



STATE TAX COMMISSION OF MISSOURI

RAMAIAH P. SREEDEVI,	)	
	)	
Complainant,	)	
	)	Appeal No. 23-14891
v.	)	Parcel No. 20O430153
	)	
JAKE ZIMMERMAN, ASSESSOR,	)	
ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	

DECISION AND ORDER

Ramaiah P. Sreedevi (Complainant) appeals the St. Louis County Board of Equalization's (Respondent) decision valuing the subject residential property at \$1,107,100 as of January 1, 2023.¹ Complainant alleges overvaluation and discrimination and asserts the true value in money (TVM) of the subject property was \$933,900 as of the assessment date. Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence establishing overvaluation or discrimination. The BOE decision is affirmed. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, is \$1,107,100.

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 4, 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 home located at 998 Delvin Dr, St. Louis, MO 63025. The Parcel ID number is 200430153.

2. Assessment and Valuation. Respondent determined the subject property's appraised value was \$1,107,100 as of January 1, 2023. The BOE independently determined that the subject's appraised value as of January 1, 2023, was \$1,107,100.

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

Exhibit	Description
A	Narrative by Complainant with arguments for overvaluation including comparative assessment analysis of neighboring properties
B	2023 Change of Assessment Notice for the subject property
C	Photographs of subject property

Complainant testified that Respondent overvalued his property because he claims Respondent overvalued the land value of the subject. Complainant testified that the subject is located on a lot with steep hills and is less desirable than neighboring properties. Complainant also testified that his property increased at a higher percentage rate from 2021 to 2023 compared to his neighbors. Complainant proposed a 10% increase from the 2021

value for the TVM for the subject rather than 30% assessed. His proposed value for 2023 based on this calculation is \$933,900.

4. Respondent's Evidence. Respondent introduced Exhibit 1, consisting of the October 31, 2023, BOE decision letter for the subject property. Exhibit 1 shows the BOE valued the subject property at \$1,107,100.

5. Value. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, was \$1,107,100.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Assessment, Valuation, and Discrimination. 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.

To obtain a reduction in assessed value based upon discrimination, a complaining taxpayer must (1) prove the true value, also known as the fair market value (FMV), of the subject property as of the taxing date, and (2) show an intentional plan of discrimination by the assessor resulting in an assessment at a greater percentage of value than other property within the same class and the same taxing district, or, in the absence of such an intentional plan, show that the level of assessment is so grossly excessive as to be inconsistent with an honest exercise of judgment. *Zimmerman v. Mid-America Financial Corp.*, 481 S.W.3d 564, 571 (Mo. App. E.D. 2015), quoting *Savage v. State Tax Comm'n of Missouri*, 722 S.W.2d 72, 78 (Mo. banc 1986). Evidence of value and assessments of a few properties does not prove discrimination. Substantial evidence must show that all other

property in the same class, generally, is actually undervalued. *State ex rel. Plantz v. State Tax Commission*, 384 S.W.2d 565, 568 (Mo. 1964). The difference in the assessment ratio of the subject property the average assessment ratio in the subject county must be shown to be grossly excessive. *Savage* at 79. No other methodology is sufficient to establish discrimination. *Cupples-Hesse, supra*.

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 \$933,900 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.

The comparable sales approach is typically used to value residential properties improved with a single-family home or a condo like the subject. "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 a licensed appraiser. Complainant's proposed value is to use the 2021 appraised value and add 10% based on a comparative assessment analysis with neighboring homes. However, this is not a recognized approach to value.

Complainant testified that the lot for the subject is more undesirable than neighboring properties because of steep grading. However, Complainant offered no evidence actually quantifying alleged adverse value of this location and alleged undesirable features of the subject as of January 1, 2023. In other words, Complainant offered no professional analysis completed by someone trained to analyze such location attributes and to show the deleterious effect they had on the property on the assessment date, January 1, 2023. As a non-professional in the industry, Complainant's lay opinion is speculative.

In order to prove overvaluation, the taxpayer must not only prove that the assessment is erroneous, but *must also must prove "the value that should have been placed on the property" on the assessment date*. *Hermel, Inc. v. State Tax Commission*, 564 S.W.2d 888, 897 (Mo. banc 1978). Emphasis added. Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence showing that the BOE's value was incorrect, nor did he prove the TVM on the assessment date. 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.

5. Complainant Did Not Prove Discrimination.

Complainant did not prove discrimination for the subject property. Missouri courts have consistently held that (1) a taxpayer alleging discrimination must show the true value in money of his property as a necessary part of his discrimination claim; and (2) the proper

method of determining discrimination is to compare the actual level of assessment of the subject property as determined by the assessor to the common level of assessment for the subject property's subclass. *Mid-America Financial Corp.*, 481 S.W.3d at 574, citing *Savage*, 722 S.W.2d at 72.

Regarding the first point, Complainant did not rebut the correctness of the BOE's valuation. As discussed above, Complainant did not present substantial and persuasive evidence rebutting the presumption of correctness of the BOE's value and establishing that her value was correct. Complainant did not present any recent comparable sales or a properly-authenticated appraisal report supported by the testimony of the appraiser who performed the appraisal to establish the TVM was lower than the amount found by the BOE. Therefore, Complainant failed to establish a market value which would point to discrimination.

Regarding the second point, Complainant presented no evidence of additional properties for comparison with the subject property in order to establish an intentional plan of discrimination by St. Louis County. Neither Complainant's testimony nor his exhibits contain specific information for comparative properties showing actual assessed values versus the subject. There was no evidence presented supported by the expert testimony of a professional that a statistically significant number of other residential properties within St. Louis County are being assessed at a lower ratio of market value than the subject property. In other words, Complainant presented no evidence of several properties which sold for prices in excess of their appraised value. He testified that the subject property was appraised higher based on his observations, but again presented no persuasive comparable

sales in support of his testimony. Because the Complainant failed to establish the market value of the subject property and failed to establish that it is being assessed at a higher percentage of market value than a statistically significant number of other properties in St. Louis County, the claim of discrimination fails.

CONCLUSION AND ORDER

The BOE decision is affirmed. The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, is \$1,107,100.

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 October 30, 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 October 31, 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