



STATE TAX COMMISSION OF MISSOURI

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| CHARLES N. VAPOREAN, |) | |
| |) | |
| Complainant, |) | |
| |) | Appeal No. 23-11106 |
| v. |) | Parcel No. 21R630144 |
| |) | |
| JAKE ZIMMERMAN, ASSESSOR, |) | |
| ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI, |) | |
| |) | |
| Respondent. |) | |

DECISION AND ORDER

Charles N. Vaporean (Complainant) appeals the St. Louis County Board of Equalization's (Respondent) decision valuing the subject residential property at \$314,800 as of January 1, 2023. Complainant alleges overvaluation and asserts the true value in money (TVM) of the subject property was \$214,100 as of the assessment date. Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence establishing overvaluation. The BOE decision is affirmed. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, is \$314,800.¹

¹ Complainant timely filed a complaint for review of assessment. The State Tax Commission (STC) has authority to hear and decide Complainant's appeal. Mo. Const. art. X, sec. 14; Section 138.430.1, RSMo 2000. All statutory citations are to RSMo 2000, as amended.

The evidentiary hearing was held June 9, 2025, via Webex. Complainant appeared *pro se*. Respondent Jake Zimmerman, Assessor, St. Louis County, Missouri, was represented by counsel, Kevin Wyatt. The case was heard and decided by Senior Hearing Officer Benjamin C. Slawson.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Subject Property. The subject residential property consists of a single-family ranch style home built in 1965 on a 0.25 acre lot located at 4 Chevington Ct., Ballwin, MO 63011. The Parcel ID number is 21R630144. The total living space in the home is 1,685 square feet and includes three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

2. Assessment and Valuation. Respondent determined the subject property's appraised value was \$314,800 as of January 1, 2023. The BOE independently determined that the subject's appraised value as of January 1, 2023, was \$314,800.

3. Complainant's Evidence. Complainant introduced the following Exhibits which were all admitted without objection:

| Exhibit | Description |
|----------------|--|
| A | Inventory of Exhibits |
| B | Pictures depicting condition of Subject Home (4 Chevington Ct, Ballwin, MO) |
| C | Description and Cost Estimate of Comparable Homes |
| D | Cost Estimates to Upgrade Subject Home to Comp Home 1 (420 Iron Lantern, Ballwin, MO) |
| E | Cost Estimates to Upgrade Subject Home to Comp Home 2 (435 Breezewood Dr, Ballwin, MO) |
| F | Cost Estimates to Upgrade Subject Home to Comp Home 3 (494 Trailwood Dr, Ballwin, MO) |
| G | Estimate for Upgrade: Labor for Kitchen, Bath, Flooring Upgrade, Painting |
| H | Estimate for Upgrade: Window replacement |
| I | Estimate for Upgrade: Structural Repair |
| J | Estimate for Upgrade: Full Bath for Basement |
| K | Estimate for Upgrade: Bedroom/Office Add to Basement |
| L | Estimate for Upgrade: Deck |

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| M | Estimate for Upgrade: Bathroom1 Hardware |
| N | Estimate for Upgrade: Entry Door |
| O | Estimate for Upgrade: Garage Doors |
| P | Estimate for Upgrade: Kitchen Appliance Hardware |
| Q | Estimate for Upgrade: Tuckpointing |
| R | Estimate for Upgrade: Bathroom2 Hardware |
| S | Estimate for Upgrade: Shower Hardware |
| T | Estimate for Upgrade: Interior Door |
| U | Estimate for Upgrade: Hardware Moulding |
| V | Estimate for Upgrade: Hardware Knobs |
| W | Estimate for Upgrade: Kitchen Lights Hardware |

Complainant testified that Respondent overvalued his property because it is not in the same condition as the comparables used by Respondent in his assessment. Complainant testified that his opinion of value for the property as of January 1, 2023, is \$214,100. Complainant reached this value by calculating the median value between an average of his three comparables' adjusted sales prices (\$142,117.42) and \$284,200 which is a possible valuation he had discussed with Respondent prior to hearing.

To support his claim of overvaluation, Complainant found his own three comparables which are described in his Exhibits. Complainant testified that he believes these comparables are most similar to the subject. However, they differ in that they are in much better condition and have updates that the subject does not have. Complainant therefore made cost estimates to the subject to bring it up to the condition of these comparables and then subtracted these estimates from the sales prices of the comparable (worksheets in Exhibits C, D, and E). Complainant also submitted into evidence his estimated costs to repair and renovate the subject to bring it up to the same condition as his comparables (Exhibits G through W). Complainant used a factor of 0.75 to be fair and not

overestimate the costs. After subtracting those values from the comparables' sales prices, Complainant obtained an average price of \$142,117.42 for the comparables. Complainant is not a licensed appraiser in the State of Missouri.

4. Respondent's Evidence. Respondent introduced Exhibit 1, consisting of the October 17, 2023, BOE decision letter for the subject property. Exhibit 1 shows the BOE valued the subject property at \$314,800.

5. Value. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, was \$314,800.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Assessment and Valuation. Residential real property is assessed at 19% of its TVM as of January 1 of each odd-numbered year. Sections 137.115.1; 137.115.5(1)(a). The TVM is "the fair market value of the property on the valuation date[.]" *Snider v. Casino Aztar/Aztar Mo. Gaming Corp.*, 156 S.W.3d 341, 346 (Mo. banc 2005) (internal quotation omitted). The fair market value is "the price which the property would bring from a willing buyer when offered for sale by a willing seller." *Mo. Baptist Children's Home v. State Tax Comm'n*, 867 S.W.2d 510, 512 (Mo. banc 1993). "True value in money is defined in terms of value in exchange not value in use." *Tibbs v. Poplar Bluff Assocs. I, L.P.*, 599 S.W.3d 1, 7 (Mo. App. S.D. 2020) (internal quotation omitted). The TVM "is a function of [the property's] highest and best use[.]" *Snider*, 156 S.W.3d at 346. "Determining the true value in money is an issue of fact for the STC." *Cohen v. Bushmeyer*, 251 S.W.3d 345, 348 (Mo. App. E.D. 2008).

"For purposes of levying property taxes, the value of real property is typically determined using one or more of three generally accepted approaches." *Snider*, 156 S.W.3d

at 346. The three generally accepted approaches are the cost approach, the income approach, and the comparable sales approach. *Id.* at 346-48. The STC has wide discretion in selecting the appropriate valuation method but "cannot base its decision on opinion evidence that fails to consider information that should have been considered under a particular valuation approach." *Id.*, at 348.

The comparable sales approach "is most appropriate when there is an active market for the type of property at issue such that sufficient data are available to make a comparative analysis." *Snider*, 156 S.W.3d at 348. For this reason, the comparable sales approach is typically used to value residential property. "The comparable sales approach uses prices paid for similar properties in arms-length transactions and adjusts those prices to account for differences between the properties." *Id.* at 347-48 (internal quotation omitted). "Comparable sales consist of evidence of sales reasonably related in time and distance and involve land comparable in character." *Id.* at 348.

2. Evidence. The hearing officer is the finder of fact and determines the credibility and weight of the evidence. *Kelly v. Mo. Dep't of Soc. Servs., Family Support Div.*, 456 S.W.3d 107, 111 (Mo. App. W.D. 2015). "Although technical rules of evidence are not controlling in administrative hearings, fundamental rules of evidence are applicable." *Mo. Church of Scientology v. State Tax Comm'n*, 560 S.W.2d 837, 839 (Mo. banc 1977).

3. Complainant's Burden of Proof. The taxpayer bears the burden of proof and must show by a preponderance of the evidence the property is overvalued. *Westwood P'ship v. Gogarty*, 103 S.W.3d 152, 161 (Mo. App. E.D. 2003). The BOE's valuation is presumptively correct. *Tibbs*, 599 S.W.3d at 7. The "taxpayer may rebut this presumption

by presenting substantial and persuasive evidence that the valuation is erroneous." *Id.* (internal quotation omitted). The taxpayer also must prove "the value that should have been placed on the property" on the assessment date. *Id.* See also *Hermel, Inc. v. State Tax Commission*, 564 S.W.2d 888, 897 (Mo. banc 1978). "Substantial evidence is that evidence which, if true, has probative force upon the issues, and from which the trier of fact can reasonably decide the case on the fact issues." *Savage v. State Tax Comm'n*, 722 S.W.2d 72, 77 (Mo. banc 1986) (internal quotation omitted). Evidence is persuasive when it has "sufficient weight and probative value to convince the trier of fact." *Daly v. P.D. George Co.*, 77 S.W.3d 645, 651 (Mo. App. E.D. 2002); see also *White v. Dir. of Revenue*, 321 S.W.3d 298, 305 (Mo. banc 2010) (noting the burden of persuasion is the "party's duty to convince the fact-finder to view the facts in a way that favors that party").

Property owners are competent to testify to the reasonable fair market value of their property. *Cohen*, 251 S.W.3d at 348. However, if owner's testimony is based on "improper elements or an improper foundation[.]" it is not substantial and persuasive evidence rebutting the presumptively correct BOE value. *Id.* at 349.

4. Complainant Did Not Produce Substantial and Persuasive Evidence of Overvaluation.

Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence to support his \$214,100 opinion of value. Complainant introduced no evidence pertaining to a recognized valuation method. Complainant did not produce any evidence supporting a comparable sales approach, income approach, or cost approach.

Complainant's method for obtaining his opinion of value is not a recognized approach to value. The comparable sales approach is typically used to value residential properties improved with a single-family home. "The comparable sales approach uses prices paid for similar properties in arms-length transactions and adjusts those prices to account for differences between the properties." *Snider*, 156 S.W.3d at 347-48 (internal quotation omitted). Complainant did not offer testimony of an appraiser, nor an appraisal of the property as evidence of the TVM of the property as of January 1, 2023. Therefore, Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence showing that the subject property was overvalued based on comparable sales data.

Complainant is not an appraiser. Complainant offered his own estimates for renovating the subject to bring it to be more similar to the three comparables he found in its condition and features. However, Complainant offered no evidence actually quantifying adverse value of the condition issues and outdated features of the subject. In other words, Complainant offered no professional analysis completed by someone trained to analyze such condition issues and to show the deleterious effect they had on the property on the assessment date, January 1, 2023. As a non-professional, Complainant's estimates, and related adjustments to sales prices of the comparables, are speculative. Complainant's estimates are not the market based adjustments of sales prices using acceptable appraisal methods and techniques.

Therefore, Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence showing that the BOE's value was incorrect. Because the STC "cannot base its decision on

opinion evidence that fails to consider information that should have been considered” under a recognized approach to value, *Snider*, 156 S.W.3d at 348, the BOE decision is affirmed.

CONCLUSION AND ORDER

The BOE decision is affirmed. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, is \$314,800.

Application for Review

A party may file an application for review of this decision within 30 days of the mailing date set forth in the certificate of service for this decision. The application "shall contain specific detailed grounds upon which it is claimed the decision is erroneous." Section 138.432. The application must be in writing, and may be mailed to the State Tax Commission of Missouri, P.O. Box 146, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0146, or emailed to Legal@stc.mo.gov. A copy of the application must be sent to each person listed below in the certificate of service. ***Failure to state specific facts or law upon which the application for review is based will result in summary denial.*** Section 138.432.

Disputed Taxes

The Collector of St. Louis County, and the collectors of all affected political subdivisions therein, shall continue to hold the disputed taxes pending the possible filing of an application for review, unless the disputed taxes have been disbursed pursuant to a court order under the provisions of section 139.031.

SO ORDERED August 28, 2025.

Benjamin C. Slawson
Senior Hearing Officer
State Tax Commission

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing has been electronically mailed and/or sent by U.S. Mail on August 29th, 2025, to:

Complainant(s) and/or Counsel for Complainant(s), the County Assessor and/or Counsel for Respondent and County Collector.

Stacy M. Ingle
Legal Assistant