

1 withdrew as his former counsel provided an erroneous last known address to the Court and the
2 parties when he withdrew, and therefore Zandian requests that the judgment be set aside.

3 III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

4 A party seeking to set aside a default judgment has the burden to prove mistake,
5 inadvertence, surprise, or excusable neglect by a preponderance of the evidence. *Kahn v.*
6 *Orme*, 108 Nev. 510, 513–14, 835 P.2d 790, 793 (1992). The Court finds that Zandian has not
7 met the burden to prove mistake, inadvertence, surprise, or excusable neglect by a
8 preponderance of the evidence.

9 Specifically, Zandian has not met the factors set forth in *Kahn* to compel the court to
10 set aside the judgment. *Id.* at 513, 835 P.2d at 792–93 (holding that the district court must
11 consider whether the party moving to set aside a judgment promptly applied to remove the
12 judgment, lacked intent to delay the proceedings, lacked knowledge of the procedural
13 requirements, and demonstrated good faith, in addition to considering the state's underlying
14 policy of resolving cases on the merits). Zandian failed to promptly apply for relief, has not
15 established a lack of intent to delay these proceedings or a lack of knowledge of the procedural
16 requirements, and did not provide a good-faith reason for the over five-and-a-half-month gap
17 between entry of default and the time he obtained new counsel and filed the Motion to Set
18 Aside Default Judgment.

19 a. Zandian Did Not Promptly Apply To Remove The Judgment

20 Even though a motion to set aside a judgment may be filed within the six month
21 deadline provided for in NRCP 60(b), a party can still fail to act promptly. *See Kahn* 108 Nev.
22 at 514, 835 P.2d at 793. Therefore, “want of diligence in seeking to set aside a judgment is
23 ground enough for denial of such a motion.” *Id.* (citing *Union Petrochemical Corp. v. Scott*,
24 96 Nev. 337, 339, 609 P.2d 323, 324 (1980) (citing *Lentz v. Boles*, 84 Nev. 197, 438 P.2d 254
25 (1968); *Hotel Last Frontier v. Frontier Prop.*, 79 Nev. 150, 380 P.2d 293 (1963)).

26 Despite his knowledge of the default judgment, Zandian did not move to have the
27 judgment set aside until nearly six months after its entry. Although Zandian argues he did not
28 receive notice of the various proceedings, notice was mailed to his address. Therefore, the

1 notice requirement of NRCP 55 was fulfilled as Plaintiff served written notice of the
2 application for default judgment. Moreover, NRCP 55 is likely not implicated since the
3 judgment ultimately resulted from sanctions arising from Zandian's failure to respond to
4 discovery. *See Durango Fire Protection, Inc. v. Troncoso*, 120 Nev. 658 (2004) (trial court's
5 entry of judgment for plaintiff, in action for breach of contract, after striking defendant's
6 answer was a sanction for defendant's failure to appear at several hearings and calendar calls
7 rather than a default judgment, and thus, civil procedure rule requiring written notice before
8 entry of default judgment was not applicable).

9 Further, First Judicial District Court Rule 22(3) expressly states that "[a]ny form of
10 order permitting withdrawal of an attorney submitted to the Court for signature shall contain
11 the address at which the party is to be served with notice of all further proceedings." Plaintiff
12 had a right to rely on the address given by Zandian's prior attorney.

13 No evidence supports Zandian's claims that he lacked knowledge of this matter. Even
14 if Zandian was living in France, for which no competent evidence has been provided to this
15 Court, Zandian was required to provide the Court and the parties with his new address.
16 However, Zandian never informed this Court or the parties of any address change. The record
17 demonstrates that the Plaintiff's discovery requests, motions, application for judgment, orders
18 and notice of judgment were all mailed to Zandian's address of record. Under NRCP 5(b),
19 service by mail is complete upon mailing. Thus, Zandian received notice of the proceedings
20 and his repeated failure to respond constituted inexcusable neglect.

21 **b. Zandian Has Failed To Show He Lacked Intent To Delay**

22 Zandian received all of the papers and pleadings in this matter. However, he failed to
23 respond to Plaintiff's discovery and willfully ignored the proceedings of this matter. In fact,
24 Zandian waited nearly six months to secure new counsel and file the motion to set aside.
25 Furthermore, Zandian failed to file an opposition to the application for judgment.
26 Accordingly, the Court finds that Zandian has failed to establish the absence of an intent to
27 delay.

28 **c. Whether Zandian Lacked Knowledge Of Procedural Requirements**

1 Zandian unquestionably had notice of the written discovery, motions and orders filed in
2 this matter, and yet he ignored all of these documents. All that was required of Zandian was to
3 either personally respond to the discovery and motions or obtain counsel to appear on his
4 behalf. Zandian knew discovery had been served but deliberately chose to ignore it. Zandian
5 knew a motion for sanctions and an application for judgment had been filed, which led to the
6 judgment, but Zandian chose to ignore those items as well. Zandian's failure to obtain new
7 counsel or otherwise act on his own behalf is inexcusable. See *Kahn* 108 Nev. at 514-15, 835
8 P.2d at 793-4. As the Nevada Supreme Court stated in *Kahn*:

9 we are not confronted here with some subtle or technical aspect of
10 procedure, ignorance of which could readily be excused. The requirements
11 of the rule are simple and direct. *To condone the actions of a party who has*
12 *sat on its rights only to make a last-minute rush to set aside judgment would*
be to turn NRCP 60(b) into a device for delay rather than the means for
relief from an oppressive judgment that it was intended to be.

13 *Id.* (citing *Union*, 96 Nev. at 339, 609 P.2d at 324 (citing *Franklin v. Bartsas Realty, Inc.*, 95
14 Nev. 559, 598 P.2d 1147 (1979); *Central Operating Co. v. Utility Workers of America*, 491
15 F.2d 245 (4th Cir.1974)) (emphasis added in original)).

16 Zandian had sufficient knowledge to act responsibly. He had previously retained
17 counsel to defend this action and retained new counsel to set aside the judgment. Therefore,
18 this Court cannot conclude that Zandian failed to respond to set aside the default judgment
19 because he was ignorant of procedural requirements.

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21 **d. Whether Zandian Acted In Good Faith**

22 Zandian has not provided any valid reason for failing to respond to the requested
23 discovery, the motion for sanctions or the application for judgment. Furthermore, he has not
24 provided a reasonable explanation for waiting over five months to obtain other counsel despite
25 having knowledge of the judgment entered against him.

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27 Based upon the fact that Zandian knew about this case and continued to receive the
28 papers and pleadings from this matter, it was inexcusable for Zandian not to respond to the

1 earlier discovery requests and motions. Zandian has not demonstrated good faith. In fact,
2 Zandian has only demonstrated inexcusable neglect by his willful failure to respond to, and
3 participate in, this action. Accordingly, the Court determines that Zandian lacked good faith in
4 contesting this action.

5 **e. Whether This Case Should Be Tried On The Merits For Policy Reasons**

6 The Nevada Supreme Court has held that “good public policy dictates that cases be
7 adjudicated on their merits.” *See Kahn* 108 Nev. at 516, 835 P.2d at 794 (citing *Hotel Last*
8 *Frontier v. Frontier Prop.*, 79 Nev. 150, 155–56, 380 P.2d 293, 295 (1963) (original
9 emphasis). However, this policy has its limits:
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11 We wish not to be understood, however, that this judicial tendency to grant
12 relief from a default judgment implies that the trial court should always
13 grant relief from a default judgment. Litigants and their counsel may not
14 properly be allowed to disregard process or procedural rules with impunity.
Lack of good faith or diligence, or lack of merit in the proposed defense,
may very well warrant a denial of the motion for relief from the judgment.

15 *Id.* (citing *Lentz v. Boles*, 84 Nev. 197, 200, 438 P.2d at 256 (1968)).

16 Zandian has disregarded the process and procedural rules of this matter with impunity.
17 He has repeatedly ignored this matter and failed to respond to the written discovery and
18 motions in this matter since his former attorney John Peter Lee withdrew from representation.
19 Zandian’s lack of good faith or diligence warrants a denial of the motion to set aside.

20 Zandian’s complete failure to respond to the discovery requests and subsequent
21 motions evidences his willful and recalcitrant disregard of the judicial process, which
22 prejudiced Plaintiff. *Foster v. Dingwall*, 227 P.3d 1042, 1049 (Nev. 2010) (citing *Hamlett v.*
23 *Reynolds*, 114 Nev. 863, 865, 963 P.2d 457, 458 (1998) (upholding the district court’s strike
24 order where the defaulting party’s “constant failure to follow [the court’s] orders was
25 unexplained and unwarranted”); *In re Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Products*, 460 F.3d 1217,
26 1236 (9th Cir.2006) (holding that, with respect to discovery abuses, “[p]rejudice from
27 unreasonable delay is presumed” and failure to comply with court orders mandating discovery
28 “is sufficient prejudice”).

1 In light of Zandian's repeated and continued abuses, the policy of adjudicating cases on
2 the merits would not be furthered in this case, and the ultimate sanctions are necessary to
3 demonstrate to Zandian and future litigants that they are not free to act with wayward
4 disregard of a court's orders. *Foster*, 227 P.3d at 1049. Moreover, Zandian's failure to oppose
5 Plaintiff's motion to strike the General Denial or the application for judgment constitutes an
6 admission that the motion and application were meritorious. *Id.* (citing *King v. Carlidge*, 121
7 Nev. 926, 927, 124 P.3d 1161, 1162 (2005) (stating that an unopposed motion may be
8 considered as an admission of merit and consent to grant the motion) (citing DCR 13(3)).

9 IV. CONCLUSION

10 The record provides substantial evidence to support this denial of Zandian's motion to
11 set aside. Further, the policy of resolving cases on the merits does not allow litigants "to
12 disregard process or procedural rules with impunity." *Kahn*, 108 Nev. at 516, 835 P.2d at 794
13 (quoting *Lentz v. Boles*, 84 Nev. 197, 200, 438 P.2d 254, 256-57 (1968)).

14 Zandian has failed to show mistake, inadvertence, surprise or excusable neglect
15 pursuant to NRCP 60(b). Zandian had every opportunity to properly defend this action and
16 instead made a voluntary choice not to. Therefore, Zandian's motion to set aside is hereby
17 DENIED.

18 DATED: This 6th day of February, 2014. IT IS SO ORDERED:
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22 JAMES T. RUSSELL
23 DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
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