

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

JIM L RAUSCH
APPELLANT,

CASE NO: 23R 1336

V.

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

LANCASTER COUNTY
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property is an improved residential parcel in Lancaster County, parcel number 17-11-404-005-000.
2. The Lancaster County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$407,000 for tax year 2023.
3. Jim L Rausch (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Lancaster County Board of Equalization (the County Board).
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$407,000 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 May 20, 2024, at the Tax Equalization and Review Commission Hearing Room, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner James D. Kuhn.
7. Jim L. Rausch was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Tim Johns (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 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 stated although the house value appears to be close, the main contention is the value attributed to what the Appraiser has classified as an in-ground pool. The Taxpayer stated the pool is not an in-ground pool rather an above ground pool that could be purchased for \$14,000 including pumps and chemicals.
17. The Taxpayer stated the counties comparables have walk-out basements whereas the Subject Property does not. The Taxpayer provided property detail records of three comparable properties. The property detail records do not show any of the components or costing details for the comparable properties. The Taxpayer did not provide Property Record Files (PRF) for the Commission to analyze to see if they are truly comparable to the Subject Property.
18. The Appraiser stated the comparable properties the county provided did not include any of the walk-out value and made the comparable properties as similar to the Subject Property for comparison purposes.
19. The Appraiser stated the pool only has about a foot or two above the ground showing and the rest is below the surface of the ground. The Appraiser provided a photo of the pool which shows a majority of the pool is below ground. The pool appears to have

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).

been placed and then had dirt and other components built up around the exterior of the pool.

20. 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.
21. 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 2023 is affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2023 is:

Land	\$ 70,000
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$337,000</u>
Total	\$407,000
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 2023.

7. This Decision and Order is effective on October 4, 2024.

Signed and Sealed: October 4, 2024



James D. Kuhn, Commissioner