



# STATE TAX COMMISSION OF MISSOURI

MICHAEL & LAURA JETTE, )  
 )  
 Complainant(s), )  
 ) Appeal No. 23-10458  
 v. ) Parcel No. 18U220157  
 )  
 JAKE ZIMMERMAN, ASSESSOR, )  
 ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI, )  
 )  
 Respondent. )

## DECISION AND ORDER

Laura and Michael Jette (Complainant) appeal the St. Louis County Board of Equalization's (BOE) decision finding the true value in money (TVM) of the subject property on January 1, 2023, was \$500,000. Complainant alleges overvaluation and claims that the TVM as of that date was \$470,000.<sup>1</sup> Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence of overvaluation. The BOE decision is affirmed. The TVM of the subject property on January 1, 2023, was \$500,000.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 on April 8, 2025, via Webex. Complainant appeared *pro se* and was represented by Laura Jette. Respondent Jake Zimmerman, Assessor, St. Louis County, Missouri, was represented by counsel, Kevin Wyatt. The case was heard and decided by Hearing Officer Samuel Knapper.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

**1. The Subject Property.** The subject residential real property is located at 10700 Rooster Ridge Rd., Chesterfield, Missouri and the corresponding Parcel ID is 18U220157. The property consists of an approximate 4 acre lot and single family home.

**2. Assessment and Valuation.** Respondent classified the subject property as residential and determined the TVM on January 1, 2023, was \$581,000. The BOE considered this matter and independently determined the TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, was \$500,000.

**3. Complainant’s Evidence.** Complainant introduced the following Exhibit which was admitted without objection:

Exhibit	Description
A	Word Document created by Complainant supporting their proposed valuation with alternative comparables, procedural questions and general arguments

Complainant testified that her opinion of value as of January 1, 2023, for the subject property is \$470,000. Complainant testified that she believes that the BOE overvalued her property for two reasons: (1) failure to account for property conditions and (2) failure to utilize appropriate comparable sales.

Complainant testified that she has lived in her neighborhood for 23 years, before Chesterfield was a city. Consequently, there are unique conditions for her property. Complainant testified her neighborhood consists of ten to twelve four acre lots and that her lot is very steep. Complainant also testified that the neighborhood pays dues; however, the dues are not fixed because a trustee calculates what the necessary expenses (e.g. road maintenance, snow removal, etc.) will be and charges accordingly. Complainant testified that a looming expense will be to redo the roads as the bids have been significant. Complainant also testified that her property relies upon well water and a septic tank system. Complainant believes that buyers would view the grade of her property, the reliance upon well water, the use of a septic tank and the burden of neighborhood costs negatively when considering purchasing her property.

Second, Complainant noted that her property assessment has increased by over 50% over the past four years. Complainant testified that it was difficult to find comparable properties. Complainant found two properties that she believes are similar (*See Exhibit A*) and averaged their price per square foot. Complainant then applied this average to her property's square footage for a sum of \$390,000. Complainant suggested the \$470,000 to account for variances between properties.

Upon cross examination Complainant testified that she is not a licensed appraiser, nor does he have any educational background or professional training specifically in making adjustments between residential sales. Complainant testified that she did not make adjustments to the alternative comparable sales or research the parties to the transactions.

Complainant testified she located the properties with 'zillow' and placed geographical boundaries in the search parameters while searching for home sales with similar features.

**4. Respondent's Evidence.** Respondent introduced Exhibit 1, the BOE's October 17, 2023, Decision Letter. Complainant did not object. Respondent's Exhibit 1 was admitted into evidence.

**5. Value.** The TVM of the subject property as of January 1, 2023, was \$500,000.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

**1. Assessment and Valuation.** Pursuant to Article X, Sections 4(a) and 4(b), Mo. Const. of 1945 real property and tangible personal property is assessed at its value or such percentage of its value as may be fixed by law for each class and for each subclass. Article X, Sections 4(a) and 4(b), Mo. Const. of 1945. Residential real property is assessed at 19% of its TVM as of January 1 of each odd-numbered year. Section 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). "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.** "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). 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). "It is within the purview of the hearing officer to determine the method of valuation to be adopted in a given case." *Tibbs v. Poplar Bluff Assocs. I, L.P.*, 599 S.W.3d 1, 9 (Mo.

App. S.D. 2020). The hearing officer “may inquire of the owner of the property or of any other party to the appeal regarding any matter or issue relevant to the valuation, subclassification or assessment of the property.” Section 138.430.2. The Hearing Officer’s decision regarding the assessment or valuation of the property may be based solely upon his inquiry and any evidence presented by the parties, or based solely upon evidence presented by the parties. *Id.*

**3. Complainant's Burden of Proof.** The taxpayer bears the burden of proof and must show by a preponderance of the evidence that the property was 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." *Id.*

"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").

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

Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence to support her opinion of value of \$470,000 for the subject property as of January 1, 2023.

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).

While Complainant offered two comparable sales which she believes are more determinative of the value of the subject property than those Respondent used, these sales are not persuasive evidence. Little information was provided by Complainant regarding the sale conditions of these properties and no adjustments are made to account for differences between the subject property and these other properties. Further, Complainant's calculation of an average sale price of the comparables per square foot to determine the fair market value of the subject property is not a generally accepted approach to value property.

Complainant argues that the TVM should be lowered due to unique conditions of her property; however, there is no expert analysis to support this opinion. In other words, the Complainant's proposed TVM relied upon the Complainant's opinion of the impact of the unique conditions (the grade of the lot, the presence of well water, the reliance upon a septic tank and additional dues associated with neighborhood maintenance) as opposed to

an objective opinion based upon particular knowledge in assessing residential property values (e.g. an appraisal report). It appears that the BOE did take the unique conditions into account when it reduced the TVM to \$500,000 from \$581,000.

Even if Complainant had rebutted the presumption of correct valuation by the BOE, Complainant has not proven that the TVM of the subject property is \$470,000 as of January 1, 2023. While a property owner's opinion of value is generally admissible, the opinion lacks "probative value where it is shown to have been based upon improper elements or an improper foundation." *Shelby Cty. R-IV Sch. Dist. v. Herman*, 392 S.W.2d 609, 613 (Mo. 1965); *see also Cohen v. Bushmeyer*, 251 S.W.3d 345, 349 (Mo. App. W.D. 2008) (noting a property owner's opinion of value loses probative value when it rests on an improper foundation).

Complainant did not produce substantial and persuasive evidence showing that the subject property was overvalued. Therefore, Complainant's evidence does not provide the necessary foundation and elements to support her overvaluation claim. 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, was \$500,000.



### **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 January 8, 2026.

STATE TAX COMMISSION OF MISSOURI

Samuel Knapper  
Hearing Officer

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing has been electronically mailed and/or sent by U.S. Mail on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 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