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8  
9 BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL PROTECTION AND INNOVATION  
10 OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

11 In the Matter of: ) CFL LICENSE NO.: 60DBO-106147  
12 THE COMMISSIONER OF FINANCIAL ) CONSENT ORDER  
13 PROTECTION AND INNOVATION, )  
14 Complainant, )  
15 v. )  
16 SME PARTNERS LLC, )  
17 Respondent. )  
18 )  
19 )

20 This Consent Order is entered into between the Commissioner of Financial Protection and  
21 Innovation (Complainant or Commissioner) and Respondent SME PARTNERS LLC (Respondent)  
22 and is made with respect to the following facts:

23 **I.**

24 **RECITALS**

25 A. The Commissioner has jurisdiction over the licensing and regulation of persons and  
26 entities engaged in the business of finance lending or brokering under the California Financing Law  
27 (CFL) (Fin. Code, § 22000 et seq.).  
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1           B.       Respondent is a limited liability company, with a principal place of business at 1396  
2 W. Herndon Ave. Ste. 110, Fresno, California 93711.

3           C.       Respondent is licensed as a finance lender under the CFL with main license number  
4 60DBO-106147.

5           D.       Respondent conducts business under its CFL license at its primary place of business  
6 described in paragraph B. above and does not operate any branch offices in California.

7           E.       In accordance with Financial Code section 22159, CFL licensees must file an annual  
8 report with the Commissioner by March 15 of each year (Annual Report).

9           F.       On December 21, 2020, the Commissioner notified CFL licensees of the March 15,  
10 2021 deadline to file their annual reports by sending notice to the email address of each CFL  
11 licensee established pursuant to the Commissioner’s Order on Electronic Communications, dated  
12 November 22, 2013. The notification admonished licensees that the Commissioner could assess  
13 penalties for untimely filing or failing to file pursuant to Financial Code section 22715(b).

14           G.       On January 21, 2021, the Commissioner again notified CFL licensees of the March  
15 15, 2021 deadline to file their annual reports by sending notice to the email address each CFL  
16 licensee established pursuant to the Commissioner’s Order on Electronic Communications, dated  
17 November 22, 2013. The notification again warned that the Commissioner could assess monetary  
18 penalties for untimely filing or failing to file pursuant to Financial Code section 22715(b).

19           H.       On February 16, 2021, the Commissioner again notified CFL licensees of the March  
20 15, 2021 deadline to file their annual reports by sending notice to the email address each CFL  
21 licensee established pursuant to the Commissioner’s Order on Electronic Communications, dated  
22 November 22, 2013. The notification warned that the Commissioner could assess penalties and  
23 summarily revoke licenses for untimely filing or failing to file pursuant to Financial Code section  
24 22715.

25           I.       On March 12, 2021, the Commissioner again notified CFL licensees of the March 15,  
26 2021 deadline to file their annual reports by sending notice to the email address each CFL licensee  
27 established pursuant to the Commissioner’s Order on Electronic Communications, dated November  
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1 22, 2013. The notification warned that the Commissioner could assess penalties and summarily  
2 revoke licenses for untimely filing or failing to file pursuant to Financial Code section 22715.

3 J. As of March 15, 2021, Respondent had not filed its Annual Report with the  
4 Commissioner. As a result, the Commissioner issued a notice on March 18, 2021 to Respondent to  
5 Respondent’s email address established pursuant to the Commissioner’s Order on Electronic  
6 Communications, dated November 22, 2013, advising Respondent that it should file its annual report  
7 by or before March 30, 2021 or else its license would be summarily revoked pursuant to Financial  
8 Code section 22715 (Notice email).

9 K. As of March 30, 2021, Respondent had not filed its Annual Report with the  
10 Commissioner as directed in the Notice Letter. As a result, on April 16, 2021, the Commissioner  
11 issued an Order Summarily Revoking California Finance Lenders License Pursuant to Financial  
12 Code Section 22715 for CFL License Number 60DBO-106147 (Summary Revocation Order(s)).

13 L. Upon receiving the Summary Revocation Order(s), Respondent timely notified the  
14 Commissioner that Respondent was requesting a hearing on the Summary Revocation Order(s).

15 M. On May 3, Respondent submitted its Annual Report, which was due on March 15,  
16 2021, 34 business days late. Pursuant to Financial Code Section 22715, the maximum penalty that  
17 may be imposed for filing 34 business days late is \$15,000.00 (\$100 per business day for the first  
18 five business days and \$500 per business day thereafter up to a maximum of \$25,000).

19 N. In connection with these proceedings, Respondent represented to the Commissioner  
20 that it had taken no new applications under its license.

21 O. The Commissioner finds that entering into this Consent Order is in the public interest  
22 and consistent with the purposes fairly intended by the policies and provisions of the CFL.

23 NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, and the terms and conditions set  
24 forth herein, the parties agree as follows:

25 **II.**

26 **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

27 1. Purpose. The parties intend to resolve this matter for the purpose of judicial economy  
28 and expediency and without the uncertainty and expense of a hearing or other litigation.

1           2.       Order Rescinding Penalty Order. The Commissioner hereby rescinds Summary  
2 Revocation Order(s), which had been issued on April 16, 2021.

3           3.       Administrative Penalty. Respondent shall pay an administrative penalty of \$5,000.00  
4 no later than 30 days after the effective date of this Consent Order as defined in paragraph 25. The  
5 penalty must be made payable in the form of a cashier’s check or Automated Clearing House deposit  
6 to the Department of Financial Protection and Innovation and transmitted to the attention of  
7 Accounting – Litigation, Department of Financial Protection and Innovation, 2101 Arena Boulevard,  
8 Sacramento, California 95834. Notice of the payment must be concurrently sent to Noah M. Bean,  
9 Senior Counsel, Department of Financial Protection and Innovation, 2101 Arena Boulevard,  
10 Sacramento, California 95834.

11           4.       Failure to Pay Administrative Penalty. If Respondent fails to comply with paragraph  
12 3, the Commissioner may summarily suspend Respondent from engaging in business under its  
13 license until it provides evidence of compliance to the Commissioner’s satisfaction. Respondent  
14 hereby waives any notice or hearing rights afforded under the Administrative Procedure Act,  
15 including Government Code section 11415.60, subdivision (b); Code of Civil Procedure; or any  
16 other provision of law to contest the summary suspension contemplated by this paragraph.

17           5.       Waiver of Hearing Rights. Respondent acknowledges the Commissioner is ready,  
18 willing, and able to proceed with the filing of an administrative enforcement action on the charges  
19 contained in this Consent Order. Respondent hereby waives the right to any hearings, and to any  
20 reconsideration, appeal, or other right to review which may be afforded pursuant to the CFL, the  
21 California Administrative Procedure Act, the California Code of Civil Procedure, or any other  
22 provision of law. Respondent further expressly waives any requirement for the filing of an  
23 Accusation pursuant to Government section 11415.60, subdivision (b). By waiving such rights,  
24 Respondent effectively consents to this Consent Order and the Order Rescinding the Penalty Order  
25 becoming final.

26           6.       Full and Final Resolution. The parties hereby acknowledge and agree that this  
27 Consent Order is intended to constitute a full and final resolution of the violations described herein,  
28 and that no further proceedings or actions will be brought by the Commissioner in connection with

1 these matters except under the CFL or any other provision of law, or excepting therefrom any  
2 proceeding to enforce compliance with the terms of this Consent Order.

3 7. Failure to Comply with Consent Order. Respondent agrees that if it fails to comply  
4 with the terms of this Consent Order, the Commissioner may, in addition to all other available  
5 remedies it may invoke under the CFL, summarily suspend/revoke the CFL license of Respondent  
6 until Respondent is in compliance. Respondent waives any notice and hearing rights to contest such  
7 summary suspensions/revocations which may be afforded under the CFL, the California  
8 Administrative Procedure Act, the California Code of Civil Procedure, or any other provision of law  
9 in connection therewith.

10 8. Information Willfully Withheld or Misrepresented. This Consent Order may be  
11 revoked, and the Commissioner may pursue any and all remedies available under law against  
12 Respondent if the Commissioner discovers that Respondent knowingly or willfully withheld or  
13 misrepresented information used for and relied upon in this Consent Order.

14 9. Future Actions by Commissioner. If Respondent fails to comply with the terms of the  
15 Consent Order, the Commissioner may institute proceedings for any and all violations otherwise  
16 resolved under this Consent Order. The Commissioner reserves the right to bring any future actions  
17 against Respondent, or any of its partners, owners, officers, shareholders, directors, employees or  
18 successors for any and all unknown violations of this CFL.

19 10. Assisting Other Agencies. Nothing in this Consent Order limits the  
20 Commissioner's ability to assist any other government agency (city, county, state or federal) with  
21 any prosecution, administrative, civil or criminal action brought by that agency against Respondent  
22 or any other person based on any of the activities alleged in this matter or otherwise.

23 11. No Presumption Against Drafter. Each party acknowledges that it has had the  
24 opportunity to draft, review, and edit the language of this Consent Order. Accordingly, the parties  
25 intend no presumption for or against the drafting party will apply in construing any part of this  
26 Consent Order. The parties waive the benefit of Civil Code section 1654 as amended or  
27 corresponding provisions of any successor statute, which provide that in cases of uncertainty,  
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1 language of a contract should be interpreted most strongly against the party who caused the  
2 uncertainty to exist.

3 12. Independent Legal Advice. Each of the parties represents, warrants, and agrees that it  
4 has received independent advice from its attorney(s) and/or representatives with respect to the  
5 advisability of executing this Consent Order.

6 13. Headings. The headings to the paragraphs of this Consent Order are inserted for  
7 convenience only and will not be deemed a part hereof or affect the construction or interpretation of  
8 the provisions hereof.

9 14. Binding. This Consent Order is binding on all heirs, assigns, and/or successors in  
10 interest.

11 15. Reliance. Each of the parties represents, warrants, and agrees that in executing this  
12 Consent Order, it has relied solely on the statements set forth herein and the advice of its own legal  
13 counsel. Each of the parties further represents, warrants, and agrees that in executing this Consent  
14 Order it has placed no reliance on any statement, representation, or promise of any other party, or  
15 any other person or entity not expressly set forth herein, or upon the failure of any party or any other  
16 person or entity to make any statement, representation, or disclosure of anything whatsoever. The  
17 parties have included this clause: (1) to preclude any claim that any party was in any way  
18 fraudulently induced to execute this Consent Order; and (2) to preclude the introduction of parol  
19 evidence to vary, interpret, supplement, or contradict the terms of this Consent Order.

20 16. Waiver, Amendments, and Modifications. No waiver, amendment, or modification of  
21 this Consent Order will be valid or binding unless it is in writing and signed by each of the parties.  
22 The waiver of any provision of this Consent Order will not be deemed a waiver of any other  
23 provision. No waiver by either party of any breach of, or of compliance with, any condition or  
24 provision of this Consent Order by the other party will be considered a waiver of any other condition  
25 or provision or of the same condition or provision at another time.

26 17. Full Integration. This Consent Order is the final written expression and the complete  
27 and exclusive statement of all the agreements, conditions, promises, representations, and covenants  
28 between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof, and supersedes all prior or

1 contemporaneous agreements, negotiations, representations, understandings, and discussions  
2 between and among the parties, their respective representatives, and any other person or entity, with  
3 respect to the subject matter covered hereby.

4 18. Governing Law. This Consent Order will be governed by and construed in  
5 accordance with California law. Each of the parties hereto consents to the jurisdiction of such court  
6 and thereby irrevocably waives, to the fullest extent permitted by law, the defense of an inconvenient  
7 forum to the maintenance of such action or proceeding in such court.

8 19. Counterparts. This Consent Order may be executed in one or more separate  
9 counterparts, each of which when so executed, shall be deemed an original. Such counterparts shall  
10 together constitute a single document.

11 20. Effect Upon Future Proceedings. If Respondent applies for any license, permit or  
12 qualification under the Commissioner’s current jurisdiction, or are the subject of any future action by  
13 the Commissioner to enforce this Consent Order, then the subject matter hereof shall be admitted for  
14 the purpose of such application(s) or enforcement proceeding(s).

15 21. Voluntary Agreement. Respondent hereby enters into this Consent Order voluntarily  
16 and without coercion and acknowledges that no promises, threats, or assurances have been made by  
17 the Commissioner or any officer, or agent thereof, about this Consent Order. The parties each  
18 represent and acknowledge that he, she or it is executing this Consent Order completely voluntarily  
19 and without any duress or undue influence of any kind from any source.

20 22. Notice. Any notice required under this Consent Order shall be provided to each party  
21 at the following addresses:

22 To Respondent: SME PARTNERS LLC  
23 c/o Jason Hollrah  
24 1396 W. Herndon Ave. Ste. 110  
25 Fresno, California 93711  
jhollrah@assemigroup.com

26 To the Commissioner: Noah M. Bean, Senior Counsel  
27 Department of Financial Protection and Innovation  
28 2101 Arena Boulevard  
Sacramento, California 95834  
Noah.Bean@dfpi.ca.gov

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23. Signatures. A fax or electronic mail signature shall be deemed the same as an original signature.

24. Public Record. Respondent hereby acknowledges that the Consent Order is and will be a matter of public record.

25. Effective Date. This Consent Order shall become final and effective when signed by all parties and delivered by the Commissioner’s agent via e-mail to Respondent at the following email address: jhollrah@assemigroup.com.

26. Authority to Sign. Each signatory hereto covenants that he/she possesses all necessary capacity and authority to sign and enter into this Consent Order and undertake the obligations set forth herein.

Dated: May 12, 2021

MANUEL P. ALVAREZ  
Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation



By \_\_\_\_\_  
MARY ANN SMITH  
Deputy Commissioner  
Enforcement Division

Dated: May 11, 2021

SME PARTNERS LLC

By \_\_\_\_\_  
JASON HOLLRAH  
Manager