

Courtesy of the Keith County News  
By JORDAN SHEARER  
News Staff Writer

Along with various other changes this year, property valuations on commercial land and improvements in Ogallala increased 28 percent from what they had been last year.

Keith County Assessor Renae Zink gave the Keith County Board of Commissioners a brief overview of the results of the changes that took place throughout the county this year during their May 24 meeting.

In order to be in compliance with state statutes, both residential and commercial properties have to be valued at between 92 percent and 100 percent of market value. According to Zink, the 28 percent increase in Ogallala's commercial properties was done to bring its valuations up to the 92 percent mark.

"I went to the lowest that we could possibly go," Zink said to the commissioners about the 28 percent increase in commercial valuations.

She also said that although the 28 percent increase only brought the valuation up to 92 percent of market value, the Nebraska Department of Revenue, Property Assessment Division reclassified that 92 percent as 100 percent.

"We called it at 100 percent based on good assessment practices instead of the 92 (percent)," a Nebraska Department of Revenue, Property Assessment Division representative said.

In essence, even though the state reclassified the valuation, the actual valuation of commercial properties is still only 92 percent of market value. Zink told the commissioners that she wanted to clarify the situation in case there were any misunderstandings when property owners see the published results listed as 100 percent of market value.

In addition to the increase in commercial valuations, there was an 8 percent increase for improvements on rural properties and improvements on properties in "Ogallala Suburban," which is a 2-mile stretch around the city limits.

For definitional purposes in the assessment process, an "improvement" is any structure that exists on a parcel of property, regardless of whether or not it has been recently renovated. Additionally, the classification of "neighborhood" is "an area of like properties grouped together to determine a market."

Properties around Lake McConaughy saw a 5 percent increase to improvements. The valuation of the land itself, however, remained the same.

“It has been difficult keeping up with the sales market of this area. The properties appear to be in demand and selling for so much more than assessed value,” a report from the Keith County Assessors Office said of the recent changes.

For the assessment year of 2017, the assessor’s office did a review of the surrounding villages in the county, including Brule, Paxton, Roscoe, Keystone and Sarben. The assessor’s office reviews every section of the county at least once every six years to record changes to the properties. During years when a section of the county is not reviewed, its valuation may increase or decrease based on the sales of similar properties.

The review increased Brule’s residential valuations from 91.54 percent to 94.99 percent and Paxton’s residential valuations from 85.52 percent up to 98.52 percent. Residential properties at Keystone, Roscoe and Sarben, which are calculated together, were increased 85.07 percent to 97.97 percent.

Agricultural grassland north of the North Platte River increased 15 percent. Dryland between the North Platte and South Platte Rivers decreased 10 percent. Dryland and irrigated land south of the South Platte River decreased 5 percent, except for a handful of categories, including 3D1, 3D, 4D1 and 4D. Because of an error last year, those categories had to be increased 4 percent.

To compute the valuations, the assessor’s office takes a given amount of years of property sales and, along with physical characteristics of the given home or land, uses them to compute a valuation for that given parcel. For residential properties, two years of sales are used. For both commercial and agricultural land, three years of sales are used. Every year, the oldest year of sales is dropped out of the calculation and the most recent year is added.

The recent valuation changes were made based on 310 residential sales, 38 commercial sales and 60 agricultural sales.

Valuations do not determine the amount of taxes that property owners pay. Rather, the County Board sets a levy, or percentage amount, on the property valuations to arrive at the property taxes for the year.

Valuation change notices were scheduled to be mailed to property owners by May 31 (today). If owners would like to discuss their

valuation changes with a representative from the assessor's office, Zink asked that they call and make an appointment. Due to the time of year, the office receives a large volume of such visits.