

**NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION  
AND REVIEW COMMISSION**

CATHY HANUS,	)	
	)	
Appellant,	)	CASE NO 05A-052
	)	
v.	)	DECISION AND ORDER REVERSING
	)	THE DECISION OF THE DOUGLAS
DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF	)	COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
EQUALIZATION,	)	AFTER STIPULATION AT HEARING
	)	
Appellee.	)	
	)	

The above-captioned case was called for a hearing on the merits of an appeal by Cathy Hanus to the Tax Equalization and Review Commission ("the Commission"). The hearing was held in the Commission's Hearing Room on the sixth floor of the Nebraska State Office Building in the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, on May 22, 2006, pursuant to a Notice and Order for Hearing issued February 6, 2006. Commissioners Wickersham, Warnes, Lore, and Hans were present. Commissioner Wickersham presided at the hearing.

Cathy Hanus, ("the Taxpayer") was present at the hearing without legal counsel.

The Douglas County Board of Equalization ("the County Board") appeared through legal counsel, James A. Thibodeau, a Deputy County Attorney for Douglas County, Nebraska.

The Commission took statutory notice, received exhibits and heard testimony.

The Commission is required by Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018 (Supp. 2005) to state its final decision and order concerning an appeal, with findings of fact and conclusions of law, on the record or in writing. The final decision and order of the Commission in this case is as follows.

**I.  
FINDINGS**

The Commission finds and determines that:

1. The Taxpayer is the owner of record of certain real property described as E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 5, Township 16, Range 9, Douglas County, Nebraska, ("the subject property").
2. Taxable value of the subject property placed on the assessment roll as of January 1, 2005, ("the assessment date") by the Douglas County Assessor, value as proposed by the Taxpayer in a timely protest, and taxable value as determined by the County Board is shown in the following table:

Description: E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 5, Township 16, Range 9,,Douglas County, Nebraska

	Assessor Notice Value	Taxpayer Protest Value	Board Determined Value
Agricultural Land	\$15,960.00	\$7,420.00	\$15,960.00
Home Site	\$6,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00
Residence	\$45,400.00	\$30,000.00	\$45,400.00
Farm Site	\$4,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00
Outbuilding	\$	\$	\$
Total	\$71,360.00	\$41,420.00	\$71,360.00

3. The Taxpayer timely filed an appeal of the County Board's decision to the Commission.
4. The County Board was served with a Notice in Lieu of Summons and duly answered that Notice.
5. An Order for Hearing and Notice of Hearing issued on February 6, 2006, set a hearing of the Taxpayer's appeal for May 22, 2006, at 3:00 p.m. CDST.

6. An Affidavit of Service which appears in the records of the Commission establishes that a copy of the Order for Hearing and Notice of Hearing was served on all parties.
7. At the hearing the parties entered into a stipulation determining taxable value of the subject property as of the assessment date.
8. For reasons stated below, the Taxpayer has adduced sufficient, clear and convincing evidence that the decision of the County Board is unreasonable or arbitrary, taxable value as determined by the County Board is unreasonable or arbitrary, and the decision of the County Board should be vacated and reversed.
9. Taxable value of the subject property for the tax year 2005 is:

Agricultural land,	
Home site and farm site	\$20,564.00
Residence	\$45,400.00
Total	<u><u>\$65,964.00.</u></u>

## II.

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission in this appeal is over all issues raised during the county board of equalization proceedings. *Arcadian Fertilizer, L.P. v. Sarpy County Bd. of Equalization*, 7 Neb.App. 655, 584 N.W.2d 353, (1998)
2. The Commission has jurisdiction over the parties to this appeal.
3. “Actual value is the most probable price expressed in terms of money that a property will bring if exposed for sale in the open market, or in an arm’s length transaction, between a

willing buyer and a willing seller, both of whom are knowledgeable concerning all the uses to which the real property is adapted and for which the real property is capable of being used. In analyzing the uses and restrictions applicable to real property the analysis shall include a full description of the physical characteristics of the real property and an identification of the property rights valued.” Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-112 (Reissue 2003).

4. Actual value may be determined using professionally accepted mass appraisal methods, including, but not limited to, the (1) sales comparison approach using the guidelines in section 77-1371, (2) income approach, and (3) cost approach. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-112 (Reissue 2003).
5. Use of all of the statutory factors for determination of actual value is not required. All that is required is use of the applicable factors. *First National Bank & Trust of Syracuse v. Otoe Cty.*, 233 Neb. 412, 445 N.W.2d 880 (1989).
6. “Actual value, market value, and fair market value mean exactly the same thing.” *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas County Board of Equalization, et al.*, 11 Neb.App. 171, 180, 645 N.W.2d 821, 829 (2002).
7. Taxable value is the percentage of actual value subject to taxation as directed by section 77-201 of Nebraska Statutes and has the same meaning as assessed value. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-131 (Reissue 2003).
8. All taxable real property, with the exception of qualified agricultural land and horticultural land, shall be valued at actual value for purposes of taxation. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-201(1) (Cum. Supp. 2004).

9. Qualified agricultural land and horticultural land shall be valued for purposes of taxation at eighty percent of its actual value. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-201 (2) (Reissue 2003).
10. Qualified agricultural land and horticultural land means land which is primarily used for the production of agricultural or horticultural products, including wasteland lying in or adjacent to and in common ownership or management with land used for the production of agricultural or horticultural products. Land retained or protected for future agricultural or horticultural uses under a conservation easement as provided in the Conservation and Preservation Easements Act shall be defined as agricultural land or horticultural land. Land enrolled in a federal or state program in which payments are received for removing such land from agricultural or horticultural production shall be defined as agricultural land or horticultural land. Land that is zoned predominantly for purposes other than agricultural or horticultural use shall not be assessed as agricultural land or horticultural land. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1359 (1) (Reissue 2003).
11. Agricultural or horticultural products include grain and feed crops; forages and sod crops; animal production, including breeding, feeding, or grazing of cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats, bees, or poultry; and fruits, vegetables, flowers, seeds, grasses, trees, timber, and other horticultural crops. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1359 (2) (Reissue 2003).
12. No residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural building or enclosed structure or the directly associated land or site of the building or enclosed structure shall be assessed as qualified agricultural or horticultural land. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1361 (2) (Reissue 2003).

13. The Taxpayer must establish by clear and convincing evidence that the action of the County Board was unreasonable or arbitrary. Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5016 (7) (Supp. 2005) *Garvey Elevators, Inc. v. Adams County Board of Equalization*, 261 Neb. 130, 621 N.W.2d, 523, (2001).
14. "Clear and convincing evidence means and is that amount of evidence which produces in the trier of fact a firm belief or conviction about the existence of a fact to be proved." *Castellano v. Bitkower*, 216 Neb. 806, 812, 346 N.W.2d 249, 253 (1984).
15. A decision is "arbitrary" when it is made in disregard of the facts and circumstances and without some basis which could lead a reasonable person to the same conclusion. *Phelps Cty. Bd. of Equal. v. Graf*, 258 Neb 810, 606 N.W.2d 736, (2000).
16. The Taxpayer after proving that the action of the County Board was unreasonable or arbitrary must also demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the value as determined by the County Board was unreasonable. *Garvey Elevators, Inc. v. Adams County Bd. of Equalization*, 261 Neb. 130, 621 N.W.2d 518, (2001).
17. A decision is unreasonable only if the evidence presented leaves no room for differences of opinion among reasonable minds. *Pittman v. Sarpy Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 258 Neb 390, 603 N.W.2d 447, (1999).

### **III. DISCUSSION**

“Ordinarily, a stipulation entered by the parties to a proceeding or by their attorneys within the scope of authority for representation of the parties, establishes the fact or facts

stipulated and binds the parties.” *Ehlers v. Perry*, 242 Neb. 208, 218, 494 N.W.2d 325, 333 (1993)

**V.  
ORDER**

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:**

1. The decision of the County Board determining taxable value of the subject property as of the assessment date, January 1, 2005, is vacated and reversed.

2. Taxable value of the subject property for the tax year 2005 is:

Agricultural land,	
Home site and farm site	\$20,564.00
Residence	\$45,400.00
Total	\$65,964.00.

3. This decision, if no appeal is timely filed, shall be certified to the Douglas County Treasurer, and the Douglas County Assessor, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-5018 (Supp. 2005).

4. Any request for relief, by any party, which is not specifically provided for by this order is denied.

5. Each party is to bear its own costs in this proceeding.

6. This decision shall only be applicable to tax year 2005.

7. This order is effective for purposes of appeal May 25, 2006.

**Signed and Sealed.** May 25, 2006.

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Wm. R. Wickersham, Commissioner

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Susan S. Lore, Commissioner

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Robert L. Hans, Commissioner

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William C. Warnes, Commissioner

**SEAL**

**ANY PARTY SEEKING REVIEW OF THIS ORDER MAY DO SO BY FILING A PETITION WITH THE APPROPRIATE DOCKET FEES IN THE NEBRASKA COURT OF APPEALS. THE PETITION MUST BE FILED WITHIN THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF THIS ORDER AND MUST SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS OF STATE LAW CONTAINED IN NEB. REV. STAT. §77-5019 (SUPP. 2005). IF A PETITION IS NOT TIMELY FILED, THIS ORDER BECOMES FINAL AND CANNOT BE CHANGED.**