

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW COMMISSION

Gene D. Weilage,
Appellant,

v.

Pawnee County Board of Equalization,
Appellee.

Case No: 14A 126

Decision and Order Affirming Pawnee
County Board of Equalization

Background

1. The Subject Property is an agricultural parcel, with a legal description of: All 28-1-10, 640 Ac, Pawnee County, Nebraska.
2. The Pawnee County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$788,230 for tax year 2014.
3. The Taxpayer protested this value to the Pawnee County Board of Equalization (the County Board) and requested a lower assessed value for tax year 2014.
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$791,570 for tax year 2014.
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 1, 2016, at the Commission Hearing Room, Sixth Floor, Nebraska State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska, before Commissioner Nancy J. Salmon.
7. Gene D. Weilage was present at the hearing for (Taxpayer).
8. Jennifer Stehlik Ladman, Pawnee County Attorney, was present for the County Board.

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 the 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

¹ See, Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1301(1) (Reissue 2009).

² See, Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5016(8) (2014 Cum. Supp.), *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 (2009).

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
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

Findings of Fact & Conclusions of Law

16. The Taxpayer asserted that the valuation of the Subject Property for Tax Year 2014 had increased by 16% when the County Average was 10%. He presented the Commission with a copy of an article from the Pawnee Republican.
17. The County Assessor stated that the 10% was an average. Some parcels increase by a larger percentage and some at a lower percentage. The County Assessor explained that the Subject Property was valued using the Sales Comparison Approach.
18. The Taxpayer asserted that the tree cover on the Subject Parcel had increased and was not taken into consideration for the 2014 assessment.
19. The County Assessor explained he uses the aerial photos to determine tree canopy and asserted that the adjustment to the Subject Property was correct for 2014. The Commission gives great weight to the Assessor’s opinion.
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.

³ *Brenner v. Banner Cty. Bd. Of Equal.*, 276 Neb. 275, 283, 753 N.W.2d 802, 811 (2008) (Citations omitted).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5016(8) (2014 Cum. Supp.).

⁶ *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 171, 645 N.W.2d 821 (2002).

⁷ Cf. *Josten-Wilbert Vault Co. v. Board of Equalization for Buffalo County*, 179 Neb. 415, 138 N.W.2d 641 (1965)

(determination of actual value); *Lincoln Tel. and Tel. Co. v. County Bd. Of Equalization of York County*, 209 Neb. 465, 308 N.W.2d 515 (1981)(determination of equalized taxable value).

⁸ Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018(1) (2014 Cum. Supp.).

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.

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 2014, is Affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2014 is:

Land	\$780,625
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$ 10,945</u>
Total	\$791,570

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Pawnee County Treasurer and the Pawnee County Assessor, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018 (2014 Cum. Supp.).
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 2014.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on March 4, 2016.

Signed and Sealed: March 4, 2016

Nancy J. Salmon, Commissioner