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FILED

DEC 28 2016

SUSAN Y. SOONG
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
OAKLAND

11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
12 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
13 OAKLAND DIVISION

14 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

15 v.

16 GERNOT SEBASTIAN ZEPERNICK, a/k/a
17 SEBASTIAN ZEPERNICK, a/k/a HENRY
18 ZEPERNICK,
19 Defendant.

20)
21) No. CR 14-00512 PJH
22)
23)

24) **PLEA AGREEMENT**
25)
26)
27)
28)

20 The United States of America and Gernot Sebastian Zepernick ("defendant") hereby
21 enter into the following Plea Agreement pursuant to Rule 11(c)(1)(B) of the Federal Rules of
22 Criminal Procedure ("Fed. R. Crim. P."):

23 RIGHTS OF DEFENDANT

- 24 1. The defendant understands his rights:
25 (a) to be represented by an attorney;
26 (b) to be charged by Indictment;
27 (c) to plead not guilty to any criminal charge brought against him;
28

1 (d) to have a trial by jury, at which he would be presumed not guilty of the
2 charge and the United States would have to prove every essential element of the charged offense
3 beyond a reasonable doubt for him to be found guilty;

4 (e) to confront and cross-examine witnesses against him and to subpoena
5 witnesses in his defense at trial;

6 (f) not to be compelled to incriminate himself;

7 (g) to appeal his conviction, if he is found guilty; and

8 (h) to appeal the imposition of sentence against him.

9 AGREEMENT TO PLEAD GUILTY AND WAIVE CERTAIN RIGHTS

10 2. The defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives the rights set out in Paragraph
11 1(b)-(g) above. The defendant also knowingly and voluntarily waives the right to file any
12 appeal, any collateral attack, or any other writ or motion, including but not limited to an appeal
13 under 18 U.S.C. § 3742 or a motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 or § 2255, that challenges the
14 sentence imposed by the Court if that sentence is consistent with or below the United States
15 Sentencing Guidelines range stipulated by the parties in Paragraph 8 of this Plea Agreement,
16 regardless of how the sentence is determined by the Court. This Agreement does not affect the
17 rights or obligations of the United States as set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3742(b). Nothing in this
18 paragraph, however, will act as a bar to the defendant perfecting any legal remedies he may
19 otherwise have on appeal or collateral attack respecting claims of ineffective assistance of
20 counsel or prosecutorial misconduct. Pursuant to Fed. R. Crim. P. 7(b), the defendant will waive
21 indictment and plead guilty to Count One of the Information filed in this case. Count One of the
22 Information charges the defendant with participating in a conspiracy to suppress and restrain
23 competition by rigging bids to obtain selected properties offered at public real estate foreclosure
24 auctions in Contra Costa County in the Northern District of California (the “selected
25 properties”), in unreasonable restraint of interstate trade and commerce, in violation of the
26 Sherman Antitrust Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1, beginning as early as November 2008 and continuing until
27 in or about January 2011 (the “relevant period”).
28

1 3. The defendant will plead guilty to the criminal charge described in Paragraph 2,
2 above, pursuant to the terms of this Plea Agreement and will make a factual admission of guilt to
3 the Court in accordance with Fed. R. Crim. P. 11, as set forth in Paragraph 4 below.

4 FACTUAL BASIS FOR OFFENSE CHARGED

5 4. The defendant agrees that he is guilty of the offense to which he will plead guilty
6 and agrees that the following facts are true:

7 (a) During the relevant period, the defendant participated in a conspiracy to
8 rig bids to obtain the selected properties. The primary purpose of this conspiracy was to
9 suppress and restrain competition in order to purchase the selected properties at noncompetitive
10 prices. To carry out their conspiracy, the defendant and his co-conspirators agreed not to
11 compete to purchase the selected properties, designated which conspirator would win the
12 selected properties at the public auctions for the group of conspirators, and refrained from or
13 stopped bidding on the selected properties at the public auctions.

14 (b) During the relevant period, the business activities of the defendant and his
15 co-conspirators were within the flow of, and substantially affected, interstate trade and
16 commerce. For example, mortgage holders located in states other than California received
17 proceeds from the public real estate foreclosure auctions that were subject to the bid-rigging
18 conspiracy.

19 (c) During the relevant period, the conspiratorial activities described above
20 took place in the Northern District of California, and the real estate that was the subject of this
21 conspiracy was located in this District.

22 POSSIBLE MAXIMUM SENTENCE

23 5. The defendant understands that the statutory maximum penalty which may be
24 imposed against him upon conviction for a violation of Section One of the Sherman Antitrust
25 Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1, is:

- 26 (a) a term of imprisonment for ten (10) years (15 U.S.C. § 1);
27 (b) a fine in an amount equal to the greatest of (1) \$1 million, (2) twice the
28 gross pecuniary gain the conspirators derived from the crime, or (3) twice the gross pecuniary

1 loss caused to the victims of the crime by the conspirators (15 U.S.C. § 1; 18 U.S.C. § 3571(b)
2 and (d)); and

3 (c) a term of supervised release of three (3) years following any term of
4 imprisonment. If the defendant violates any condition of supervised release, the defendant could
5 be required to serve up to an additional two (2) years in prison (18 U.S.C. § 3559(a)(3); 18
6 U.S.C. § 3583(b)(2) and (e)(3); and United States Sentencing Guidelines (“U.S.S.G.,”
7 “Sentencing Guidelines,” or “Guidelines”) §5D1.2(a)(2)).

8 6. In addition, the defendant understands that:

9 (a) pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5E1.1 or 18 U.S.C. § 3663(a)(3), the Court may
10 order him to pay restitution to the victims of the offense; and

11 (b) pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3013(a)(2)(A), the Court is required to order the
12 defendant to pay a \$100 special assessment upon conviction for the charged crime.

13 SENTENCING GUIDELINES

14 7. The defendant understands that the Sentencing Guidelines are advisory, not
15 mandatory, but that the Court must consider, in determining and imposing sentence, the
16 Guidelines Manual in effect on the date of sentencing unless that Manual provides for greater
17 punishment than the Manual in effect on the last date that the offense of conviction was
18 committed, in which case the Court must consider the Guidelines Manual in effect on the last
19 date that the offense of conviction was committed. The Court must also consider the other
20 factors set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) in determining and imposing sentence. The defendant
21 understands that the Guidelines determinations will be made by the Court by a preponderance-
22 of-the-evidence standard. The defendant understands that although the Court is not ultimately
23 bound to impose a sentence within the applicable Guidelines range, its sentence must be
24 reasonable, based upon consideration of all relevant sentencing factors set forth in 18 U.S.C.
25 § 3553(a). Pursuant to U.S.S.G. §1B1.8, the United States agrees that self-incriminating
26 information that the defendant provides to the United States pursuant to this Plea Agreement will
27 not be used to increase the volume of affected commerce attributable to the defendant or in
28

1 determining the defendant's applicable Guidelines range, except to the extent provided in
 2 U.S.S.G. §1B1.8(b).

3 SENTENCING AGREEMENT

4 8. The United States and the defendant agree that the following Sentencing
 5 Guidelines apply for Count One (15 U.S.C. § 1):

6		
7	(a) Base Offense Level, U.S.S.G. §2R1.1(a):	12
8	(b) Conduct involved agreement to submit noncompetitive	
9	bids, U.S.S.G. §2R1.1(b)(1):	+1
10	(c) Volume of Commerce, U.S.S.G. §2R1.1(b)(2):	+2
11	(d) Downward adjustment for mitigating role in the	
12	offense, U.S.S.G. §3B1.2(b)	-2
13	Total:	13
14	Fine calculated as one to five percent of the volume	
15	of commerce, but not less than \$20,000,	
16	U.S.S.G. §2R1.1(c)(1):	\$60,387 to \$301,935

17 9. The United States agrees that it will make a motion, pursuant to U.S.S.G. § 3E1.1,
 18 for a downward adjustment of two levels for acceptance of responsibility due to the defendant's
 19 timely notification of his intention to enter a guilty plea. Therefore, the total Guidelines
 20 calculations result in an adjusted offense level of 11, for a jail term of 8 to 14 months and a fine
 21 of \$60,387 to \$301,935. The United States agrees to recommend a fine between \$6,000 and
 22 \$60,000.

23 10. The defendant understands that the Court will order him to pay a special
 24 assessment of \$100 pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3013(a)(2)(A), in addition to any fine imposed. The
 25 parties agree that there exists no aggravating or mitigating circumstance of a kind, or to a degree,
 26 not adequately taken into consideration by the U.S. Sentencing Commission in formulating the
 27 Guidelines justifying a departure pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5K2.0.
 28

1 11. The government and the defendant agree to recommend that the Court order the
2 defendant to pay no restitution pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5E1.1(a). However, if the Court orders the
3 defendant to pay restitution, the defendant understands that this Plea Agreement is voidable by
4 the government if he fails to pay the restitution as ordered by the Court. The defendant further
5 agrees that he will not seek to discharge any restitution obligation or any part of such obligation
6 in any bankruptcy proceeding.

7 12. The United States and the defendant are not aware of any information that would
8 affect the defendant's Criminal History Category. If no other information were discovered, the
9 defendant's Criminal History Category would be I. The parties understand that the defendant's
10 Criminal History Category is determined by the Court.

11 13. The defendant understands that the sentence to be imposed on him is within the
12 sole discretion of the sentencing judge. The United States cannot and does not make any
13 promises or representations as to what sentence the defendant will receive. The United States
14 will inform the Probation Office and the Court of (a) this Agreement, (b) the nature and extent of
15 the defendant's activities in this case and all other activities of the defendant that the United
16 States deems relevant to sentencing, and (c) the nature and extent of the defendant's cooperation
17 with the United States. In so doing, the United States may use any information it deems relevant,
18 including information provided by the defendant both prior and subsequent to the signing of this
19 Agreement. The United States reserves the right to make any statement to the Court or the
20 Probation Office concerning the nature of the criminal violation charged in the Information, the
21 participation of the defendant therein, and any other facts or circumstances that it deems relevant.
22 The United States also reserves the right to comment on or
23 to correct any representation made by or on behalf of the defendant and to supply any other
24 information that the Court may require.

25 14. If the United States determines that the defendant has provided substantial
26 assistance in any Federal Proceeding, as defined in Paragraph 17 of this Plea Agreement, and has
27 otherwise fully complied with all of the terms of this Plea Agreement, it will file a motion,
28 pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5K1.1, advising the sentencing judge of all relevant facts pertaining to that

1 determination and requesting the Court to sentence the defendant in light of the factors set forth
2 in U.S.S.G. §5K1.1(a)(1)-(5). The defendant acknowledges that the decision whether he has
3 provided substantial assistance in any Federal Proceeding and has otherwise complied with the
4 terms of this Plea Agreement is within the sole discretion of the United States. It is understood
5 that, should the United States determine that the defendant has not provided substantial
6 assistance in any Federal Proceeding, or should the United States determine that the defendant
7 has violated any provision of this Plea Agreement, such a determination will release the United
8 States from any obligation to file a motion pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5K1.1, but will not entitle the
9 defendant to withdraw his guilty plea once it has been entered. The defendant further
10 understands that, whether or not the United States files a motion pursuant to U.S.S.G. §5K1.1,
11 the sentence to be imposed on him remains within the sole discretion of the sentencing judge.

12 15. Subject to the full, truthful, and continuing cooperation of the defendant, as
13 defined in Paragraph 17 of this Plea Agreement, and prior to sentencing in this case, the United
14 States will fully advise the Court and the Probation Office of the fact, manner, and extent of the
15 defendant's cooperation and his commitment to prospective cooperation with the United States'
16 investigation and prosecutions, all material facts relating to the defendant's involvement in the
17 charged offense, and all other relevant conduct. To enable the Court to have the benefit of all
18 relevant sentencing information, the United States may request, and the defendant will not
19 oppose, that sentencing be postponed until the defendant's cooperation is complete.

20 16. The United States and the defendant understand that the Court retains complete
21 discretion to accept or reject either party's sentencing recommendation. The defendant
22 understands that, as provided in Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(c)(3)(B), if the Court does not impose a
23 sentence consistent with either party's sentencing recommendation, he nevertheless has no right
24 to withdraw his plea of guilty.

25 DEFENDANT'S COOPERATION

26 17. The defendant will cooperate fully and truthfully with the United States in the
27 prosecution of this case, the current federal investigation of violations of federal antitrust and
28 related criminal laws involving the purchase of properties at public real estate foreclosure

1 auctions in the Northern District of California, any other federal investigation resulting
2 therefrom, and any litigation or other proceedings arising or resulting from any such
3 investigation to which the United States is a party (“Federal Proceeding”). The ongoing, full,
4 and truthful cooperation of the defendant shall include, but not be limited to:

5 (a) producing all documents, including claimed personal documents, and
6 other materials, wherever located, not protected under the attorney-client privilege or the work-
7 product doctrine in the possession, custody, or control of the defendant, that are requested by
8 attorneys and agents of the United States in connection with any Federal Proceeding;

9 (b) making himself available for interviews, not at the expense of the United
10 States, upon the request of attorneys and agents of the United States in connection with any
11 Federal Proceeding;

12 (c) responding fully and truthfully to all inquiries of the United States in
13 connection with any Federal Proceeding, without falsely implicating any person or intentionally
14 withholding any information, subject to the penalties of making a false statement or declaration
15 (18 U.S.C. §§ 1001, 1623), obstruction of justice (18 U.S.C. § 1503, *et seq.*), or conspiracy to
16 commit such offenses;

17 (d) otherwise voluntarily providing the United States with any material or
18 information not requested in (a) - (c) of this paragraph and not protected under the attorney-client
19 privilege or work-product doctrine that he may have that is related to any Federal Proceeding;
20 and

21 (e) when called upon to do so by the United States in connection with any
22 Federal Proceeding, testifying in grand jury, trial, and other judicial proceedings fully, truthfully,
23 and under oath, subject to the penalties of perjury (18 U.S.C. § 1621), making a false statement
24 or declaration in grand jury or court proceedings (18 U.S.C. § 1623), contempt (18 U.S.C.
25 §§ 401-402), and obstruction of justice (18 U.S.C. § 1503, *et seq.*).

26 GOVERNMENT’S AGREEMENT

27 18. Subject to the full, truthful, and continuing cooperation of the defendant, as
28 defined in Paragraph 17 of this Plea Agreement, and upon the Court’s acceptance of the guilty

1 plea called for by this Plea Agreement and the imposition of sentence, the United States agrees
2 that it will not bring further criminal charges against the defendant for any act or offense
3 committed before the date of signature of this Plea Agreement that was undertaken in furtherance
4 of an antitrust conspiracy or in violation of any related criminal law involving the purchase of
5 properties at public real estate foreclosure auctions in the Northern District of California
6 (“Relevant Offenses”). The nonprosecution terms of this paragraph do not apply to (a) any acts
7 of perjury or subornation of perjury (18 U.S.C. §§ 1621-22), making a false statement or
8 declaration (18 U.S.C. §§ 1001, 1623), obstruction of justice (18 U.S.C. § 1503, *et seq.*),
9 contempt (18 U.S.C. §§ 401-402), or conspiracy to commit such offenses; (b) civil matters of
10 any kind; (c) any violation of the federal tax or securities laws or conspiracy to commit such
11 offenses; or (d) any crime of violence.

12 19. The defendant understands that he may be subject to administrative action by
13 federal or state agencies other than the United States Department of Justice, Antitrust Division,
14 based upon the conviction resulting from this Plea Agreement, and that this Plea Agreement in
15 no way controls whatever action, if any, other agencies may take. However, the United States
16 agrees that, if requested, it will advise the appropriate officials of any governmental agency
17 considering such administrative action of the fact, manner, and extent of the cooperation of the
18 defendant as a matter for that agency to consider before determining what administrative action,
19 if any, to take.

20 REPRESENTATION BY COUNSEL

21 20. The defendant has reviewed all legal and factual aspects of this case with his
22 attorney and is fully satisfied with his attorney’s legal representation. The defendant has
23 thoroughly reviewed this Plea Agreement with his attorney and has received satisfactory
24 explanations from his attorney concerning each paragraph of this Plea Agreement and
25 alternatives available to the defendant other than entering into this Plea Agreement. After
26 conferring with his attorney and considering all available alternatives, the defendant has made a
27 knowing and voluntary decision to enter into this Plea Agreement.
28

1 VOLUNTARY PLEA

2 21. The defendant's decision to enter into this Plea Agreement and to tender a plea of
3 guilty is freely and voluntarily made and is not the result of force, threats, assurances, promises,
4 or representations other than the representations contained in this Plea Agreement. The United
5 States has made no promises or representations to the defendant as to whether the Court will
6 accept or reject the recommendations contained within this Plea Agreement.

7 VIOLATION OF PLEA AGREEMENT

8 22. The defendant agrees that, should the United States determine in good faith,
9 during the period that any Federal Proceeding is pending, that the defendant has failed to provide
10 full, truthful, and continuing cooperation, as defined in Paragraph 17 of this Plea Agreement, or
11 has otherwise violated any provision of this Plea Agreement, the United States will notify
12 counsel for the defendant in writing by personal or overnight delivery, email, or facsimile
13 transmission and may also notify counsel by telephone of its intention to void any of its
14 obligations under this Plea Agreement (except its obligations under this paragraph), and the
15 defendant will be subject to prosecution for any federal crime of which the United States has
16 knowledge, including, but not limited to, the substantive offenses relating to the investigation
17 resulting in this Plea Agreement. The defendant may seek Court review of any determination
18 made by the United States under this paragraph to void any of its obligations under this Plea
19 Agreement. The defendant agrees that, in the event that the United States is released from its
20 obligations under this Plea Agreement and brings criminal charges against the defendant for any
21 Relevant Offense, the statute of limitations period for such offense will be tolled for the period
22 between the date of signature of this Plea Agreement and six (6) months after the date the United
23 States gave notice of its intent to void its obligations under this Plea Agreement.

24 23. The defendant understands and agrees that in any further prosecution of him
25 resulting from the release of the United States from its obligations under this Plea Agreement
26 because of the defendant's violation of this Plea Agreement, any documents, statements,
27 information, testimony, or evidence provided by him to attorneys or agents of the United States,
28 federal grand juries, or courts, and any leads derived therefrom, may be used against him. In

1 addition, the defendant unconditionally waives his right to challenge the use of such evidence in
2 any such further prosecution, notwithstanding the protections of Fed. R. Evid. 410.

3 ENTIRETY OF AGREEMENT

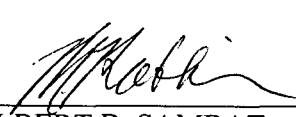
4 24. This Plea Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the United States
5 and the defendant concerning the disposition of the criminal charges in this case and supersedes
6 and replaces in its entirety any prior plea agreement between the parties concerning the
7 disposition of the criminal charges in this case. This Plea Agreement cannot be modified except
8 in writing, signed by the United States and the defendant.

9 25. The undersigned attorneys for the United States have been authorized by the
10 Attorney General of the United States to enter this Plea Agreement on behalf of the United
11 States.


12 26. A facsimile or PDF signature will be deemed an original signature for the purpose
13 of executing this Plea Agreement. Multiple signature pages are authorized for the purpose of
14 executing this Plea Agreement.

15 
16 _____
17 GERNOT SEBASTIAN ZEPERNICK
18 Defendant

18 Dated: 12/28/2016

15 
16 _____
17 ALBERT B. SAMBAT
18 MICHAEL A. RABKIN
19 United States Department of Justice
20 Antitrust Division

20 Dated: 12/28/2016

19 
20 _____
21 SANJAY BHANDARI
22 Counsel for Defendant Gernot Sebastian
23 Zepernick

23 Dated: Dec. 28, 2016