

§ 15.2.1.1 If the parties select Meet and Confer as the initial method of dispute resolution, the Owner and Design-Builder shall endeavor to resolve Claims subject to the meet and confer session. The meet and confer session shall be attended by representatives who have the authority to bind the Owner and Design-Builder. The Owner or Design-Builder may request senior representatives from the Architect, Subcontractors, or other interested parties to attend the meet and confer session. The meet and confer session shall take place within thirty (30) days after a request by either party to this Agreement unless the parties mutually agree otherwise.

§ 15.2.1.2 Discussions held during the meet and confer process shall be treated as settlement discussions and, as such, will be confidential.

§ 15.2.1.3 If the Owner and Design-Builder reach a mutually acceptable resolution, appropriate documentation memorializing the resolution shall be prepared. If the resolution results in a change to the Contract Sum or the Contract Time, the parties shall execute a Change Order.

§ 15.2.1.4 If the Owner and Design-Builder cannot reach a mutually acceptable resolution at the meet and confer session, or if the meet and confer session does not take place within the time specified in Section 15.2.1, either party may proceed to mediation in accordance with Section 15.3.

§ 15.2.2 Project Neutral

§ 15.2.2.1 If the parties select a Project Neutral to serve as an initial decision maker of Claims, the Owner and Design-Builder shall share the expense of the Project Neutral.

§ 15.2.2.2 The Project Neutral will review Claims and, within ten days of the receipt of a Claim, take one or more of the following actions: (1) request additional supporting data from the claimant or a response with supporting data from the other party, (2) reject the Claim in whole or in part, (3) approve the Claim in whole or in part, (4) suggest a compromise, or (5) advise the parties that the Project Neutral is unable to resolve the Claim if the Project Neutral lacks sufficient information to evaluate the merits of the Claim or if the Project Neutral concludes that, in the Project Neutral's sole discretion, it would be inappropriate for the Project Neutral to resolve the Claim.

§ 15.2.2.3 In evaluating Claims, the Project Neutral may, but shall not be obligated to, consult with or seek information from persons with special knowledge or expertise who may assist the Project Neutral in rendering a decision. The retention of such persons shall be a shared expense of the Owner and Design-Builder.

§ 15.2.2.4 If the Project Neutral requests either party to provide a response to a Claim or to furnish additional supporting data, such party shall respond within ten days after receipt of the request and shall either (1) provide a response or the requested supporting data, (2) advise the Project Neutral when the response or supporting data will be furnished or (3) advise the Project Neutral that no response or supporting data will be furnished. Upon receipt of the response or supporting data, if any, the Project Neutral will take one of the actions described in Section 15.2.2.2(2)-(5).

§ 15.2.2.5 Pursuant to Sections 15.2.2.2 through 15.2.2.4 the Project Neutral will render an initial decision approving or rejecting the Claim in whole or in part or indicating that the Project Neutral is unable to resolve the Claim. The initial decision shall (1) be in writing, (2) state the reasons therefore, and (3) identify any change in the Contract Sum or Contract Time or both. The initial decision shall be binding on the parties, but subject to mediation in accordance with the process set forth in Section 15.3 and, if the parties fail to resolve their dispute through mediation, subject to binding dispute resolution in accordance with Section 15.4.

§ 15.2.2.5.1 If an initial decision has not been rendered within 30 days after the Claim has been referred to the Project Neutral, the party asserting the Claim may demand mediation and binding dispute resolution without a decision having been rendered. Unless the Project Neutral and all affected parties agree, the Project Neutral will not decide disputes between the Design-Builder and persons or entities other than the Owner.

§ 15.2.2.6 Either party may file for mediation of an initial decision at any time, subject to the terms of Section 15.3.

§ 15.2.2.7 Either party may, within 30 days from the date of a Project Neutral's initial decision, demand in writing that the other party file for mediation within 60 days of the initial decision. If such a demand is made and the party receiving the demand fails to file for mediation within the time required, then both parties waive their rights to mediate or pursue binding dispute resolution proceedings with respect to the initial decision.

§ 15.2.3 In the event of a Claim against the Design-Builder, the Owner may, but is not obligated to, notify the surety, if