

BEFORE THE IDAHO BOARD OF TAX APPEALS

BRIAN SOPATYK,)
)
Appellant,) APPEAL NO. 25-A-1112
)
v.) FINAL DECISION AND ORDER
)
BOISE COUNTY,)
)
Respondent.)
)
)
)
_____)

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY APPEAL

This appeal is taken from a decision of the Boise County Board of Equalization denying an appeal of the valuation for taxing purposes on property described by Parcel No. RP095010000660. The appeal concerns the 2025 tax year.

This matter came on for hearing November 20, 2025, in Idaho City, Idaho, before Hearing Officer Michelle Woodmansee. Appellant Brian Sopatyk was self-represented. Boise County Deputy Prosecutor Brennon Womble represented Respondent.

Board Members Kenneth Nuhn and Doug Wallis join in issuing this decision.

The issue on appeal concerns the market value of an improved residential property.

The decision of the Boise County Board of Equalization is modified.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The assessed land value is \$382,000, and the improvements' value is \$144,424, totaling \$526,424. Appellant contends the correct total value is \$436,000.

The subject property is a 1.99 acre rural residential parcel situated on a bluff overlooking the Middle Fork of the Payette River in the Lightning Creek subdivision in

Garden Valley, Idaho. The property is improved with a 1,165 square foot, two (2) bedroom, one (1) bathroom residence constructed in 1965. The property is further improved with a 384 square foot dry cabin.

Appellant questioned the accuracy of subject's current assessment given the value swings the property has experienced the last few years. It was noted subject's 2023 assessed value was roughly \$540,000, which increased to nearly \$572,000 in 2024, and then dropped to approximately \$526,000 for 2025. In support of a lower valuation, Appellant offered an independent fee appraisal report with an effective date of valuation of July 3, 2024. The appraisal developed value estimates for the subject property using the cost approach and the sales comparison approach, though no weight was afforded the cost approach in the final reconciliation.

For subject's land value, the appraisal's cost approach considered two (2) vacant land sales and two (2) active listings. The first land sale concerned a 2.23 acre waterfront lot which sold for \$285,000 in November 2023, and the second land sale was a 2.38 acre non-waterfront parcel with a December 2022 purchase price of \$174,000. Both listings, characterized by the appraisal as "highly speculative," concerned waterfront lots with superior frontage to subject. The first was a 2.4 acre parcel with a \$610,000 asking price, and the other was a .44 acre lot with a \$400,000 asking price. The appraisal determined a land value of \$285,000 for subject's 1.99 acres.

The cost model next considered the value of subject's improvements. Using Marshall Valuation Service and local construction data, the appraisal determined a base replacement cost of \$125 per square foot, or \$135,000, for subject's residence. A value of \$40,000 was estimated for the dry cabin, resulting in a total cost new estimate of

\$175,000 for subject's improvements. After applying physical depreciation, the appraisal determined a depreciated value of \$102,077 for subject's sixty (60) year old improvements. The appraisal next added \$49,000 for site improvements and, after including the \$285,000 land value determined earlier, concluded a total value of \$436,077 for the subject property under the cost approach.

The appraisal's comparative sales model included four (4) closed sales and two (2) pending sales. Sale No. 1 was a .37 acre non-waterfront parcel improved with a 1,072 square foot residence constructed in 1973 which sold for \$480,000 in November 2023. Sale No. 2 concerned the July 2023 purchase of a 2.99 acre parcel improved with a 1,459 square foot residence constructed in 1989 for \$465,000. Sale No. 3 involved a 911 square foot residence constructed in 2003 situated on a .42 acre lot which sold for \$415,000 in March 2023. Sale No. 4 concerned the May 2024 purchase of a 1.06 acre parcel improved with a 1,600 square foot residence constructed in 1984 for \$506,000. The first pending sale property was a 1.17 acre lot improved with a 2,194 square foot residence constructed in 2000 and a listed price of \$870,000. The other pending sale concerned a .63 acre parcel improved with a 1,062 square foot residence constructed in 1981 with a listed price of \$389,900.¹

Each sale property was compared to subject, and adjustments were made for differences in key characteristics such as gross living area, construction quality, condition, garages, and outbuildings, among others. The appraisal determined adjusted prices from \$412,400 to \$450,900. In reconciling the adjusted price data, the appraisal excluded the two (2) pending sales and placed primary weight on Sale No. 3 due to its

¹ This property was also included in Respondent's analysis as a closed sale. Respondent reported the sale closed in July 2024 at a price of \$388,600.

overall similarity and close proximity to subject. The result was a value conclusion of \$436,000 for the subject property.

Respondent was critical of certain aspects of the appraisal. Respondent pointed out that, with the exception of Sale No. 3, none of the improved sales in the appraisal were waterfront properties. Respondent also questioned the lack of adjustments for location and lot size. Lastly, pointing to the appraisal's July 2024 effective date of valuation, Respondent was concerned with the absence of time adjustments to the sales to reflect pricing levels on January 1, 2025, the relevant date of valuation in this matter.

For support of subject's current assessed value, Respondent developed two (2) sales analyses: one (1) centered on subject's land value, and one (1) focused on subject's total value. Respondent's land analysis included three (3) vacant riverfront sales. The first was a .38 acre lot with a July 2024 purchase price of \$180,000. The next sale concerned a 6.5 acre parcel which sold for \$550,000 in August 2024. Lastly was the September 2024 purchase of an 8.9 acre parcel for \$715,000. After application of an unknown time-adjustment factor and a \$30,000 downward adjustment for the superior river access enjoyed by all three (3) sale lots, Respondent calculated adjusted prices ranging from \$159,120 to \$680,978, or from \$75,917 to \$418,737 per acre. Subject's 1.99 acres are assessed at \$342,000, or \$171,859 per acre, which Respondent maintained was reasonable.

Respondent's other analysis included three (3) improved sales, none of which were riverfront. Sale No. 1 was a 1.24 acre lot improved with a 1,224 square foot residence which sold for \$288,000 in December 2024. Sale No. 2, which was also included in Appellant's appraisal as the second pending sale, concerned a .63 acre

parcel improved with a 1,010 square foot residence, and a July 2024 purchase price of \$388,600. Sale No. 3 was a 968 square foot residence situated on a .36 acre lot which sold for \$470,000 in October 2024. According to Respondent, the improved residential market has stabilized since its peak in 2021, so no time adjustments were warranted for the improved sales. Adjustments were made, however, for location, lot size, age, square footage, outbuildings, and other differences. The result was adjusted sale prices from \$507,670 to \$630,637, with an average of \$587,828. Subject's current total assessed value is \$526,424.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

This Board's goal in its hearings is the acquisition of sufficient, accurate evidence to support a determination of market value in fee simple interest or, as applicable, a property's exempt status. This Board, giving full opportunity for all arguments and having considered all the testimony and documentary evidence submitted by the parties, hereby enters the following.

Idaho Code § 63-205 requires taxable property be assessed at market value annually on January 1; January 1, 2025, in this case. Market value is always estimated as of a precise point in time. Idaho Code § 63-201 provides the following definition,

“Market value” means the amount of United States dollars or equivalent for which, in all probability, a property would exchange hands between a willing seller, under no compulsion to sell, and an informed, capable buyer, with a reasonable time allowed to consummate the sale, substantiated by a reasonable down or full cash payment.

Market value is estimated according to recognized appraisal methods and techniques. The three (3) primary approaches for determining market value include the sales comparison approach, the cost approach, and the income approach. *Merris v.*

Ada Cnty., 100 Idaho 59, 63, 593 P.2d 394, 398 (1979). The sales comparison approach is typically utilized to estimate the market value of residential property. The approach compares recent sales of similar properties to the subject property, with adjustments made for differences in key characteristics.

Both parties developed traditional sales comparison models, but the value conclusions differed significantly. Respondent offered one (1) sales analysis centered on land value and one (1) analysis for subject's total value. While the Board appreciated Respondent's land value analysis, the subject property is an improved residential property, which is a different property type and competes in the market for a different pool of potential buyers than vacant land. This difference was evidenced by Respondent's use of a time adjustment in its analysis of the vacant lot sales and no time adjustment in its analysis of the improved residential sales. Respondent explained time adjustments for the vacant sales were necessary because "land sales continue to be in an inflationary market." By contrast, with respect to the improved residential sales, Respondent stated, "[r]esidential sales throughout Boise County have stabilized since their peak in 2021, therefore, no time adjustment was needed." In any event, where the relevant issue is subject's total assessed value, not the specific values of the individual land and improvement components, the Board did not place much emphasis on Respondent's land analysis.

We turn now to the parties' improved sales analyses. Generally speaking, properties in the Garden Valley area are widely diverse in the characteristics of the improvements and underlying land, which the Board understands makes for a difficult appraisal assignment. This diversity was demonstrated in the adjustments made in the

parties' respective valuation models. The gross adjustments for the closed sales in Appellant's appraisal ranged from 14.6% to 36.2%, though net adjustments were more reasonable, ranging from -10.9% to 3.4%. Respondent's adjustments were considerably higher, ranging from 51.6% to 98.4% on a gross basis, with net adjustments varying from 34.2% to 76.3%. In other words, questions of comparability between the subject property and the parties' sale properties were apparent, but unsurprising given the noted diversity of properties in the area.

For the most part, the parties' adjustments to the sales were typical and reasonably similar. The exception was location. The adjustments made to Respondent's Sale No. 2, which was also the second pending sale in Appellant's appraisal, illustrates the parties' differing views regarding location. The sale property was a .63 lot improved with a 1,010 square foot residence constructed in 1981, which sold for \$388,600 in July 2024. After roughly 61% in net adjustments, Respondent concluded an adjusted sale price of \$625,178, whereas Appellant's appraisal determined an adjusted price of \$412,400, after 5.8% in net adjustments. Though the individual adjustments did vary somewhat between the parties' valuation models, the primary source of divergence was the \$175,000 location adjustment Respondent applied to Sale No. 2, which equated to 45% of the sale price, while the appraisal made no adjustment for location. Though such a high level of adjustment for a single property characteristic is questionable on its face, the lack of any location adjustment in Appellant's appraisal report is likewise dubious, particularly given that the sale was not a riverfront property, whereas subject is.

Respondent was critical of the sale properties included in the appraisal's sales model because only one (1) was true riverfront, and a couple of the parcels were less

than one (1) acre in size. Though valid points, Respondent's criticism was somewhat curious given that none of its own improved sales were situated on the river, and two (2) of three (3) sale properties in its analysis were also less than one (1) acre in size. Respondent was also concerned with the lack of time adjustments applied to the sales in the appraisal, but as noted earlier, Respondent likewise did not apply any time adjustments in its analysis of improved sales.

In reviewing the parties' combined sales data, what stood out to the Board was the fact subject's assessed value exceeds the unadjusted sale prices of all the closed sales in the record by a considerable margin. This alone brings into question whether roughly \$526,000 is an accurate estimate of subject's market value given that the highest sale price in the record was \$506,000, for a property improved with a newer, larger, and higher quality residence. Even after the parties' heavy adjustments, subject's assessed value is higher than all but two (2) of the parties' adjusted sale prices. This too was curious to the Board, because the subject property was not characterized as uniquely special such that it would command a premium price in the marketplace. Subject's residence is older than all the sale residences, and the subject parcel is situated on a bluff above the river so does not have easy walk-in access to the water, a common characteristic enjoyed by many riverfront parcels in the area.

Of all the improved sales analyzed by the parties, only one (1) was a riverfront property. This was Sale No. 3 in Appellant's appraisal, a .42 acre parcel improved with a 911 square foot residence constructed in 2003 which sold for \$415,000, with an adjusted price of \$429,100. As the only improved riverfront sale in the record, thereby

eliminating the need for any speculative location adjustments, it factored heavily in the Board's consideration of subject's current market value.

Idaho Code § 63-511 places the burden on Appellant to establish subject's valuation is erroneous by a preponderance of the evidence. Given the record in this matter, the Board found the burden of proof satisfied, though did not find sufficient support for the value petitioned by Appellant. While the Board was concerned with Respondent's sizeable location adjustments, the absence of any adjustments for location in Appellant's appraisal was equally concerning. In weighing the parties' sales data and accompanying analyses, with emphasis on the single improved riverfront sale in the record, the Board finds a value of \$480,000 reasonable for the subject property in this instance. The decision of the Boise County Board of Equalization is modified accordingly.

FINAL ORDER

In accordance with the foregoing Final Decision, IT IS ORDERED that the decision of the Boise County Board of Equalization concerning the subject parcel be, and the same hereby is, MODIFIED, to reflect a decrease in subject's total assessed value to \$480,000, with \$132,000 attributable to the improvements, and \$348,000 (includes \$40,000 site improvement value) to the land.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to Idaho Code § 63-1305, any taxes which have been paid in excess of those determined to have been due be refunded or applied against other *ad valorem* taxes due from Appellant.

Idaho Code § 63-3813 provides that under certain circumstances the above-ordered value for the current tax year shall not be increased in the subsequent assessment year.

DATED this 2nd day of February, 2026.