

**BEFORE THE NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW
COMMISSION**

CHRISTIAN R. TOSCANO
APPELLANT,

CASE NO: 20R 0363

V.

DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD
OF EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

DECISION AND ORDER
AFFIRMING THE DECISION
OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property is an improved residential parcel in Douglas County, parcel number 1943680000.
2. The Douglas County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$222,600 for tax year 2020.
3. Christian R. Toscano (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Douglas County Board of Equalization (the County Board).
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$222,600 for tax year 2020.
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 January 13, 2022, at Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam Street, Room 227, Omaha, Nebraska, before Commissioner Steven Keetle.
7. Christian Toscano and Faviola Perez were present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Scott Barnes with the County Assessor's Office (County Appraiser) was present for the County Board.

II. 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 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

¹ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-1301(1) (Cum. Supp. 2020).

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, 759 N.W.2d 464, 473 (2009).

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

⁴ *Id.* at 283-84.

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

⁶ *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 171, 174-75, 645 N.W.2d 821, 826 (2002).

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

III. FINDINGS OF FACT & CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

16. The Taxpayer alleged that the assessed value of the Subject Property has increased excessively since it was purchased in 2017. The County Board presented the Property Record File (PRF) for the Subject Property. The PRF contains information about the characteristics of the Subject Property and information regarding the qualified sales that occurred in the economic area of the Subject Property. This information was used to determine the value attributed to each of the characteristics of residential properties in the area, including the Subject Property.
17. The PRF indicates that the market area in which the Subject Property is located was re-appraised for tax year 2019 and again for tax year 2020.
18. The County Appraiser stated that the market area was re-appraised because the sales prices in the area were increasing at such a rate that the assessed values were outside the range allowed by law, requiring the county to reappraise all properties in the market area, including the Subject Property.
19. The Commission must look to the value of the Subject Property as of January 1 of each tax year.⁹

⁷ *Josten-Wilbert Vault Co. v. Bd. of Equal. for Buffalo Cty.*, 179 Neb. 415, 418, 138 N.W.2d 641, 643 (1965) (determination of actual value); *Lincoln Tel. and Tel. Co. v. Cty. Bd. of Equal. of York Cty.*, 209 Neb. 465, 468, 308 N.W.2d 515, 518 (1981) (determination of equalized taxable value).

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

⁹ Neb. Rev. Stat §77-1301(Reissue 2018)

20. The assessed value for real property may be different from year to year, dependent upon the circumstances.¹⁰ For this reason, a prior year's assessment is not relevant to the subsequent year's valuation.¹¹
21. The County Board presented the Property Record File (PRF) for the Subject Property. The PRF contains information about the characteristics of the Subject Property and information regarding the qualified sales that occurred in the economic area of the Subject Property. This information was used to determine the value attributed to each of the characteristics of residential properties in the area, including the Subject Property.
22. The Taxpayer discussed the condition of the alley behind the Subject Property as well as water issues in the basement.
23. The Taxpayer did not present photographs of the alley or basement of the Subject Property.
24. The Taxpayer did not present any estimates for repairing or remediation of the basement water issues to allow the Commission to analyze the impact it may have on the value of the Subject Property.
25. The Taxpayer alleged that the Subject Property should not be the highest valued property in the neighborhood.
26. The PRF for the Subject Property contains account notes that indicate it was updated prior to the Taxpayer's purchase. The County Appraiser indicated that exterior inspection and the real estate listing the property is rated at good condition.
27. The County Appraiser stated that the sales in the Subject Property's neighborhood included another two-story property with the same quality and condition rating sold for the same amount per square foot as the Subject Property is assessed for but had a lower total value due to the difference in size.

¹⁰ See *Affiliated Foods Coop. v. Madison Co. Bd. of Equal.*, 229 Neb. 605, 613, 428 N.W.2d 201, 206 (1988).

¹¹ See *DeVore v. Bd. Of Equal.*, 144 Neb. 351, 13 N.W.2d 451 (1944), *Affiliated Foods*, 229 Neb. at 613, 428 N.W.2d at 206 (1988).

28. The County Appraiser stated that due to its above average condition the Subject Property was on the high end of the sales in the market area.
29. The Sales Presented by the County Board show that the per square foot assessed value of the Subject Property is within the range of sales prices in the market area but at the upper end of the range.
30. 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.
31. 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.

IV. 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 2020 is affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2020 is:

Land	\$ 6,300
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$216,300</u>
Total	\$222,600
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 year 2020.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on May 17, 2023.

Signed and Sealed: May 17, 2023



Steven A. Keetle, Commissioner