

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

LANE M. NELSON,
APPELLANT,

V.

SAUNDERS COUNTY BOARD
OF EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

CASE NO: 23R 0176

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

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property is an improved residential parcel in Saunders County, parcel number 001852501.
2. The Saunders County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$188,490 for tax year 2023.
3. Lane M. Nelson (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Saunders County Board of Equalization (the County Board) and requested an assessed value of \$59,000 for tax year 2023.
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$188,490 for tax year 2023.
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 March 19, 2024, at the Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam Street, Room 227, Omaha, Nebraska, before Commissioner Steven Keetle.
7. Lane Nelson was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Richard Register, Deputy County Attorney, and Rhonda Andresen, County Assessor (County Assessor) 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 the Commission considers an appeal of a decision of a county board of equalization, there are two burdens of proof.³
12. The first involves a presumption 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.⁴ 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.⁵
13. The second burden of proof requires that 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.⁶ The burden of showing such valuation to be unreasonable rests upon the taxpayer on appeal from the action of the board.⁷
14. The order, decision, determination or action appealed from shall

¹ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-1301(1) (Cum. Supp. 2022).

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 *Pinnacle Enters., Inc. v. Sarpy Cty. Bd. of Equalization*, 320 Neb. 303, 309, ____ N.W.3d ____ (2025). See also *Brenner*, 276 Neb. at 283, 753 N.W.2d at 811 (quoting *Ideal Basic Indus. v. Nuckolls Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 231 Neb. 653, 654-55, 437 N.W.2d 501, 502 (1989)).

⁴ *Pinnacle Enters.*, 320 Neb. at 309, ____ N.W.3d at ____ (quoting *Cain v. Custer Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 315 Neb. 809, 818, 1 N.W.3d 512, 521 (2024)). See also *Brenner*, 276 Neb. at 283, 753 N.W.2d at 811 (quoting *Ideal Basic Indus.*, 231 Neb. at 654-55, 437 N.W.2d at 502).

⁵ *Pinnacle Enters.*, 320 Neb. at 309, ____ N.W.3d at ____.

⁶ *Id.* See also *Brenner*, 276 Neb. at 283-84, 753 N.W.2d at 811.

⁷ *Pinnacle Enters.*, 320 Neb. at 309, ____ N.W.3d at _____. See also *Brenner*, 276 Neb. at 283-84, 753 N.W.2d at 811.

be affirmed unless evidence is adduced establishing that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary.⁸ Proof that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary must be made by clear and convincing evidence.⁹

15. The Taxpayer must introduce competent evidence of actual value of the Subject Property in order to successfully claim that the Subject Property is overvalued.¹⁰ The County Board need not put on any evidence to support its valuation of the property at issue unless the Taxpayer establishes that the County Board's valuation was unreasonable or arbitrary.¹¹
16. In an appeal, the Commission may determine any question raised in the proceeding upon which an order, decision, determination, or action appealed from is based.¹² The Commission may consider all questions necessary to determine taxable value of property as it hears an appeal or cross appeal.¹³ The Commission may take notice of judicially cognizable facts, may take notice of general, technical, or scientific facts within its specialized knowledge, and may utilize its experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge in the evaluation of the evidence presented to it.¹⁴ The Commission's Decision and Order shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law.¹⁵

⁸ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5016(9) (Reissue 2018).

⁹ *Pinnacle Enters.*, 320 Neb. at 309, ____ N.W.3d at ____; *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas County Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 171, 645 N.W.2d 821 (2002).

¹⁰ Cf. *Josten-Wilbert Vault Co. v. Bd. of Equal. for Buffalo County*, 179 Neb. 415, 138 N.W.2d 641 (1965) (determination of actual value) abrogated on other grounds by *Potts v. Bd. of Equalization*, 213 Neb. 37, 328 N.W.2d 175 (1982); *Lincoln Tel. and Tel. Co. v. County Bd. of Equal. of York County*, 209 Neb. 465, 308 N.W.2d 515 (1981) (determination of equalized taxable value).

¹¹ *Wheatland Indus., LLC v. Perkins Cty. Bd. of Equalization*, 304 Neb. 638, 935 N.W.2d 764 (2019) (quoting *Bottorf v. Clay Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 7 Neb. App. 162, 168, 580 N.W.2d 561, 566 (1998)).

¹² Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5016(8) (Reissue 2018).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5016(6) (Reissue 2018).

¹⁵ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5018(1) (Reissue 2018).

III. FINDINGS OF FACT & CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

17. The Subject Property is a 3.04-acre rural residential parcel improved with a 1,470 square foot one-and-one-half story residence constructed in 1895, as well as two garages and four sheds. The residence on the Subject Property has a condition rating of below normal.
18. The Taxpayer alleged that the assessed value of the Subject Property was too high based on recent sales of comparable properties.
19. The Taxpayer presented the Property Record File (PRF) for four properties in the County that the Taxpayer purchased as part of three sales that occurred in 2023.¹⁶ Two of these purchased properties, purchased in a single sale that involved multiple parcels, were located in the same market area as the Subject Property. The purchase price of each of these properties was below their assessed value. The Taxpayer did not present the Real Estate Transfer statement or other information regarding the terms of the sales presented.
20. The County Assessor presented the PRF for three residential properties located in the same market area as the Subject Property that occurred between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2022. The purchase price of each of these properties was higher than their assessed value.
21. The County Assessor stated that the condition of the Subject Property is lower than that of the recent sales and presented a table showing the differences in characteristics of the Subject Property and the County Assessor's three comparable sales and the corresponding differences in assessed values based on those characteristics.
22. The County Assessor presented a list of all sales of residential properties located in the same market area as the Subject

¹⁶ Two properties were purchased as part of a single sale.

Property that occurred between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2022, which included 14 additional properties.

23. A review of all residential sales in the market area shows that some of these properties sold for more than their assessed value and some sold for less than their assessed value.
24. The County Assessor stated that all of the sales presented by the County Assessor were used to create the assessment model for properties in the Subject Property's rural residential market area.
25. "Pursuant to § 77-112, the statutory measure of actual value is not what an individual buyer may be willing to pay for property, but, rather, its market value in the ordinary course of trade."¹⁷
26. Comparable properties share similar use (residential, commercial/industrial, or agricultural), physical characteristics (size, shape, and topography), and location.¹⁸
27. "A sales comparison adjustment is made to account (in dollars or a percentage) for a specific difference between the subject property and a comparable property. As the comparable is made more like the subject, its price is brought closer to the subject's unknown value."¹⁹
28. The information presented shows that the sales comparables presented by the County Assessor are more comparable to the Subject Property than the sales presented by the Taxpayer and support the assessed value of the Subject Property.
29. The Taxpayer has produced competent evidence that the County Board failed to faithfully perform its duties and to act on sufficient competent evidence to justify its actions.
30. However, the Taxpayer has not adduced clear and convincing evidence that the determination of the County Board is

¹⁷ *Cabela's, Inc. v. Cheyenne Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 8 Neb. App. 582, 593, 597 N.W.2d 623, 632 (1999) (citations omitted).

¹⁸ See generally, *International Association of Assessing Officers, Property Assessment Valuation 169-79* (3rd ed. 2010).

¹⁹ Appraisal Institute, *Appraising Residential Properties* 334 (4th ed. 2007).

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 2023 is affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2023 is:

Land	\$ 40,240
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$148,250</u>
Total	\$188,490

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Saunders County Treasurer and the Saunders County Assessor, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5018.
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 2023.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on January 20, 2026.

Signed and Sealed: January 20, 2026.



Steven A. Keettle, Commissioner