

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

JOHN GALT DEVELOPMENT
LLC
APPELLANT,

V.

LANCASTER COUNTY
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

CASE NOS: 21R 0484

DECISION AND ORDER
REVERSING THE DECISION
OF THE LANCASTER
COUNTY BOARD OF
EQUALIZATION

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property consists of an improved residential parcel in Lancaster County, parcel number 10-25-206-005-000.
2. The Lancaster County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$121,300 for tax year 2021.
3. John Galt Development LLC (the Taxpayer) protested these values to the Lancaster County Board of Equalization (the County Board).
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$121,300 for tax year 2021.
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 March 27, 2023, at the Tax Equalization and Review Commission Hearing Room, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner James D. Kuhn.
7. Mark Becher was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Bret Smith (the 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 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 asserted that the value of Subject Property is excessive due to water damage and mold in the basement.
17. The Appraiser conceded that the water damage and mold would justify lowering the condition rating of the Subject Property from 3 to 2.
18. The Appraiser provided evidence that the Subject Property's value would be lowered by \$28,000 if a condition rating change was made.
19. The Commission finds the condition rating adjustment is warranted for tax year 2021.
20. Competent evidence has been produced that the County Board failed to faithfully perform its duties and to act on sufficient competent evidence to justify its actions.
21. Clear and convincing evidence has been produced that the determination of the County Board is arbitrary or unreasonable and the decision of the County Board should be vacated.

IV. ORDER

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

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).

1. The decision of the County Board of Equalization determining the taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2021 is vacated and reversed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax years 2021 is:

Land	\$ 25,000
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$ 68,300</u>
Total	\$ 93,300

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 2021.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on June 23, 2023.

Signed and Sealed: June 23, 2023



James D. Kuhn, Commissioner