

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

TIMOTHY L. HOPWOOD
APPELLANT,

CASE NO: 22R 0179

V.

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF
EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

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

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property is an improved residential parcel in Polk County, parcel number 720041594.
2. The Polk County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$64,425 for tax year 2022.
3. Timothy L. Hopwood (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Polk County Board of Equalization (the County Board) and requested an assessed value of \$30,535 for tax year 2022.
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$64,425 for tax year 2022.
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 August 17, 2023, at the Tax Equalization and Review Commission Hearing Room, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner James D. Kuhn.
7. Kathryn Hopwood was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Jodi Krance (the Assessor) 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 asserted the assessed improvement value of the Subject Property was excessive.
17. The Taxpayer asserted the Subject Property was purchased for the land and not the trailer on the land.
18. The Taxpayer listed flaws in the condition of the trailer but presented no evidence that indicated what impact, if any, the condition of the trailer had on the value of the Subject Property.
19. The Taxpayer presented two comparable properties for reference but did not present the Property Record Cards (PRFs) for the properties. Accordingly, the Commission cannot see the basis for the determination of assessed value for the properties presented by the Taxpayer or compare their characteristics to the characteristics of the Subject Property.⁹
20. The Assessor testified the Subject Property was purchased in 2019 for \$65,000 which is above the assessed value.
21. The Assessor presented comparable properties that had the land included in the value like the Subject Property.

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 For this reason, the Order for Single Commissioner Hearing and Notice issued to the Taxpayer on July 12, 2023, includes the following:

NOTE: Copies of the County's Property Record File for any property you will present as a comparable parcel should be provided so that your claim can be properly analyzed. The information provided on the County's web page is not a property record file. A Property Record File is only maintained in the office of the County Assessor and should be obtained from that office prior to the hearing.

22. The Assessor testified for tax year 2022, there was a total revaluation of the Subject Property's market area.
23. 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.
24. 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 2022 is affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2022 is:

Land	\$ 28,325
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$ 36,100</u>
Total	\$ 64,425

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Polk County Treasurer and the Polk 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 2022.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on October 20, 2023.

Signed and Sealed: October 20, 2023



James D. Kuhn, Commissioner