

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

EDWARD R. KACZMAREK,
APPELLANT,

CASE NO: 20R 0525

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 consists of an improved residential parcel in Douglas County, parcel number 643830277.
2. The Douglas County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$54,900 for tax year 2020.
3. Edward R. Kaczmarek (the Taxpayer) protested these values to the Douglas County Board of Equalization (the County Board).
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$54,900 for tax year 2020.
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 September 13, 2022, at Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam Street, Room 227, Omaha, Nebraska, before Commissioner Steven Keetle.
7. Edward R and Marcella Kaczmarek were present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Scott Barnes and Kurt Skradis with the County Assessor's Office (the County Appraisers) were 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 Subject Property is a residential parcel improved with an 840 square foot ranch style property constructed in 1957 with a quality and condition rating of fair.
17. The Subject Property is used as a rental property.
18. The Taxpayer alleged that the increase in value of the Subject Property from the prior assessed value was unreasonable or arbitrary.
19. 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.
20. The County Appraisers stated that it was determined by the County Assessor's office that properties in the Subject Property's market area were undervalued and all properties in the area were reassessed for tax year 2020.
21. The PRF indicates that the market area in which the Subject property is located was reappraised for tax year 2020.

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).

22. The assessed value for real property may be different from year to year according to the circumstances.⁹ For this reason, a prior year's assessment is not relevant to the subsequent year's valuation.¹⁰
23. The Commission must look to the value of the Subject Property as of January 1 of each tax year.¹¹
24. The Taxpayer argued that the assessed value of the Subject Property should be reduced due to the condition of nearby properties and crime in the area.
25. The County Appraisers stated that the majority of properties in the Subject Property's market area are impacted by the condition of nearby properties and crime as the Subject Property is.
26. The County Appraisers stated that market area in which the Subject Property is located was reappraised because the recent sales of properties in the market area indicated that values were rising even with the condition of nearby properties and crime in the area.
27. The County Appraisers stated that these sales indicated the impact of the condition of nearby properties and crime in the area were already accounted for in the assessed values of the properties in the market area, including the Subject Property.
28. The Taxpayer argued that the value of the Subject Property should be lowered due to its condition.
29. The Taxpayer discussed the roof, interior walls, and mold on the interior of the Subject Property.
30. The Taxpayer did not provide photographs or estimates for the repair or clean-up of the condition items discussed.
31. The County Appraisers stated that based on the description of the Subject Property provided by the Taxpayer the condition

⁹ *Affiliated Foods Coop. v. Madison Co. Bd. of Equal.*, 229 Neb. 605, 614, 428 N.W.2d 201, 206 (1988); see Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-1502 (Reissue 2018).

¹⁰ *Affiliated Foods Coop.*, 229 Neb. at 613, 428 N.W.2d at 206; *DeVore v. Board of Equal.*, 144 Neb. 351, 354-55, 13 N.W.2d 451, 452-53 (1944).

¹¹ Neb. Rev. Stat §77-1301(Reissue 2018)

rating of fair would reflect the repairs and maintenance issues discussed by the Taxpayer. The County Appraisers stated that any condition rating lower than fair would indicate that the property is unrentable.

32. The Taxpayer has not demonstrated that the County Assessors determination of fair condition for the Subject Property is unreasonable or arbitrary.
33. 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.
34. The Taxpayer has not adduced clear and convincing evidence that the determination of the County Board is arbitrary or unreasonable and the decisions 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	\$ 7,100
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$47,800</u>
Total	\$54,900

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 September 6, 2023.

Signed and Sealed: September 6, 2023



Steven A. Keetle, Commissioner