

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW COMMISSION

Bel Fury Investments Group, LLC,
Appellant,

v.

Douglas County Board of Equalization,
Appellee.

Case Nos: 18R 0347 & 19R 0492

Decision and Order Affirming
County Board of Equalization

Background

1. The Subject Property is a single family dwelling, with a legal description of: Rambleridge Lot 240 Block 0 90x56.67.
2. The Douglas County Assessor (the Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$118,700 for tax year 2018 and \$139,100 for tax year 2019.
3. Bel Fury Investments Group LLC (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Douglas County Board of Equalization (the County Board) and requested an assessed value of \$108,100 for tax year 2018 and \$116,000 for tax year 2019.
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$118,700 for tax year 2018 and \$139,100 for tax year 2019.
5. The Taxpayer appealed the determinations of the County Board to the Tax Equalization and Review Commission (the Commission).
6. A Single Commissioner hearing was held on January 28, 2020, at the Commission Hearing Room, Sixth Floor, Nebraska State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner James D. Kuhn.
7. Scott W. Bloemer was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Larry Thomsen (the Appraiser) was present for the County Board.

Applicable Law

9. All real property in Nebraska subject to taxation shall be assessed as of the effective date of January 1.¹
10. The Commission’s review of the determinations of the County Board of Equalization is de novo.²
11. When considering an appeal a presumption exists that the “board of equalization has faithfully performed its official duties in making an assessment and has acted upon

¹ Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1301(1) (Reissue 2018).

² See Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5016(8) (Reissue 2018), *Brenner v. Banner Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 276 Neb. 275, 286, 753 N.W.2d 802, 813 (2008). “When an appeal is conducted as a ‘trial de novo,’ as opposed to a ‘trial de novo on the record,’ it means literally a new hearing and not merely new findings of fact based upon a previous record. A trial de novo is conducted as though the earlier trial had not been held in the first place, and evidence is taken anew as such evidence is available at the time of the trial on appeal.” *Koch v. Cedar Cty. Freeholder Bd.*, 276 Neb. 1009, 1019 (2009).

sufficient competent evidence to justify its action.”³ That presumption “remains until there is competent evidence to the contrary presented, and the presumption disappears when there is competent evidence adduced on appeal to the contrary. From that point forward, the reasonableness of the valuation fixed by the board of equalization becomes one of fact based upon all the evidence presented. The burden of showing such valuation to be unreasonable rests upon the taxpayer on appeal from the action of the board.”⁴

12. The order, decision, determination or action appealed from shall be affirmed unless evidence is adduced establishing that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary.⁵
13. Proof that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary must be made by clear and convincing evidence.⁶
14. A Taxpayer must introduce competent evidence of actual value of the Subject Property in order to successfully claim that the Subject Property is overvalued.⁷
15. The Commission’s Decision and Order shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law.⁸

Findings of Fact & Conclusions of Law

16. The Taxpayer’s issue with the 2018 and 2019 assessment is mostly with the valuation of the land. The Taxpayer asserted the land value increased 67% from 2016 and remains high for 2018 and 2019. The Taxpayer provided a spreadsheet with seven comparable properties showing an average value of \$2.32 per square foot for the land component as compared to the \$4.46 per square foot of the Subject Property.
17. The Appraiser stated the Taxpayer’s comparable properties are all located in a different neighborhood from the Subject Property. He provided documentation of two comparable properties located next to the Subject Property, one of which is the same size and same value.
18. The Subject Property received an increase in value for 2019 even though the Taxpayer stated there have been no improvements to the Subject Property. The Taxpayer stated the property was not sale-ready and would take an estimated \$35,000 to fix the deficiencies.
19. The Appraiser asserted a reappraisal was done to the Subject Property’s neighborhood for 2019. According to the Appraiser, there were quite a number of sales in the neighborhood and the Subject Property may still be undervalued.

³ *Brenner v. Banner Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 276 Neb. 275, 283, 753 N.W.2d 802, 811 (2008).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5016(9) (Reissue 2018).

⁶ *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 171, 645 N.W.2d 821 (2002).

⁷ Cf. *Josten-Wilbert Vault Co. v. Bd. of Equal. for Buffalo Cty.*, 179 Neb. 415, 138 N.W.2d 641 (1965) (determination of actual value); *Lincoln Tel. and Tel. Co. v. County Bd. of Equal. of York Cty.*, 209 Neb. 465, 308 N.W.2d 515 (1981) (determination of equalized taxable value).

⁸ Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018(1) (Reissue 2018).

20. The Taxpayer has not produced competent evidence that the County Board failed to faithfully perform its duties and to act on sufficient competent evidence to justify its actions.
21. The Taxpayer has not adduced clear and convincing evidence that the determinations of the County Board are arbitrary or unreasonable and the decisions of the County Board should be affirmed.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. The Decisions of the County Board of Equalization determining the taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2018 and 2019 are affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property is:

2018

Land	\$ 22,900
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$ 95,800</u>
Total	\$118,700

2019

Land	\$ 22,900
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$116,200</u>
Total	\$139,100

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Douglas County Treasurer and the Douglas County Assessor, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018 (Reissue 2018).
4. Any request for relief, by any party, which is not specifically provided for by this Decision and Order is denied.
5. Each Party is to bear its own costs in this proceeding.
6. This Decision and Order shall only be applicable to tax years 2018 and 2019.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on February 26, 2020.

Signed and Sealed: February 26, 2020

James D. Kuhn, Commissioner