

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

FRANCIS SOBETSKI,
APPELLANT,

CASE NO: 22R 0923

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 0827080000.
2. The Douglas County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$132,800 for tax year 2022.
3. Francis Sobetski (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 \$132,800 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 24, 2023, at the Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam Street, Room 227, Omaha, Nebraska, before Commissioner Steven Keetle.
7. Francis Sobetski, Jr. was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Thomas Cheslak 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 a 1,793 square foot one and one-half story brick residence constructed in 1935. The Subject Property has a quality rating of average and a condition rating of fair.
17. 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 residential properties in the area, including the Subject Property.
18. The PRF for the Subject Property indicates that the market area in which the Subject Property is located was reappraised for tax year 2022.
19. The Taxpayer alleged that the increase in the assessed value of the Subject Property from the prior assessed value was unreasonable or arbitrary.
20. The assessed value for real property may be different from year to year according to the circumstances.⁹ For this reason, a prior

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 *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).

year's assessment is not relevant to the subsequent year's valuation.¹⁰

21. The Commission must look to the value of the Subject Property as of January 1 of each tax year.¹¹
22. The Taxpayer alleged that the assessed value of the Subject Property should be reduced due to its condition.
23. The Taxpayer discussed the condition of the roof, soffits, fascia, and brick work of the Subject Property as well as water damage to the kitchen ceiling.
24. The Taxpayer stated that the water damage in the kitchen was caused by a roof leak, but roof had been repaired to address that leak for tax year 2022.
25. The Taxpayer stated that the windows of the Subject Property were the original 1935 windows in tax year 2022.
26. The Taxpayer presented proposals for the replacement of the fascia and soffits of the Subject Property as well as the replacement of twenty-four windows in the Subject Property obtained in 2023.
27. The County Board provided photographs of the kitchen ceiling, brick work around the front porch and one of the windows of the Subject Property.
28. The County Appraisers addressed the condition issues discussed by the Taxpayer as well as the photographs of the of the Subject Property and discussed the typical condition issues for properties of the same age as the Subject Property. The County Appraisers stated that the age of the Subject Property was typical for the area.
29. The County Appraisers stated that the condition of the windows, soffits, and fascia were considered as part of fair condition rating for the Subject Property in tax year 2022, and that the replacement of the windows, soffits, and fascia would increase the

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)

condition rating of the Subject Property to average or good condition.

30. The PRF presented by the County Board lists the property as in fair condition.
31. The Taxpayer has not demonstrated that the County's determination of a fair condition rating for the Subject Property was unreasonable or arbitrary.
32. 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.
33. 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	\$ 5,100
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$127,700</u>
Total	\$132,800
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 2022.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on October 11, 2024.

Signed and Sealed: October 11, 2024



Steven A. Keetle, Commissioner