

INDIANA BOARD OF TAX REVIEW

Final Determination Findings and Conclusions Lake County

Petition #: 45-001-02-1-5-00892
Petitioner: Calvin Kennedy Sr.
Respondent: Department of Local Government Finance
Parcel #: 001-25-42-0297-0013
Assessment Year: 2002

The Indiana Board of Tax Review (the Board) issues this determination in the above matter, and finds and concludes as follows:

Procedural History

1. The informal hearing as described in Ind. Code § 6-1.1-4-33 was held on February 9, 2004 in Lake County, Indiana. The Department of Local Government Finance (the DLGF) determined that the Petitioner's property tax assessment for the subject property is \$7,700, and notified the Petitioner on March 31, 2004.
2. The Petitioner filed a Form 139L on April 26, 2004.
3. The Board issued a notice of hearing to the parties dated October 4, 2004.
4. A hearing was held on November 8, 2004 in Crown Point, Indiana before Special Master Peter Salvesson.

Facts

5. The subject property is located at 1827 East 21st Ave, Gary, in Calumet Township.
6. The subject property is a vacant residential lot consisting of 0.498 acres of land.
7. The Special Master did not conduct an on-site visit of the property.
8. The DLGF determined that the assessed value of the property is \$7,700 for the land. There are no improvements on the subject property.
9. The Petitioner requested a value of \$700 for the property.
10. Calvin Kennedy Sr., the owner of the property, and John Toumey, an assessor/auditor with DLGF, appeared at the hearing and were sworn as witnesses.

Issues

11. Summary of Petitioner's contentions in support of an alleged error in the assessment:
 - a) The assessment is too high, as the subject property was purchased through a tax sale for \$675 on October 19, 2002. *Kennedy testimony; Petitioner Ex. 1.*
 - b) No improvements have been made in the area of the subject property. *Kennedy testimony.*
 - c) The subject property is wooded and may be part of a wetlands designation. *Id.*
 - d) An old housing structure is located on the back of the property, covered by wood. *Id.*
12. Summary of Respondent's contentions in support of the assessment:
 - a) The physical characteristics of the subject property are properly reflected on the property record card. *Toumey testimony; Respondent Ex. 2.*
 - b) A 30% negative influence factor is applied for the unimproved nature of the subject property, and excess frontage. *Id.* No improvements are taxed to the property. *Id.*

Record

13. The official record for this matter is made up of the following:
 - a) The Petition, and all subsequent submissions by either party.
 - b) The tape recording of the hearing labeled Lake Co - 568.
 - c) Exhibits:

Petitioner Exhibit 1:	Tax Sale Receipt
Respondent's Exhibit 1:	Form 139L Petition
Respondent's Exhibit 2:	Subject Property Record Card
Respondent's Exhibit 3:	Arial Map
Board Exhibit A:	Form 139L Petition
Board Exhibit B:	Notice of Hearing
Board Exhibit C:	Sign-In Sheet
 - d) These Findings and Conclusions.

Analysis

14. The most applicable laws are:
- a) A Petitioner seeking review of a determination of an assessing official has the burden to establish a prima facie case proving that the current assessment is incorrect, and specifically what the correct assessment would be. *See Meridian Towers East & West v. Washington Twp. Assessor*, 805 N.E.2d at 475, 478 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2003); *see also, Clark v. State Bd. of Tax Comm'rs*, 694 N.E.2d 1230 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1998).
 - b) In making its case, the taxpayer must explain how each piece of evidence is relevant to the requested assessment. *See Indianapolis Racquet Club, Inc. v. Washington Twp. Assessor*, 802 N.E.2d 1018, 1022 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2004) (“[I]t is the taxpayer’s duty to walk the Indiana Board....through every element of the analysis”).
 - c) Once the Petitioner establishes a prima facie case, the burden shifts to the assessing official to rebut the Petitioner's evidence. *See American United Life Ins. Co. v. Maley*, 803 N.E.2d 276 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2004). The assessing official must offer evidence that impeaches or rebuts the Petitioner's evidence. *Id.*; *Meridian Towers*, 805 N.E.2d at 479.
15. The Petitioner did not provide sufficient evidence to support the Petitioner’s contentions. This conclusion was arrived at because:
- a) The Petitioner contends that the assessment of the subject parcel is too high. The Petitioner submitted evidence that the parcel was purchased at a tax sale in October, 2002 for \$675.
 - b) The 2002 Real Property Assessment Manual (the Manual) defines the “true tax value” of real estate as “the market value-in-use of a property for its current use, as reflected by the utility received by the owner or a similar user, from the property.” 2002 REAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT MANUAL at 2 (incorporated by reference at 50 IAC 2.3-1-2). The Manual further provides that for the 2002 general reassessment, a property’s assessment must reflect its market value-in-use as of January 1, 1999. MANUAL at 4. While an actual sale of a property may be a good indicator of its actual market value, the sale must be an “arm’s-length transaction.” In other words, a sale does not necessarily indicate the market value of the property unless that sale happens in a competitive and open market under all conditions requisite to a fair sale, in which the buyer and seller are typically motivated. MANUAL at 10. “Fair market value’ is what a willing buyer, under no compulsion to buy, would pay a willing seller, under no compulsion to sell.” *Second National Bank of Richmond v. State*, 366 N.E.2d 694, 696 (Ind. Ct. App. 1977). A tax sale purchase of property does not satisfy the conditions of a competitive and open market, and the buyer and seller being typically willing, motivated and under no compulsion to buy or sell. Thus, the purchase price of property obtained in a tax sale is not, by itself, probative evidence of market value

of a property.

- c) The Petitioner also testified that the property is wooded and may be part of a wetlands designation. Generally, land values in a given neighborhood are determined through the application of a Land Order that was developed by collecting and analyzing comparable sales data for the neighborhood and surrounding areas. *See Talesnick v. State Bd. of Tax Comm'rs*, 693 N.E.2d 657, 659 n. 5 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1998). However, properties often possess peculiar attributes that do not allow them to be lumped with each of the surrounding properties for purposes of valuation. The term "influence factor" refers to a multiplier "that is applied to the value of land to account for characteristics of a particular parcel of land that are peculiar to that parcel." GUIDELINES, glossary at 10. Petitioner has the burden to produce "probative evidence that would support an application of a negative influence factor and a quantification of that influence factor." *See Talesnick v. State Bd. of Tax Comm'rs.*, 756 N.E.2d 1104, 1108 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2001). The DLGF testified that a 30% negative adjustment factor was applied to the property to reflect the unimproved nature of the lot and its excess frontage. While the property's designation as a wetland may be relevant to the issue of whether a different negative influence factor should apply here, Petitioner's mere statement the subject property "may" be part of a wetlands designation is insufficient evidence to consider the matter. Further, the Petitioner failed to show how this condition, if it existed, would impact the market value-in-use of the subject property, or show what the actual market value of the property is. *See Talesnick*, 756 N.E.2d at 1108.
- d) For the reasons set forth, the Petitioner has failed to make a prima facie case that the assessment of the subject property is incorrect.

Conclusion

16. The Petitioner did not make a prima facie case. The Board finds in favor of Respondent.

Final Determination

In accordance with the above findings and conclusions the Indiana Board of Tax Review now determines that the assessment should not be changed.

ISSUED: _____

Commissioner,
Indiana Board of Tax Review

IMPORTANT NOTICE

- APPEAL RIGHTS -

You may petition for judicial review of this final determination pursuant to the provisions of Indiana Code § 6-1.1-15-5. The action shall be taken to the Indiana Tax Court under Indiana Code § 4-21.5-5. To initiate a proceeding for judicial review you must take the action required within forty-five (45) days of the date of this notice. You must name in the petition and in the petition's caption the persons who were parties to any proceeding that led to the agency action under Indiana Tax Court Rule 4(B)(2), Indiana Trial Rule 10(A), and Indiana Code §§ 4-21.5-5-7(b)(4), 6-1.1-15-5(b). The Tax Court Rules provide a sample petition for judicial review. The Indiana Tax Court Rules are available on the Internet at <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/rules/tax/index.html>. The Indiana Trial Rules are available on the Internet at http://www.in.gov/judiciary/rules/trial_proc/index.html. The Indiana Code is available on the Internet at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code>.