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1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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3 BLAKE LIVELY,

4 Plaintiff,

5 v.

24 Civ. 10049 (LJL)
25 Civ. 00779 (LJL)

6 WAYFARER STUDIOS LLC, ET AL.,

Conference

7 Defendants.

8 -----x

New York, N.Y.
December 9, 2025
10:30 a.m.

11 Before:

12 HON. LEWIS J. LIMAN,

District Judge

14 APPEARANCES

15 WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER
Attorneys for Plaintiff Blake Lively

16 BY: MICHAEL GOTTLIEB
AARON E. NATHAN

17 -and-

18 MANATT, PHELPS & PHILLIPS
BY: MATTHEW F. BRUNO

19 LINER FREEDMAN TAITELMAN COOLEY, LLP
BY: BRYAN FREEDMAN

20 ELLYN GAROFALO

21 Attorneys for Defendants Wayfarer Studios LLC, Justin
Baldoni, Jamey Heath, Steve Sarowitz, It Ends With Us
22 Movie LLC, Melissa Nathan, Agency Group LLC, and Jennifer
Abel

-and-

23 MEISTER SEELIG & FEIN LLP
BY: MITCHELL SHUSTER

24 KEVIN FRITZ

25 -and-

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APPEARANCES (Continued)

SHAPIRO ARATO BACH LLP
BY: JONATHAN BACH
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QUINN EMANUEL URQUHART & SULLIVAN, LLP
Attorneys for Third-Party Defendant Jonesworks, LLC, and
Stephanie Jones
BY: MORGAN L. ANASTASIO
MAAREN SHAH
KRISTIN TAHLER

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1 (Case called)

2 MR. GOTTLIEB: Good morning, your Honor. Mike
3 Gottlieb from Willkie Farr & Gallagher on behalf of Blake
4 Lively and Ryan Reynolds.

5 MR. NATHAN: Good morning, your Honor. Aaron Nathan
6 from Willkie Farr & Gallagher on behalf of Blake Lively and
7 Ryan Reynolds.

8 MR. BRUNO: Good morning, your Honor. Matthew Bruno
9 of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips on behalf of Plaintiffs.

10 MS. SHAH: Good morning, your Honor. Maaren Shah from
11 Quinn Emanuel on behalf of Stephanie Jones and Jonesworks.

12 MS. TAHLER: Good morning, your Honor. Kristin Tahler
13 from Quinn Emanuel on behalf of Stephanie Jones and Jonesworks.

14 MS. ANASTASIO: Good morning, your Honor. Morgan
15 Anastasio also with Quinn Emanuel for Stephanie Jones and
16 Jonesworks.

17 THE COURT: Good morning.

18 MR. FREEDMAN: Good morning, your Honor. Bryan
19 Freedman on behalf of Wayfarer Studios LLC, It Ends With Us
20 Movie LLC, Justin Baldoni, Jamey Heath, Steve Sarowitz, Melissa
21 Nathan, Agency Group, and Jennifer Abel.

22 THE COURT: Good morning.

23 MS. GAROFALO: Good morning, your Honor. Ellyn
24 Garofalo on behalf of the Wayfarer defendants.

25 MR. BACH: Good morning, your Honor. Jonathan Bach on

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1 behalf of the same defendants.

2 MS. SHAPIRO: Good morning, your Honor. Alexandra
3 Shapiro also on behalf of the defendants.

4 THE COURT: Welcome to the case, Mr. Bach and
5 Ms. Shapiro.

6 MR. SHUSTER: Good morning, your Honor. Mitchell
7 Shuster from Meister Seelig & Fein on behalf of the defendants.

8 MR. FRITZ: Good morning, your Honor. Kevin Fritz
9 from Meister Seelig & Fein on behalf of the same parties.

10 THE COURT: Good morning, all. All right. So we are
11 here for a post-discovery conference. Let me hear first from
12 Mr. Gottlieb about the status of the case. Then I will hear
13 from counsel for Jonesworks. Then I will hear from the
14 defendants.

15 MR. GOTTLIEB: Would you like us at the podium, your
16 Honor?

17 THE COURT: Whatever suits you. The podium would be
18 helpful.

19 MR. GOTTLIEB: So, your Honor, the progress of
20 discovery is, from our perspective at least, that it's nearly
21 complete. There are expert depositions occurring this week
22 that should be completed -- will be completed by this Friday.
23 I think there's five more that are occurring. And as far as
24 fact discovery goes, there are certain pending motions that we
25 think continue to require resolution by the Court, and I will

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1 address which ones those are. But other than that, in our
2 view, we are on track to complete the required tasks by the
3 conclusion of expert discovery at the end of this week.

4 The motions that we believe are pending and require
5 resolution prior to trial, we believe that there is the
6 spoliation motion, which as of last night has been fully
7 briefed, and that motion is ripe for decision. In our view,
8 the spoliation motions should be -- and we have laid this out
9 in our papers -- we would like it to be decided in conjunction
10 with the motions for summary judgment for a number of reasons
11 that we have laid out already in the papers, one of which is
12 that adverse inferences may be relevant to the Court's decision
13 on summary judgment, and we have cited some authority for that
14 proposition in the briefs.

15 The other is that if adverse inferences or preclusion
16 instructions are granted, as we have requested, that will, in
17 our view, narrow issues for trial and also affect trial
18 preparation as we are entering the pretrial period. And so for
19 that reason, we would ask that the spoliation motion be
20 resolved at the Court's earliest available opportunity.

21 We are not certain whether the Court will want to hold
22 a hearing on that pending motion, but to the extent the Court
23 wants to hold a hearing, we are, of course, prepared to appear
24 for a hearing and provide whatever the Court feels is necessary
25 in terms of argument or evidence with respect to that motion.

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1 But that's, sort of, our first order of business from our
2 perspective.

3 The other motions that, in our view, are pending that
4 would be useful to have resolution in advance of trial, or at
5 least action along a schedule, there is Ms. Lively's 47.1
6 motion, California 47.1 motion, that is fully briefed and
7 awaiting further action from the Court. In that motion,
8 Ms. Lively has raised claims under California Statute, Civil
9 Code Section 47.1 requesting treble damages, punitive damages,
10 as well as attorney's fees as a result of the retaliatory
11 claims as argued in the motion brought by the Wayfarer parties
12 against Ms. Lively for exercising her protected rights.

13 It's our position, again, as we have laid out in the
14 briefing -- and this is in Docket No. 743 -- that this motion
15 should be decided prior to trial in part because of the
16 statutory purpose laid out by Section 47.1 that is designed to
17 make the statute's remedies available at the earliest stage of
18 litigation, while also serving the statutory purpose of
19 deterring retaliatory litigation.

20 As we have laid out in the papers, we are able to,
21 ready to participate in an evidentiary hearing on this should
22 the Court deem it necessary. We have sort of, I think,
23 outlined our thinking as to why further hearings may not be
24 necessary on this, but we are certainly prepared to participate
25 in one should the Court set it. But we think, in any event, a

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1 schedule ought to be put in place in order to try to harmonize
2 that process alongside the trial schedule that is set for
3 March 9.

4 Apart from that motion, there is also pending and
5 fully briefed motions under Rule 11 that have been filed in the
6 same action, the Wayfarer parties' actions brought against
7 Ms. Lively and Mr. Reynolds. Those motions are fully briefed
8 and pending resolution by the Court, as well as the motion for
9 sanctions under New York Professional Conduct Rule 3.6 that
10 is -- a motion for sanctions. With respect to the Rule 11
11 motions, the same rationale, we think, applies, that a schedule
12 ought to be set. To the extent the Court needs to potentially
13 take evidence or wants to hold a hearing on those, we think
14 that ought to be harmonized with the trial schedule in this
15 case and could proceed expeditiously in advance of trial if the
16 Court has time for it.

17 With respect to the 3.6 motion, we do think it makes
18 sense to resolve that prior to trial in light of the likely
19 publicity that will take place around the trial, and it would
20 be useful to have the Court's ruling and guidance with respect
21 to those pending issues before we get into that period.

22 Other than those --

23 THE COURT: Of course, with respect to trial
24 publicity, that can also be addressed through a motion in
25 limine. And my assumption has been that there are going to be

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1 a number of issues that are raised with respect to sealed
2 material and trial publicity that the parties will want to
3 raise in motions in limine on both sides.

4 Is that an unfair assumption on my part?

5 MR. GOTTLIEB: I assume there will be issues that --
6 in the sealing motions that address -- have potential spillover
7 effect into publicity just because it will affect what
8 documents are out in the public domain or not. But I don't
9 think those motions will implicate the, sort of, proper scope
10 of attorney statements to the press and to the media, which is
11 the subject of the pending 3.6 motion.

12 So it's not clear to me that the Court would need to
13 wait for resolution of either the pending sealing motions or
14 whatever motions in limine are made about testimony that may
15 happen in court when the 3.6 motion is really addressed at
16 media statements and media appearances that will be happening
17 outside of court.

18 THE COURT: I understand your interest in having the
19 motion addressed. I was actually thinking ahead to motions in
20 limine, whether there might be a motion in limine with respect
21 to trial publicity. I don't know if you have gotten that far
22 in your thinking.

23 MR. GOTTLIEB: I don't think we have, your Honor. I
24 think, you know, we obviously have the deadline for motions in
25 limine in mind and are thinking about different motions we are

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1 likely to file, but I don't think we have gotten quite that far
2 along.

3 Other than those motions, your Honor, obviously, we
4 have the various sealing motions that will be filed. In our
5 view, given that there will be numerous sealing motions that
6 are expected to be filed next week, our view is that it's
7 probably most efficient, or we think it would be most efficient
8 for the Court just to decide all of those together. But we
9 don't have a strong feeling on the sequencing of the various
10 sealing motions that may exist.

11 THE COURT: It will not surprise you that I have got
12 some thoughts with respect to sealing. It also probably will
13 not surprise you that I have tried to turn to the sealing
14 motions relatively quickly, given the First Amendment issues
15 that are involved whenever documents are filed under seal.

16 MR. GOTTLIEB: Yes.

17 THE COURT: I will get to that after I have heard from
18 everybody and have a chance to absorb what folks are saying.

19 MR. GOTTLIEB: Your Honor, we understand that and
20 appreciate it.

21 Other than those motions, your Honor, we believe that,
22 sort of, takes care of the pending motions from our
23 perspective.

24 THE COURT: All right. Let me hear from counsel for
25 Jonesworks.

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1 MS. SHAH: Thank you, your Honor. Maaren Shah for
2 Stephanie Jones and Jonesworks.

3 So, as your Honor knows, we have our separate case,
4 *Jones v. Abel, et al.*, with its motions and deadlines, and we
5 also are a third-party defendant in the Lively case with
6 respect to Jennifer Abel's claim for indemnification in that
7 case. So I will try to address those both separately in the
8 different actions.

9 Starting with the Lively case, we are on the same
10 discovery schedule as the Lively case, and so, you know,
11 everything that Mr. Gottlieb said applies to us too in terms of
12 where we are in discovery, which is all substantially
13 completed. We are in the midst of expert discovery, and I will
14 get to those deadlines in a moment.

15 The outstanding motions that we have in the Lively
16 case are a spoliation motion that we filed on the same schedule
17 as Mr. Gottlieb's firm in the Lively case, which is fully
18 briefed, and defer to your Honor as to whether you would like
19 argument on that motion. We also just filed yesterday --
20 forgive me.

21 In the Lively case --

22 THE COURT: You also indicated that in the Lively
23 case, that you intend to seek a severance; is that right?

24 MS. SHAH: Yes, your Honor. I was just about to get
25 to that. So in that case we also have Jennifer Abel's motion

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1 for summary judgment on indemnification, which I believe will
2 be fully briefed by Friday. Those are the two outstanding
3 motions from us in the Lively case.

4 We do intend to seek bifurcation in that case and
5 happy to address that if your Honor prefers.

6 THE COURT: Well, let me ask you the question about
7 timing on that.

8 MS. SHAH: Sure.

9 THE COURT: Would it make sense for the Court to
10 resolve the issue of bifurcation at the same time as it
11 resolves the issue of summary judgment, the Wayfarer parties'
12 motion for summary judgment against Lively in the Lively
13 action?

14 It seems like it's hard for me to figure out whether
15 to bifurcate you when I am not 100 percent sure what I am
16 bifurcating you from.

17 MS. SHAH: I think that does make good sense, your
18 Honor. To the extent that the motion may limit the issues or
19 at least clarify the issues, I think it makes sense to decide
20 bifurcation perhaps along the same timeline as you decide the
21 summary judgment motion in Lively and Abel's summary judgment
22 motion in Lively on the indemnification claim, yes.

23 THE COURT: And if I were to grant your motion for
24 bifurcation, I take it there is no particular urgency with
25 respect to spoliation. You would just want that to be resolved

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1 before you were to go to trial on your case.

2 MS. SHAH: I think that's right, your Honor. I think
3 that's right. For our purposes, as you know, we are seeking an
4 adverse inference and preclusion in the spoliation motion on
5 Abel's arguments with respect to indemnification. So I do
6 think I agree with your Honor that we would be happy to have
7 that decided in advance of our portion of the trial on
8 indemnification.

9 THE COURT: Anything else I should know from you?

10 MS. SHAH: Yes. In the separate case that we have,
11 *Jones v. Abel*, we still have expert discovery ongoing, which is
12 on a different schedule than the Lively case. So we have
13 filed -- served expert opening reports. Expert rebuttal
14 reports are due at the end of this month, and then the parties
15 have agreed to a mid January deadline for the completion of
16 expert depositions.

17 Past that deadline, we don't have any current pretrial
18 deadlines for motions for summary judgment in that case,
19 pretrial motions or a trial date, which we defer to your Honor
20 as to whether you would like to set a further schedule today.
21 But we do still need a further scheduling order for the
22 remainder of our case.

23 THE COURT: Have you in *Jones v. Abel* discussed with
24 your adversary any proposals with respect to summary judgment
25 deadlines?

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1 MS. SHAH: We have not, but we are happy to confer and
2 do that and make a proposal to your Honor in writing in a joint
3 letter.

4 THE COURT: OK.

5 MS. SHAH: In addition, in the *Jones v. Abel* case, we
6 have two outstanding motions. One is our motion to dismiss
7 Wayfarer's counterclaims, which has been pending. And the
8 second is, last night we filed a motion to amend that complaint
9 on a few narrow grounds, essentially to conform the defendants
10 and two additional causes of action to facts uncovered in
11 discovery, and so that is pending.

12 We have not had a chance to come to ground with the
13 Wayfarer parties -- I am sure you will hear from them -- as to
14 whether they intend to oppose that motion to amend or not. We
15 fully understand they probably need time to consider it now
16 that we have filed it, and come to a position on that. So we
17 are also happy to confer with them after the conference, once
18 they have had a chance to evaluate the pleading, whether they
19 intend to oppose and, if so, what a briefing schedule on that
20 might look like, if that is helpful for your Honor.

21 THE COURT: OK. One of my preliminary thoughts with
22 respect to *Jones v. Abel*, having looked at your motion to
23 amend, is that I would not require summary judgment papers and
24 clearly would not issue a ruling with respect to summary
25 judgment until I decide the motion to amend.

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1 MS. SHAH: I think that makes good sense, your Honor.

2 THE COURT: All right. Thank you.

3 MS. SHAH: Thank you.

4 Mr. Freedman.

5 MR. FREEDMAN: Thank you, your Honor, and good
6 morning.

7 From a readiness standpoint, we don't disagree with
8 Mr. Gottlieb with respect to where we are, what outstanding
9 motions there are, all of those. What we do believe strongly
10 is that the motion for judgment on the pleadings and the
11 motions for summary judgment should be decided, and that will
12 dictate everything else in terms of limitation of the case.
13 And we think those are the primary motions that should be
14 decided.

15 With respect to the spoliation motion, depending upon
16 how the Court rules on the summary judgment motions and the
17 motion for judgment on the pleadings, in particular with
18 respect to extraterritoriality, may obviate the need for the
19 Court to even rule on the spoliation motion. But we defer to
20 the Court on what the Court wants to do in terms of handling
21 those in an omnibus fashion or dealing with those concurrently
22 with the motion for judgment on the pleadings and motions for
23 summary judgment.

24 THE COURT: Anything else from you, Mr. Freedman?

25 MR. FREEDMAN: No, that is it. We interestingly agree

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1 on many of the issues.

2 THE COURT: All right.

3 MR. FREEDMAN: Thank you, your Honor.

4 THE COURT: So let me give you some thoughts. First
5 of all, one thing that Mr. Gottlieb did not mention but that is
6 before the Court is the dispute with respect to the parties on
7 privileged documents. And I am putting an order on the docket
8 today, it may have even issued, that calls for the privileged
9 documents to be produced to the Court in camera for the Court
10 to review, and I will try to give you an answer on those before
11 the end of the year.

12 I am going to refer the parties in both cases to
13 Magistrate Judge Cave for settlement purposes. I don't have a
14 view with respect to settlement. I never have a view with
15 respect to settlement. I am here to resolve legal issues and
16 to try cases, but you are directed to contact her chambers for
17 settlement purposes.

18 On the material submitted under seal, I would like --
19 I really would benefit from the parties' thoughts on how to
20 efficiently handle the sealing process. It's ended up
21 consuming a fair amount of the Court's time. I am sure it's
22 taken up a fair amount of the parties' time. I am very
23 sensitive to the interests of the public in making sure that
24 they get access to everything that the public is entitled to
25 get access to. With respect to summary judgment there is a

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1 presumption of public access. There needs to be weighty
2 countervailing interest to overcome that presumption.

3 My immediate thought is to direct the parties to meet
4 and confer with respect to whether there are certain documents
5 and certain informational documents that the parties agree
6 should be filed under seal. The easiest category are telephone
7 numbers and e-mail addresses, which I have routinely permitted
8 to be filed under seal. But by mentioning those, I don't mean
9 to exclude any other categories or to say that other categories
10 have to be analogous to those. But it does seem to me that the
11 burden on the Court and the parties might be easiest if you can
12 just identify for me, and identify for me in a way that I can
13 reduce to an order what can be filed under seal.

14 December 19 is the deadline for sealing motions, so I
15 would like the agreed-upon sealing motions to be filed on
16 December 19. That said, if after this conference you meet and
17 confer and decide you need a little bit more time, and I say
18 just a little bit more time, to meet and confer, to deal with
19 this massive amounts of information, send me a letter, and as
20 long as it's a reasonable request, keeping in mind the
21 interests of the public, I will likely grant it.

22 There also is, with respect to materials under seal,
23 the issue of audiotapes and videotapes that we have confronted
24 earlier in this case. You are all aware, and I think the
25 public is now aware, that audiotapes and videotapes cannot be

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1 filed on ECF. The way we have handled it in the past and the
2 way I am directing it be handled is that you provide to the
3 Clerk of Court CDs with the audio or video material that has
4 been unsealed. You provide that to the Clerk of Court within
5 two days of an order unsealing that information along with a
6 copy of the Court's order unsealing the audio and video
7 information so that any member of the public who wants it can
8 go to the Clerk's Office and get a copy of it.

9 Also on the subject of sealing, if there is
10 information as to which a party makes a sealing request, keep
11 in mind that the justification at this stage particularly
12 cannot be generic. I say that again because there is a
13 presumption of public access, and there must be weighty
14 countervailing interest to overcome that presumption. If the
15 justification is generic and not sufficiently specific, I am
16 not going to imagine grounds under which the information might
17 be permitted to be sealed. I am going to honor the public's
18 interest in the information and reject the motion to seal.

19 Mr. Freedman, you can sit down.

20 MR. FREEDMAN: Thank you, your Honor.

21 THE COURT: If you want to address the Court or
22 anybody wants to address the Court afterwards, they can.

23 I take Mr. Freedman's point that it's going to be very
24 useful for the parties to know where the Court comes out on
25 summary judgment in thinking about preparing for trial. And I

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1 am prepared to hear oral argument on the motion for summary
2 judgment alongside the Lively spoliation motion. I have not
3 reached a conclusion as to whether argument would be useful on
4 the 47.1 point raised by Mr. Gottlieb.

5 I would like to have argument on January 22 at
6 9:30 a.m. Does that present a problem for any counsel?

7 MS. SHAPIRO: Your Honor, I don't think that presents
8 a problem for us, but January 23 is the date that motions in
9 limine --

10 THE COURT: I am going to get to that in a moment.

11 MS. SHAPIRO: Sorry.

12 MS. SHAH: Your Honor, just a point of clarification
13 for us. I notice you said the Lively spoliation motion. Is
14 that to the exclusion of the Abel?

15 THE COURT: It is. I used my words advisably.

16 MS. SHAH: I can imagine.

17 THE COURT: Mr. Gottlieb.

18 MR. GOTTLIEB: Subject to whatever the Court is about
19 to say on the motions in limine, we are available on the 22nd.

20 THE COURT: With respect to motions in limine, and
21 with respect to trial, unfortunately -- and I have tried hard
22 to avoid this -- I am going to have to push back the trial from
23 the scheduled trial date. I have, as things currently stand,
24 two criminal trials scheduled for March, and as important as
25 this case is, criminal trials take precedence. And I also have

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1 in mind that there are a number of motions that are pending or
2 that will be fully submitted very soon that the parties really
3 need answers on before they file motions in limine,
4 Ms. Shapiro's point. So I have noted down that I would like to
5 move the trial to May 18, 2026. It's moving it back about two
6 months. I am prepared to have the final pretrial conference on
7 April 21 at 10:30 a.m., with the joint pretrial order, motions
8 in limine, jury instructions, and voir dire due on March 20,
9 and oppositions and responses due on March 27.

10 Note that for the joint pretrial order, in addition to
11 following the format that is in my individual practices, the
12 parties should add anything else that needs to be addressed at
13 the final pretrial conference. I am thinking -- and this is
14 not by way of exclusion -- issues with respect to how to treat
15 materials that have been filed under seal or that are
16 confidential. But I am sure with this group of lawyers there
17 will be other issues that you will want me to address.

18 On the Jonesworks, I will accept the offer that you
19 will meet and confer with respect to a schedule for the motion
20 to amend and the motion to bifurcate, and the motion for
21 summary judgment in *Jones v. Abel*. Again, I think it would be
22 useful to have the motion for bifurcation to be fully submitted
23 shortly after the deadline for summary judgment argument,
24 shortly after January 22, 2026. So try to work within that
25 schedule if you can so that I can address all of those issues

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1 at the same time. And then -- that's for bifurcation.

2 On amendment, just meet and confer with your adversary
3 on the motion to amend. Meet and confer with respect to how
4 far after I render decision on the motion to amend summary
5 judgment motions might be filed. In all likelihood, after I
6 issue an order on the motion to amend, I will schedule a
7 conference with the parties, but it would be useful just to
8 have something on paper with respect to summary judgment. And
9 I don't think there is anything else on *Jones v. Abel* that I
10 had.

11 Let me see if there are any questions from counsel for
12 Lively. Then I will see if there are questions from counsel
13 for Jonesworks, and then I will go to the Wayfarer parties.

14 MR. GOTTLIEB: Your Honor, I don't think I have
15 questions at this time. I just want to flag for the Court that
16 I presently have another trial that is scheduled to start on
17 May 18 in Houston, Texas. I will immediately go back and try
18 to harmonize the schedules, but, if necessary, may come back to
19 the Court with a letter on that. But I will do my best to -- I
20 certainly understand the Court's scheduling needs and will try
21 to harmonize those schedules. But other than that, no
22 questions for the Court.

23 THE COURT: OK.

24 MS. SHAH: No questions for us. Thank you, your
25 Honor.

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1 MR. BACH: Judge, I have the same issue as
2 Mr. Gottlieb.

3 THE COURT: Not the same trial? Maybe you can resolve
4 it.

5 MR. BACH: And it's a week-long arbitration the week
6 before May 18. But what I am inclined to do is to advise the
7 arbitrator that the federal court is not inclined -- I am one
8 of many moving parts -- the federal court is not inclined to
9 move the date.

10 THE COURT: You would be accurate in representing that
11 to the arbitrator.

12 MR. FREEDMAN: Your Honor, we have no questions. We
13 want to reiterate we are available on all those dates that the
14 Court suggested.

15 THE COURT: Is there anything else that any party
16 wants to raise with the Court?

17 MR. GOTTLIEB: No, your Honor.

18 MS. SHAH: No. Thank you, your Honor.

19 MR. FREEDMAN: No. Thank you very much.

20 THE COURT: OK. Thank you all.

21 (Adjourned)

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