

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW COMMISSION

Farida Ebrahim,
Appellant,

v.

Lancaster County Board of Equalization,
Appellee.

Case No: 19R 0328

Decision and Order Affirming
County Board of Equalization

Background

1. The Subject Property is single family dwelling, with a legal description of: Edenton South Heights, Block 4, Lot 8.
2. The Lancaster County Assessor (the Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$316,900 for tax year 2019.
3. Farida Ebrahim (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Lancaster County Board of Equalization (the County Board) and requested a lower assessed value for tax year 2019.
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$316,900 for tax year 2019.
5. The Taxpayer appealed the determination of the County Board to the Tax Equalization and Review Commission (the Commission).
6. A Single Commissioner hearing was held on October 13, 2020, at the Tax Equalization and Review Commission Hearing Room, Sixth Floor, Nebraska State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner James D. Kuhn.
7. Farida Ebrahim was present at the hearing.
8. Tim Johns (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 a determination 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 sufficient competent evidence to justify its action.”³ That presumption “remains until there is competent evidence to the contrary presented, and the presumption disappears

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).

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

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 does not feel she could sell the Subject Property for the current assessment. The Taxpayer testified the front door of the Subject Property is unusable in the winter months due to an issue with the roofline that would leak water onto the front porch and freeze. The Taxpayer stated she has contacted contractors about fixing this issue but has been told nothing can be done. The Taxpayer stated there has been a leak in the master bedroom closet and she could not use her closet for about two months.
17. The Taxpayer did not provide any evidence to quantify the impact of the negative conditions described on the market value of the Subject Property.
18. The Taxpayer stated the current assessment is about 20% higher than when she purchased the Subject Property in 2015. The Taxpayer stated her pay raises have not increased at the same pace as the increasing taxes.
19. The Appraiser stated he had inspected the Subject Property in 2018 and called the Taxpayer and verified nothing had changed for the 2019 tax year.
20. The Appraiser stated sales in the neighborhood support the current assessment.
21. 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.

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).

22. The Taxpayer has not adduced clear and convincing evidence that the determination of the County Board is arbitrary or unreasonable and the decision of the County Board should be affirmed.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

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

Land	\$ 70,000
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$246,900</u>
Total	\$316,900

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Lancaster County Treasurer and the Lancaster 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 year 2019.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on January 11, 2021.

Signed and Sealed: January 11, 2021

James D. Kuhn, Commissioner