FINRA registration on personal history form.
    - iii. FINRA's notice to Mr. Hurry of its preliminary determination to recommend disciplinary action be taken against Mr. Hurry for acting as an unregistered principal for Alpine Securities Corporation ("Alpine" or "Alpine Securities")
    - iv. FINRA Disciplinary Proceeding No. 201906123601 wherein a FINRA Extended Hearing Panel found that Alpine, a clearing firm indirectly 100% owned by John Hurry, among other things, "converted and misused customer funds and securities, engaged in unauthorized trading, charged customers unfair prices in securities transactions, charged customers unreasonable and discriminatory fees, and made an unauthorized capital withdrawal." For the misconduct FINRA, among other action, expelled Alpine from FINRA effective if the Extended Hearing Panel Decision is upheld and ordered the company to pay restitution.
    - v. Three (3) additional FINRA cases against Alpine: 1) FINRA Case # 2018057162401 initiated in 2021 for submission of inaccurate Order Audit Trail System ("OATS") data Sanction: \$30,000 fine and a censure); 2) FINRA Case

# 2019062263301 initiated March 2019 for failure to file continuing membership applications — Sanction: suspension); and 3) FINRA Case # 2012031507401 initiated September 2014 for submission of reports containing inaccurate, incomplete or improperly formatted data - Sanction - \$20,000 fine and a censure).

- vi. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's civil lawsuit against Alpine filed June 5, 2017 for the company's failure to properly file suspicious activity reports ("SAR"); failure to identify and report suspicious activity in its SAR filings; and failure to follow its own policies and procedures. Final Order: \$12,000,000 judgment and an injunction
- vii. Five (5) FINRA disciplinary actions against Scottsdale Capital Advisors, another company beneficially owned by John Hurry. Each of the matters resulted in either a suspension and/or censure and fine.

#### c. As to Diane Imbach

i. No formal experience in the administration of trusts.

#### d. As to the other proposed directors

- i. No trust company experience
- ii. No evidence of their reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity or competence to transact the business of a trust company in a manner which safeguards the interests of the general public.
- 11. The deficiencies in the *Notice of Denial* and the *Notice of Order caused* Advisors to request a hearing and are the issues on which evidence was admitted and reviewed de novo by the undersigned independent hearing officer.
- 12. All other licensure requirements were either: 1) not found to be deficiencies; or 2) items that were not requested by the Division because of its decision to deny licensure<sup>1</sup>. Those other licensure requirements are thus not relevant to the instant analysis and decision.

#### **Request for Hearing**

- 13. Within 30 days after receiving the *Notice of Order Refusing Licensure*, Advisors Capital requested a hearing to contest the Division's denial of its Application and requested that the Commissioner of the Division recuse herself from presiding over the hearing and appoint an independent hearing officer.
- 14. The Division denied Advisors' request for an independent hearing officer. In response, Advisors filed an action in the First Judicial District Court of Nevada ("District Court")<sup>2</sup> requesting an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For example, an executed lease, municipal business license, proof of insurance, fidelity bond, evidence of business formation and state business license, nor verification of capital funds.

16

17

18 19

20

21 22

23

24

25

26 27

28

injunction to enjoin the Commissioner from presiding as the hearing officer and an order remanding the matter back to the Division for the appointment of an independent hearing officer. On March 14, 2023, the District Court entered an order granting Advisors' request to remand the matter to the Division "to appoint an independent hearing officer pursuant to NRS 233B.122" ("District Court Order"). Pursuant to the District Court Order, the undersigned Hearing Officer was appointed as the hearing officer for this matter.

#### De Novo Review of the Record

#### **Evaluation of Advisors Capital's Application**

#### Advisors Capital - The Proposed Retail Trust Company

- 15. According to the *Revised Business Plan* for Advisors Capital, when formed, the company will operate out of Stateline, Nevada and provide the following services to high net worth and ultrahigh net worth family offices and individuals:
  - a. Family office trust services
  - b. Asset protection trust services
  - c. Revocable and irrevocable trust management and administration
  - d. Custodial services
  - e. Charitable trusts design, implementation and funds management
  - f. Qualified retirement plan design and management
  - g. Employee benefit plan design and management
  - h. Investment program formulation, management and administration
  - i. Trust and estate planning consulting services
  - j. Public and private business interest oversight
- 16. The proposed directors of Advisors Capital, each of whom were required to and did submit Personal History forms, are:
  - a. John Hurry
  - b. Diane Imbach
  - c. Mike Cruz
  - d. Raymond Maratea
  - e. James Cosman
- 17. In addition to being a director, Mr. Hurry will be:
  - a. the beneficial owner of Advisors Capital
  - b. the president of Advisors Capital; and
  - c. the head of sales and marketing for the company until such time as the business is established and profitable.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> John Hurry v. Financial Institutions Division Department of Business and Industry, State of Nevada (Case No.: 22TRT00056 1B), 2023.

28

- 18. Mr. Hurry will also finance Advisors Capital with a beginning investment of no less than \$2 million dollars.
- 19. Diane Imbach ("Ms. Imbach"), in addition to serving as a director, will serve as the senior trust officer for Advisors Capital and will manage the firm's office and its board committees.
- 20. Both Mr. Hurry and Ms. Imbach are residents of Nevada and intend to work out of the Stateline, Nevada office.
- 21. None of the other directors reside in Nevada.
- 22. According to Advisors Capital's Revised Business Plan, it is anticipated that The Hurry Family Office will be Advisors Capital's largest client and will generate sufficient revenue to cover the company's minimum operating costs, at least during it's "early years."

#### Officers and Directors - Experience, Ability, Standing and Competence

#### John Hurry - Experience, Ability, Standing and Competence

- 23. Per Mr. Hurry's Personal History form and Resume, he currently serves as:
  - a. administrator and management trustee for the Hurry Family Trusts which are comprised of approximately 20 different Nevada trusts, including a charitable trust.
     According to Mr. Hurry, the Hurry Family Trusts has assets in the 10-figure range, and he has served as a management trustee since 2011;
  - b. advisor/officer of Investment Services Holdings Corporation;
  - c. LLC Manager, Scottsdale Capital Advisors, LLC;
  - d. LLC Manager, Alpine, LLC; and
  - e. an officer of various other companies
- 24. Mr. Hurry has over 30 years' experience in the investment advisory and securities trading business. He has experience in recruiting, training and managing brokers, salespersons and executives in various industries.
- 25. Professionally, Mr. Hurry has the following securities related licenses:
  - a. Series 4 Options Principal License
  - b. Series 7 General Securities License
  - c. Series 27 Financial Operational Principal License
  - d. Series 55 Traders License
  - e. Series 63 State Securities License
  - f. Series 64 General Securities Principals License
  - g. Series 65 Investment Advisors License
- 26. He is registered with FINRA as a financial and operations principal, general securities principal, general securities representative, an investment banking representative, operations professional, registered options principal, securities trader and as an investment banking principal.

- 27. FINRA is a not-for-profit organization to which the United States Congress has delegated responsibility for overseeing or regulating, among other persons and entities, United States broker-dealers who are in the business of buying or selling securities on behalf of its customers or its own account or both. FINRA works under the supervision of the US Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC"). FINRA's mission is to protect investors and ensure integrity in the United States' investment.<sup>3</sup>
- 28. Mr. Hurry is also registered as an investment adviser representative and agent in the states of Arizona and California.
- 29. To date, Mr. Hurry has not had any of his professional licenses suspended or revoked by FINRA, Arizona or California.
- 30. However, in June 2022, Mr. Hurry received a formal notice that FINRA had made a preliminary determination to recommend disciplinary action be taken against him for acting as an unregistered principal for Alpine Securities in violation of NASD Rule 1021(a), FINRA Rule 1220, and FINRA Rule 2010 (the "Wells Notice"). Mr. Hurry responded to the Wells Notice expressing his disagreement with FINRA's contentions. As of the date of the hearing in the instant matter, no action has been taken by FINRA related to the Wells Notice.
- 31. Mr. Hurry has no trust company operations or governance experience.

#### Other Officers and Directors - Experience, Ability, Standing and Competence

- 32. The other proposed directors of Advisors Capital, have the following trust and other experience:
  - a. <u>Diane Imbach</u> Ms. Imbach has approximately 17 years' experience in banking, some of which includes local branch operations, regulatory compliance, training and customer relations. She has no experience working in a trust department or at a trust company; nor is she a certified trust officer. Ms. Imbach has worked with affluent and professional clients; and has experience opening bank accounts for trusts and working with trust attorneys and trust departments to serve their clients' banking needs.
  - b. Mike Cruz Mr. Cruz is and has been an attorney for approximately 28 years and testified that he understands the duties of a fiduciary. He currently works as General Counsel for SCA Clearing, LLC, the holding company for Advisors Capital, a company

<sup>3</sup> FINRA website - About FINRA.

- 100% indirectly owned by Mr. Hurry. Mr. Cruz has no experience creating, managing or administering trusts; nor does he have trust company experience.
- c. <u>Raymond Maratea</u> Mr. Maratea has over forty years' executive level experience working with national financial institutions and securities clearing firms. He is currently the CEO of Alpine, a company 100% indirectly owned by Mr. Hurry. He is also the founder and a director of TRAC Financial Services, LLC. Mr. Maratea has experience managing assets; but no experience creating, managing or administering trusts; nor does he have trust company experience.
- d. <u>James Cosman</u> Mr. Cosman has over 20 years' experience in the accounting field, including tax compliance and auditing. He is currently the Senior Accountant for Alpine, a company 100% indirectly owned by Mr. Hurry. He has experience preparing various tax returns and schedules for trusts and reviewing trust tax returns and financials. Mr. Cosman does not have trust company experience.
- 33. John Hurry and Diane Imbach are the only two of the five directors who are residents of Nevada and who will have a presence in the proposed trust company's principal office.
- 34. The only director with experience managing trust assets and administering trusts is Mr. Hurry; and his experience is related to managing and administering his own family trusts.
- 35. Mr. Hurry has no retail trust company experience.
- 36. Ms. Imbach has bank operations experience but has no experience managing and administering trusts.
- 37. None of the directors or officers expressed any familiarity with Nevada Revised Statutes ('NRS")

  Chapter 669 which governs retail trust companies or NRS Chapter 164 which governs the administration of trusts. There is no evidence that any of the directors are familiar with any federal regulations that are applicable to the types of services Advisors Capital proposes to offer.

#### **Trustworthiness and Integrity**

38. The evidence in this case that goes to the trustworthiness and integrity of the officers and directors is scarce; but includes information in their respective *Personal History* form.

#### John Hurry - Trustworthiness and Integrity

39. According to Mr. Hurry's answers/responses on his Personal History form, he:

- a. in the last 10 years, has not been involved in any voluntary or involuntary bankruptcy, receivership or insolvency proceedings; nor has any organization or business with which he has been associated as an officer, director, partner, owner or otherwise;
- b. has never entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, or been convicted of, theft, concealing stolen goods, forgery, fraud, perjury, bribery, offenses related to a violation of any State or Federal Securities Laws or similar crime; nor of any felony or a misdemeanor other than a traffic violation;
- c. has never been held liable in nor is there pending any civil or criminal fraud action in any judicial or administrative proceeding by any Federal, State, County, or Local regulatory agency;
- d. has never defaulted on a loan or financial obligation of any sort, whether as obligor, cosigner, or guarantor;
- e. has never forfeited property in full or partial satisfaction of any financial obligation; and
- f. has never had a lien placed against property for failure to pay taxes or other debts.
- 40. Question 7.8. on Mr. Hurry's Personal History form asks "[h]ave you ever been directly or indirectly connected with any organization or business which had an application for license or registration for any business activity denied by any Federal, State, County or Local regulatory agency, or which withdrew such application to avoid denial, or by request, or which had its license or registration suspended, canceled, revoked or subject to any administrative or enforcement action, whether or not a final order or judgment was entered." (emphasis added).
- 41. Mr. Hurry listed only one matter in his response to Question 7.B. on his Personal History form.

  His answer reads: "Trust Application in Nevada."
- 42. The FINRA Broker Check Report<sup>4</sup> for Mr. Hurry reveals his connection with two entities Alpine Securities and Scottsdale Capital Advisors Corporation ("Scottsdale Capital"), both of which have had their FINRA registration suspended and/or have been censored and fined; and, in the case of Alpine, is currently the subject of a FINRA Extended Hearing Panel Order expelling Alpine from FINRA membership if the Extended Hearing Panel Decision in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> FINRA Broker Check reports are reports published by FINRA. All individuals registered to sell securities or provide investment advice are required to disclose customer complaints and arbitrations, regulatory actions, employment terminations, bankruptcy filings and criminal or civil judicial proceedings.

Seizure Matter (FINRA Case # 20190661232601) described below becomes final. Alpine's appeal is currently pending.

43. Mr. Hurry should have disclosed the administrative and enforcement matters described in the FINRA Broker Check Report.

#### Alpine Securities - 100% indirectly owned by Mr. Hurry - Regulatory Issues

- 44. Alpine is owned by SCA Clearing, LLC.
- 45. Mr. Hurry is the beneficial owner of SCA Clearing, LLC and indirectly owns 100% of Alpine.
- 46. Mr. Hurry has owned Alpine directly or indirectly since 2011.
- 47. Alpine is a FINRA registered broker-dealer and a clearing firm for micro-cap over-the-counter stock transactions.
- 48. According to its FINRA Broker Check Report, in the last 10 years, Alpine has been the subject of eight regulatory disciplinary actions. Of those eight, some of the matters that the undersigned Hearing Officer finds most concerning in the context of the John Hurry's Application for a retail trust company license are:
  - a. SEC \$12 Million SARS Lawsuit. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") lawsuit against Alpine Securities filed in June 2017 (United States Securities and Exchage Commission v. Alpine Securities Corporation, (United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (Case No. 7:17-CV-4179)) (hereinafter referred to as the "SEC \$12 Million SARS Lawsuit") alleged that Alpine routinely failed to identify and timely report suspicious activity as required by the Bank Secrecy Act and its own compliance program; and failed to maintain and/or retain underlying files supporting its Suspicious Activity Reports ("SARS"). Final Judgement: Alpine must, among other things, pay a \$12 million-dollar civil penalty and is permanently enjoined from violating Section 17 of the Exchange Act and Rule 17-A-8 thereunder; and enjoined from noncompliance with reporting, recordkeeping and record retention requirements of Chapter X of Title 31 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
  - b. FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter. The FINRA complaint filed against Alpine Securities in July 2019 which alleged, among other things, that Alpine implemented exorbitant and arbitrary fees that caused its customers to incur significant debits in their accounts; and, that the firm converted customer's securities by deeming securities valued at \$1,500 or less "worthless" and "abandoned" and moving those securities into the firms abandoned securities accounts without customer authorization (hereinafter, "FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter"). The Extended Hearing Panel's Decision dated March 22, 2022 found that the foregoing misconduct resulted from "the gross mismanagement of the firm and blind adherence to misguided policies established by a non-registered person, John Hurry, who neither comprehended nor respected the duty of fair dealing that the member firm owed its customers." The Extended Hearing ordered the immediate expulsion of Alpine from FINRA if the decision becomes final; ordered Alpine Securities to pay

restitution of over \$2 million dollars plus post judgment interest and costs; and imposed a permanent cease and desist order prohibiting Alpine from violating certain FINRA rules and from dissipating or converting customer funds or assets ("Extended Hearing Panel Decision"). Alpine appealed the Extended Hearing Panel Decision on April 15, 2022. The appeal is pending. (FINRA Case # 20190661232601)

- c. <u>FINRA Financial Reporting Matter</u>. The FINRA matter filed in June 2021 wherein *FINRA suspended Alpine Securities' registration from April 7, 2022 to April 13, 2022* and ordered the company to pay hearing costs because it *failed to file a materially accurate annual audit report*. The suspension was lifted after Alpine filed its corrected financial audit. (FINRA Case #20210729963).
- d. SEC Securities Seizure Lawsuit. The SEC lawsuit against Alpine Securities and others filed in August 2022 in the District Court of Nevada (United States Securities and Exchage Commission v. Alpine Securities Corporation, Chistopher Doubek and Joseph Walsh (United States District Court for the District of Nevada (Case No. 2:22-CV-01279)) ("SEC Securities Seizure Lawsuit"). The lawsuit, which arises out of some of the same facts as the FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter described above, alleges that Alpine seized its retail customers' securities without authorization or notice to force customers to close their Alpine brokerage accounts and transferred approximately \$54 million of securities into Alpine controlled state escheatment accounts. Though Alpine eventually returned the securities to its customers after numerous customer complaints and FINRA inquiries, the SEC alleges the transactions were unauthorized and orchestrated by Alpine's then CEO and CCO and its COO. The matter is still pending.
- 49. Although Mr. Hurry is not a party to the FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter nor to the SEC Securities Seizure Lawsuit, nor was he an officer, director or employee of Alpine Securities at the time of the events that gave rise to the matter and lawsuit; he was the 100% indirect beneficial owner of Alpine who, according to the Extended Hearing Panel in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter, had significant input into the misconduct at issue in that matter.
- 50. The Extended Hearing Panel Decision said:

Indeed, the record suggests to us that many key decisions resulting in the misconduct at issue here came from John Hurry, regardless of who served as chief executive officer, and he and his family trusts continue to own the firm.

the foregoing misconduct resulted from the gross mismanagement of the firm and blind adherence to misguided policies established by a non-registered person, John Hurry, who neither comprehended nor respected the duty of fair dealing that the member firm owed its customers."

Department of Enforcement v. Alpine Securities Corporation, Disciplinary Proceeding No. 2019061232601 Extended Hearing Panel Decision dated March 22, 2022 at page 77-80. Emphasis added.

- 51. The Extended Hearing Panel Decision further states, "[w]e credit the consistent testimony from many members of Alpine Securities' management and board regarding John Hurry's controlling involvement in the management of the firm" and describes the following testimony of former Alpine Securities' various directors/employees:
  - a. Robert Tew, sole director, president, chief compliance officer and interim chief executive officer of Alpine Securities between approximately August and December 2018, testified that he talked regularly and often with John Hurry about the operation of Alpine. He further testified that he learned Alpine Securities intended possibly to roll back employees' 2018 salary increases and was not happy that the decision had been made without consulting him. He called both John and Justine Hurry but was unable to speak with either of them, so he sent an email to Justine Hurry to relay his concerns. Justine Hurry called him two hours later and fired him. (Extended Panel Decision, pg. 6 footnote 16).
  - b. Richard Nummi, Alpine Director up to August 1, 2018. Mr. Nummi testified that the board did not approve the revised fee schedule that is the subject of the pending FINRA action alleging Alpine Securities charged "exorbitant fees." Per Mr. Nummi, John Hurry informed the board that the new schedule was adopted seemingly without board approval. (Extended Hearing Panel Decision, pg. 15 footnote 106).
  - c. Christopher Doubek, sole director, chief compliance officer and chief executive officer of Alpine Securities from April 2019 through June 2021. Mr. Doubek testified that, while he served as a board member and as CEO, he communicated with John Hurry daily about managing the firm. Doubek further testified that John Hurry often threatened him with termination in order to force him to carry out his directives and plans for Alpine. (Extended Hearing Panel Decision, pg. 6 footnote 19).

#### 52. The Extended Hearing Panel Decision also states:

During the period under review, Alpine Securities acted solely for the benefit of the larger group of Hurry-related entities, and not for the benefit of its own customers. Indeed, John Hurry testified that Scottsdale's only clearing firm is Alpine Securities, so without the firm, Scottsdale cannot trade. All of the Hurry-related entities — SCAP9, Alpine Holding, CA Clearing, Scottsdale — profited and benefitted from Alpine Securities' subpar treatment of its customers. Had regulatory intervention not occurred when it did, the evidence suggests that the customers' losses would have increased because the firm reversed course only when forced to do so. Id. at page 70. Emphasis added.

53. Mr. Hurry's failure to disclose the administrative and enforcement actions that are responsive to Question 7.B. on his *Personal History* form reflects negatively on his trustworthiness and integrity as do the very pointed findings of the Extended Hearing Panel in the Alpine *FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter*.

#### Scottsdale Capital Advisors Corporation ("Scottsdale Capital")

- 54. Scottsdale Capital is a brokerage firm and an investment advisory firm that is registered with the SEC, FINRA and in 53 state and territories and has its main office in Scottsdale, Arizona.
- 55. Scottsdale Capital's sole shareholder is Scottsdale Capital Advisors Holdings LLC ("Scottsdale Holdings LLC").
- 56. Scottsdale Holdings LLC is beneficially owned by John Hurry and/or Justine Hurry, Mr. Hurry's exwife. John Hurry and Justine Hurry are also the only two Managers of Scottsdale Holdings LLC and direct the management and policies of Scottsdale Capital.
- 57. In the past 10 years, FINRA filed three (3) disciplinary actions against Scottsdale Capital one that was set aside by the SEC. One that resulted in a suspension (FINRA Case #: 2019062263701) and another that resulted in a censure and fine (FINRA Case #: 2014039940101).
- 58. Mr. Hurry failed to disclose the administrative and enforcement matters against Scottsdale Capital though they should have been disclosed in response to Question 7.B. of Mr. Hurry's *Personal History* form.

#### Other Officers and Directors - Trustworthiness and Integrity

- 59. The only evidence in the record related to the trustworthiness and integrity of the other directors is their respective *Personal History* form.
- 60. According to each of the other director's Personal History form, none reports having:
  - a. been involved in any voluntary or involuntary bankruptcy, receivership or insolvency proceedings; nor has any organization or business with which he has been associated as an officer, director, partner, owner or otherwise;
  - entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, or been convicted of, theft, concealing stolen goods, forgery, fraud, perjury, bribery, offenses related to a violation of any State or Federal Securities Laws or similar crime; nor of any felony or a misdemeanor other than a traffic violation;

- c. been held liable in nor is there pending any civil or criminal fraud action in any judicial or administrative proceeding by any Federal, State, County, or Local regulatory agency;
- d. defaulted on a loan or financial obligation of any sort, whether as obligor, cosigner, or guarantor;
- e. forfeited property in full or partial satisfaction of any financial obligation; and
- f. had a lien placed against property for failure to pay taxes or other debts.
- g. had wages or income garnished for any reason
- h. failed or refused to pay any outstanding judgments.
- 61. In the last 10 years, none of the other proposed directors report having been associated with any organization or business as an officer, director partner, owner or otherwise that has been in any voluntary or involuntary bankruptcy, receivership or insolvency proceeding.
- 62. With the exception of Darrel Michael Cruz<sup>5</sup>, none of the other directors reports having ever been directly or indirectly connected with any organization or business which had an application for license or registration for any business activity denied by any Federal, state, County or Local regulatory agency, or withdrew such application to avoid a denial, or by request, or which had its license or registration suspended, canceled, revoked or subject to any administrative or enforcement action, whether or not a final order or judgment was entered.
- 63. There is no evidence regarding the regulatory record of the other officers and directors.
- 64. There is no evidence regarding the standing of any of the directors, including Mr. Hurry.
- 65. Other than what can be inferred from the Personal History forms, there is no evidence regarding the reputation of the other directors.
- 66. If any Finding of Fact is more properly characterized as a Conclusion of law, it shall be considered as such.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW & ANALYSIS**

67. NRS 669.085 sets forth what the Division's Commissioner must consider when rendering a decision on an application for a retail trust company license.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Mr. Cruz was listed as a proposed director on a prior application for a license to establish a retail trust company in Nevada. The application was denied by the Division in January 2021.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

1. In rendering a decision on an application for a license as a retail trust

other

- (a) The proposed market or markets to be served and, if they extend outside of this State, any exceptional risk, examination or supervision concerns associated with such markets;
- (b) Whether the proposed organizational and capital structure and the amount of initial capital appear adequate in relation to the proposed business and market or markets, including, without limitation, the average level of assets under management and administration projected for each of the first 3 years of operation;
- (c) Whether the proposed officers and directors or managers of the proposed retail trust company, as a group, have sufficient experience, ability, standing and competence and whether each individually has sufficient trustworthiness and integrity to justify a belief that the proposed retail trust company will be free from improper or unlawful influence and otherwise will operate in compliance with the law and applicable fiduciary duties and that success of the proposed retail trust company is reasonably probable;
- (d) Whether any investment services to trusts, estates, charities, employee benefit plans and other fiduciary accounts or to natural persons, partnerships, limited-liability companies and other entities, including, without limitation, providing investment advice with or without discretion or selling investments in or investment products of affiliated or nonaffiliated persons, will be conducted in compliance with all applicable fiduciary standards, including, without limitation, NRS 164.700 to 164.775, inclusive, the duty of loyalty and disclosure of material information;
- (e) Whether the proposed retail trust company will be exempt from registration under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, 15 U.S.C. § 80b-1 et seq., and any similar state laws in each state where it would otherwise be required to register and, if not, whether it will comply with such registration requirements before commencing business and thereafter will comply with all federal and state laws and regulations applicable to it, its employees and representatives as a registrant under such laws;
- (f) Whether the proposed retail trust company will obtain suitable annual audits by qualified outside auditors of its books and records and its fiduciary activities under applicable account rules and standards as well as suitable internal audits; and
- (g) Any other factors that the Commissioner may reasonably require. (Emphasis added).
- 68. Regarding experience, NRS 669.083(2)(b) further provides:

NRS 669.083 Retail trust company required to maintain principal office in Nevada.

- 1. A retail trust company licensed in this State shall maintain its principal office in this State.
- The conditions for a retail trust company to fulfill the requirements of subsection 1 include, but are not limited to:

2

- (a) A verifiable physical office in this State that conducts such business operations in this State as are necessary to administer trusts in this State;
- (b) The presence of an employee that is a resident of Nevada in the principal office who has experience that is satisfactory to the Commissioner in accepting and administering trusts;
  - (c) ...;
  - (d) ...;
- (e) The provision of services to residents of this State consistent with the business plan provided by the trust company with its license application; and
- (f) Such other conditions that the Commissioner may reasonably require to protect the public interest.

Whether, pursuant to NRS 669.085(1)(c), the proposed officers and directors of Advisors Capital, as a group, have sufficient experience, ability, standing and competence to justify a belief that the proposed retail trust company will be free from improper or unlawful influence and otherwise will operate in compliance with the law and applicable fiduciary duties and that success of the proposed retail trust company is reasonably probable.

#### Officers and Directors - Experience, Ability, Standing and Competence

- 69. According to the *Revised Business Plan* for Advisors Capital, if the company is granted a license, the company will open and operate a retail trust company in Lake Tahoe/Stateline Nevada and will provide the following services to high net worth and ultra-high net worth family offices and individuals:
  - a. Family office trust services
  - b. Asset protection trust services
  - c. Revocable and irrevocable trusts management and administration
  - d. Custodial services
  - e. Charitable trusts design, implementation and funds management
  - f. Qualified retirement plan design and management
  - g. Employee benefit plan designs and management
  - h. Investment program formulation, management and administration
  - i. Trust and estate planning consulting services
  - j. Public and private business interest oversight
- 70. As a group, the five proposed directors have significant management, investment advisory and securities trading and clearing experience.
- 71. However, none of the directors have any experience operating, owning, advising or sitting on the governing board for a trust company. Simply put, none have trust company experience.
- 72. Also, there is no evidence that any of the directors have a working knowledge of federal or state laws or regulations that apply to trust companies and with perhaps the exception of Mr. Hurry,

none have a working knowledge of the laws or regulations governing the administration of trusts.

- 73. None of the directors, except Mr. Hurry, has experience accepting or administering trusts.
- 74. None of the directors, except Mr. Hurry, has served as a trustee.
- 75. As a group, the proposed officers and directors lack of trust company experience and lack of a working knowledge of the laws and regulations governing trust companies is concerning and does not give much comfort that Advisors Capital, the proposed trust company in this case, will be operated in compliance with the law.
- 76. Another concern is the fact that Mr. Hurry is the indirect employer of each of the other directors.
  Two of the proposed directors work for Alpine Securities; one works for Alpine Securities' holding company; and one works for the Hurry Family Trusts. A structure where you have a closely held company with no truly independent directors sets the stage for improper influence and weak corporate governance.
- 77. A similar case in point is reflected in some of the testimony of former directors/employees of Alpine cited in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter:
  - a. Robert Tew, at one point in time the sole director, president, chief compliance officer and interim chief executive officer of Alpine Securities, testified that he learned Alpine Securities intended to roll back employees' 2018 salary increases and was not happy that the decision had been made without consulting him though he was the sole director, president and interim chief executive officer. He called both John and Justine Hurry but was unable to speak with either of them, so he sent an email to Justine Hurry to relay his concerns. Justine Hurry called him two hours later and fired him. (Extended Panel Decision, pg. 6, footnote 16).
  - b. Richard Nummi, an Alpine Securities director up until August 1, 2018 testified that John Hurry informed the board that the new schedule was adopted seemingly without board approval. (Extended Hearing Panel Decision, pg. 15, footnote 106).
  - c. Christopher Doubek, the sole director, chief compliance officer and chief executive officer of Alpine Securities from April 2019 through June 2021 testified that while serving as a board member and as CEO, he communicated with John Hurry daily about managing the firm. John Hurry often threatened him with termination in order to force him to carry out his directives and plans for Alpine. (Extended Hearing Panel Decision, pg. 6, footnote 19).

- 78. As each of the proposed directors for Advisors Capital are indirectly employed by Mr. Hurry and none has any trust company experience be it operations, advisory or governance, Advisors Capital's proposed board structure creates a prime opportunity for improper influence and noncompliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- 79. There are no guardrails or other safeguards (e.g., independent directors; onsite knowledgeable compliance officers) to help ensure compliance with the law and protection of the public.
- 80. Regarding standing, there is no evidence regarding the standing of any of the directors either in their community or in the trust company, financial services or custodial services industries or in any other respect.
- 81. The proposed officers and directors for Advisors Capital do not have sufficient experience, ability, standing and competence to justify a belief that the proposed retail trust company will be free from improper or unlawful influence and otherwise will operate in compliance with the law and applicable fiduciary duties.

Whether the officers and directors, each individually has sufficient trustworthiness and integrity to justify a belief that the proposed retail trust company will be free from improper or unlawful influence and otherwise will operate in compliance with the law and applicable fiduciary duties and that success of the proposed retail trust company is reasonably probable.

#### John Hurry - Trustworthiness and Integrity and his Reputation Therefor

- 82. Evidence of John Hurry's trustworthiness and integrity and his reputation in that regard can be found in his Personal History form and in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure matter Extended Hearing Panel Decision.
- 83. John Hurry's response to most of the questions on his Personal History form show him as responsible in handling his personal affairs. He has had no bankruptcies in the last 10 years. He has no theft, fraud or perjury related convictions; no default on any loan or financial obligation and no liens for failure to pay taxes or other debts.
- 84. Mr. Hurry also has held seven securities and investment-related licenses and has never had any of them revoked.

- 85. The mark on Mr. Hurry's trustworthiness and integrity comes from his failure to disclose requested information on his Personal History form and from the findings of the Extended Hearing Panel Decision in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter.
- 86. Question 7.B. on Mr. Hurry's Personal History form asks "[h]ave you ever been directly or indirectly connected with any organization or business which had an application for license or registration for any business activity denied by any Federal, State, County or Local regulatory agency, or which withdrew such application to avoid denial, or by request, or which had its license or registration suspended, canceled, revoked or subject to any administrative or enforcement action, whether or not a final order or judgment was entered." (emphasis added).
- 87. Mr. Hurry did not disclose any of the many administrative or enforcement actions involving Alpine Securities and Scottsdale Capital despite the fact that he indirectly owns both companies and, in the case of Alpine Securities, based on the testimony in the FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure matter, was actively involved in key decisions.
- 88. Mr. Hurry signed a certification at the end of his Personal History form that says "the statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and that this statement is executed with the knowledge that misrepresentation or failure to reveal information requested may be deemed sufficient cause for the refusal to issue a license by the Nevada Financial Institutions Division.
- 89. FINA's view of Mr. Hurry's trustworthiness and integrity can be found in the Extended Hearing

  Panel Decision in the Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities Seizure Matter. The panel said:

Indeed, the record suggests to us that many key decisions resulting in the misconduct at issue here came from John Hurry, regardless of who served as chief executive officer, and he and his family trusts continue to own the firm. Department of Enforcement v. Alpine Securities Corporation, Disciplinary Proceeding No. 2019061232601 Extended Hearing Panel Decision dated March 22, 2022 at page 77 and 78. Emphasis added.

...Based on our finding that all of Alpine Securities' misconduct in this case was intentional and egregious, and considering the firm's post-Complaint misconduct discussed above, we find that recurrence is highly likely if Alpine Securities remains a FINRA member. Accordingly, as discussed below, we find that expulsion is an appropriate sanction and the only alternative for protecting the investing public. Id. Emphasis added.

During the period under review, Alpine Securities acted solely for the benefit of the larger group of Hurry-related entities, and not for the benefit of its own customers. *Id.* at page 70. Emphasis added.

We find that Alpine Securities' conversion and misuse of customer funds and securities, unauthorized trading and violations related to unfair fees and commission resulted from a systemic problem – the gross mismanagement of the firm and blind adherence to misguided policies established by a non-registered person, John Hurry, who neither comprehended nor respected the duty of fair dealing that the member firm owned its customers. Id. at pages 79 and 80. Emphasis added.

- 90. It is true, Mr. Hurry is not named as a party in the pending Alpine FINRA Fee and Securities

  Seizure Matter and it is true that Alpine has appealed the matter. However, unless and until a decision is issued reversing in whole or relevant part the decision and findings of the Extended Hearing Panel, the panel's findings and decision stands and cannot be ignored.
- 91. It is also true Mr. Hurry is not named as a party in the pending SEC Securities Seizure Matter regarding the movement of Alpine's client's securities to an Alpine escheat account without the client's permission. The lawsuit is still pending, and the matter had not been heard as of the hearing in this matter. There is no way to know at this point how the lawsuit will play out and whether Mr. Hurry will be found to have had knowledge of or role in the conduct that the SEC believes violated the law.
- 92. Based upon a preponderance of the evidence, Mr. Hurry does not have sufficient trustworthiness and integrity to justify a belief that the proposed retail trust company will be free from improper or unlawful influence and otherwise will operate in compliance with the law and applicable fiduciary duties.

#### Other Directors - Trustworthiness and integrity and their Reputation Therefor

- 93. Regarding each of the other directors, evidence of their trustworthiness and integrity is scant at best. It is limited to their responses to certain questions on their respective Personal History form. None of them has had a bankruptcy. None has had a theft, fraud or perjury related conviction; none have defaulted on any loan or financial obligation; and none have had liens for failure to pay taxes or other debts. From that one can infer the other directors are law abiding citizens.
- 94. Other than what is found in their respective Personal History forms, there is no evidence regarding the other directors' reputation from a business or regulatory or any other perspective.

Whether Advisors Capital has submitted satisfactory proof that the directors or officers have a good reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity and display competence to transact the business of a trust company in a manner which safeguards the general public.

95. Having considered the factors discussed above, a determination must be made as to the matters set forth in NRS 669.160(1)(a)(1).

NRS 669.160 Investigation of applicant; rights of applicant upon denial of license; entry of final order; judicial review.

- 1. Within 90 days after the application for a license is filed, the Commissioner shall investigate the facts of the application and the other requirements of this chapter to determine:
- (a) That the persons who will serve as directors or officers of the corporation, or the managers or members acting in a managerial capacity of the limited-liability company, as applicable:
- (1) Have a good reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity and display competence to transact the business of a trust company in a manner which safeguards the interests of the general public. The applicant must submit satisfactory proof of these qualifications to the Commissioner.
- 96. NRS 669.160(1)(a)(1) requires the applicant to submit "satisfactory proof" that the persons who will serve as directors and officers: 1) have a good reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity and 2) display competence to transact the business of a trust company in a manner which safeguards the interests of the general public.

97. In Nevada, "satisfactory proof" has been equated with clear and convincing evidence. See *In re Drakulich*, 111 Nev. 1556, 908 P.2d 709 (1995) wherein the Nevada Supreme Court noted:

This court has held that clear and convincing evidence must be 'satisfactory' proof that is: so strong and cogent as to satisfy the mind and conscience of a common man, and so to convince him that he would venture to act upon that conviction in matters of the highest concern and importance to his own interests. It need not possess such a degree of force as to be irresistible, but there must be evidence of tangible facts from which a legitimate inference ... may be drawn.

Id. at 1566 (citing *Gruber v. Baker*, 20 Nev. 453, 23 P.858, 865 (1890)). See also Gilman v. Nev. State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, 120 Nev. 263, 274 (2004).

- 98. In this case, there is no evidence that any of the proposed officers or directors have any trust company experience. Other than Mr. Hurry's experience administering his own family trusts, there is no evidence that any of the other directors have significant if any experience accepting and administering trusts. There is also no evidence that any of the proposed officers or directors, except perhaps Mr. Hurry, has any familiarity with the laws and regulations that govern trust companies. Reputationally, FINRA has raised serious concerns regarding Mr. Hurry's integrity. And, Mr. Hurry, himself, raised concerns regarding his truthfulness when he failed to disclose on his Personal History form the regulatory enforcement issues involving Alpine Securities and Scottsdale Capital. Those issues as well as the others cited in the above analysis create substantial doubt that the proposed trust company will be operated in a manner that safeguards the interests of the general public.
- 99. Advisors Capital *has not* submitted satisfactory proof that the directors or officers have a good reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and integrity and display competence to transact the business of a trust company in a manner which safeguards the interests of the general public.

100. If any Conclusion of Law is more properly characterized as a Finding of Fact, it shall be considered as such.

#### **DECISION**

The Nevada Financial Institutions Division's refusal to issue a retail trust company license to Advisors Capital Trust Company (in formation) is **AFFIRMED**.

Dated this 27th day of October, 2023.

/s/ Cara L. Brown Cara L. Brown Hearing Officer

#### **NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL**

Pursuant to NRS 669.160(4), the order of the Commissioner is final for the purposes of judicial review. NRS 233B.130 provides the following regarding judicial review of a final decision in a contested case involving an agency to which NRS 233B applies:

NRS 233B.130 Judicial review; requirements for petition and cross-petition; statement of intent to participate; petition for rehearing or reconsideration; service; dismissal of certain agencies and persons from proceedings concerning final decision of State Contractors' Board; exclusive means.

- 1. Any party who is:
- (a) Identified as a party of record by an agency in an administrative proceeding; and
- (b) Aggrieved by a final decision in a contested case,

is entitled to judicial review of the decision. Where appeal is provided within an agency, only the decision at the highest level is reviewable unless a decision made at a lower level in the agency is made final by statute. Any preliminary, procedural or intermediate act or ruling by an agency in a contested case is reviewable if review of the final decision of the agency would not provide an adequate remedy.

- 2. Petitions for judicial review must:
- (a) Name as respondents the agency and all parties of record to the administrative proceeding;
- (b) Be instituted by filing a petition in the district court in and for Carson City, in and for the county in which the aggrieved party resides or in and for the county where the agency proceeding occurred;
  - (c) Be served upon:
- (1) The Attorney General, or a person designated by the Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General in Carson City; and
- (2) The person serving in the office of administrative head of the named agency; and
- (d) Be filed within 30 days after service of the final decision of the agency. Cross-petitions for judicial review must be filed within 10 days after service of a petition for judicial review.

3. The agency and any party desiring to participate in the judicial review must file a statement of intent to participate in the petition for judicial review and serve the statement upon the agency and every party within 20 days after service of the petition.

- 4. A petition for rehearing or reconsideration must be filed within 15 days after the date of service of the final decision. An order granting or denying the petition must be served on all parties at least 5 days before the expiration of the time for filing the petition for judicial review. If the petition is granted, the subsequent order shall be deemed the final order for the purpose of judicial review.
- 5. The petition for judicial review and any cross-petitions for judicial review must be served upon the agency and every party within 45 days after the filing of the petition, unless, upon a showing of good cause, the district court extends the time for such service. If the proceeding involves a petition for judicial review or cross-petition for judicial review of a final decision of the State Contractors' Board, the district court may, on its own motion or the motion of a party, dismiss from the proceeding any agency or person who:
- (a) Is named as a party in the petition for judicial review or cross-petition for judicial review; and
- (b) Was not a party to the administrative proceeding for which the petition for judicial review or cross-petition for judicial review was filed.
- 6. The provisions of this chapter are the exclusive means of judicial review of, or judicial action concerning, a final decision in a contested case involving an agency to which this chapter applies.

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I certify that I am an employee of the State of Nevada, Department of Business and Industry, Financial Institutions Division, and that on OC+31, 2023, I deposited in the U.S. mail, postage prepaid, via First Class Mail and Certified Return Receipt Requested, a true and correct copy of the foregoing FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DECISION, addressed as follows:

William Peterson, Esq.
Snell & Wilmer LLP
50 W. Liberty Street, Suite 510
Reno, NV 89501
Certified Mail:7019 1120 0000 3407 8898

DATED this 31 day of October 2023.



