

701—71.20 (441) Board of review.

71.20(1) Membership.

a. Occupation of members. One member of the county board of review must be actively engaged in farming as that member's primary occupation. However, it is not necessary for a board of review to have as a member one licensed real estate broker and one registered architect or person experienced in the building and construction field if the person cannot be located after a good faith effort to do so has been made by the conference board (1966 O.A.G. 416). In determining eligibility for membership on a board of review, a retired person is not considered to be employed in the occupation pursued prior to retirement, unless that person remains in reasonable contact with the former occupation, including some participation in matters associated with that occupation.

b. Residency of members. A person must be a resident of the assessor jurisdiction served to qualify for appointment as a member of the board of review. However, a member changing assessing jurisdiction residency after appointment to the board may continue to serve on the board until the member's current term of office expires.

c. Term of office. The term of office of members of boards of review shall be for six years and shall be staggered as provided in Iowa Code section 441.31. In the event of the death, resignation, or removal from office of a member of a board of review, the conference board or city council shall appoint a successor to serve the unexpired term of the previous incumbent.

d. Membership on other boards. A member of a board of review shall not at the same time serve on either the conference board or the examining board, or be an employee of the assessor's office (1948 O.A.G. 120, 1960 O.A.G. 226).

e. Number of members. A conference board or city council may at any time change the composition of a board of review to either three or five members. To reduce membership from five members to three members, the conference board or city council shall not appoint successors to fill the next two vacancies which occur (1970 O.A.G. 342). To increase membership from three members to five members, the conference board or city council shall appoint two additional members whose initial terms shall expire at such times so that no two board members' terms expire at the end of the same year. Also, the conference board or city council may increase the membership of the board of review by an additional two members if it determines that a large number of protests warrant the emergency appointments. If the board of review has ten members, not more than four additional members may be appointed by the conference board. The terms of the emergency members will not exceed two years.

f. Removal from office. A member of a board of review may be removed from office by the conference board or city council but only after specific charges have been filed by the conference board or city council.

g. Appointment of members. Members of a county board of review shall be appointed by the county conference board. Members of a city board of review shall be appointed by the city conference board in cities with an assessor or by the city council in cities without an assessor. A city without an assessor can only have a board of review if the population of the city is 75,000 or more. A city with a population of more than 125,000 may appoint a city board of review or request the county conference board to appoint a ten-member county board of review.

71.20(2) Sessions of boards of review.

a. It is mandatory that a board of review convene on May 1 and adjourn no later than May 31 of each year. However, if either date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the board of review shall convene or adjourn on the following Monday.

b. Extended session. If a board of review determines it will be unable to complete its work by May 31, it may request that the director of revenue extend its session up to July 15. The request must be signed by a majority of the membership of the board of review and must contain the reasons the board of review cannot complete its work by May 31. During the extended session, a board of review may perform the same functions as during its regular session unless specifically limited by the director of revenue.

c. Special session. If a board of review is reconvened by the director of revenue pursuant to Iowa Code section 421.17, the board of review shall perform those functions specified in the order of the director of revenue and shall perform no other functions.

71.20(3) Actions initiated by boards of review.

a. Internal equalization of assessments. A board of review in reassessment years as provided in Iowa Code section 423.4 has the power to equalize individual assessments as established by the assessor, but cannot make percentage adjustments in the aggregate valuations of classes of property (1966 O.A.G. 416). In nonreassessment years, a board of review can adjust the valuation of an entire class of property by adjusting all assessment by a uniform percentage. Nothing contained in this rule shall restrict the director from exercising the responsibilities set forth in Iowa Code section 421.17.

b. Omitted assessments. A board of review may assess for taxation any property which was not assessed by the assessor, including property which the assessor determines erroneously is not subject to taxation by virtue of enjoying an exempt status (*Talley v. Brown*, 146 Iowa 360, 125 N.W. 248 (1910)).

c. Notice to taxpayers. If the value of any property is increased by a board of review or a board of review assesses property not previously assessed by the assessor, the person to whom the property is assessed shall be notified by regular mail of the board's action. The notification shall state that the taxpayer may protest the action by filing a written protest with the board of review within five days of the date of the notice. After at least five days have passed since notifying the taxpayer, the board of review shall meet to take final action on the matter, including the consideration of any protest filed. However, if the valuations of all properties within a class of property are raised or lowered by a uniform percentage in a nonreassessment year, notice to taxpayers need be provided only by newspaper publication as described in Iowa Code section 441.35.

71.20(4) Appeals to boards of review.

a. A board of review may act only upon written protests which have been filed with the board of review between April 16 and May 5, inclusive. In the event May 5 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, protests filed the following Monday shall be considered to have been timely filed. Protests postmarked by May 5 or the following Monday if May 5 falls on a Saturday or Sunday shall also be considered to have been timely filed. All protests must be in writing and signed by the taxpayer or the taxpayer's authorized agent. A written request for an oral hearing must be made at the time of filing the protest and may be made by checking the appropriate box on the form prescribed by the department of revenue. Protests may be filed for previous years if the taxpayer discovers that a mathematical or clerical error was made in the assessment, provided the taxes have not been fully paid or otherwise legally discharged. The protester may combine on one form assessment protests on parcels separately assessed. If the same grounds are relied upon as the basis for protesting each separate assessment. If an oral hearing is requested on more than one of the protests, the person making the combined protests may request that the oral hearings be held consecutively. A board of review may allow protests to be filed in electronic format. Protests transmitted electronically are subject to the same deadlines as written protests.

b. Grounds for protest. Taxpayers may protest to a board of review on one or more of the grounds specified in Iowa Code section 441.37. The grounds for protest and procedures for considering protests are as follows:

(1) The assessment is not equitable when compared with those of similar properties in the same assessing district. If this ground is a basis for the protest, the protest must contain the legal descriptions and assessments of the comparable properties. The comparable properties selected by the taxpayer must be located within the same assessing district as the property for which the protest has been filed (*Meyers Co. v. Partridge*, 210 N.W.2d 584 (Iowa 1977)). In considering a protest based upon this ground, the board of review should examine carefully all information used to determine the assessment of the subject property and the comparable properties and determine that those properties are indeed comparable to the subject property. It is the responsibility of the taxpayer to establish that the other properties submitted are comparable to the subject property and that inequities exist in the assessments (*Chicago & N. W. Ry. Co. v. Iowa State Tax Commission*, 257 Iowa 1359, 137 N.W.2d 246 (1965)).

(2) The property is assessed at more than its actual value as defined in Iowa Code section 441.21. If this ground is used, the taxpayer must state both the amount by which the property is overassessed and the amount considered to be the actual value of the property.

(3) The property is not assessable and should be exempt from taxation. If using this ground, taxpayers must state the reasons why it is felt the property is not assessable.

(4) There is an error in the assessment. An error in the assessment would most probably involve erroneous mathematical computations or errors in listing the property. The improper classification of property also constitutes an error in the assessment. If this ground is used, the taxpayer's protest must state the specific error alleged.

A board of review must determine:

1. If an error exists, and
2. How the error might be corrected.

(5) There is fraud in the assessment. If this ground of protest is used, the taxpayer's protest must state the specific fraud alleged, and the board of review must first determine if there is validity to the taxpayer's allegation. If it is determined there is fraud in the assessment, the board of review shall take action to correct the assessment and report the matter to the director of revenue.

(6) There has been a change of value of real estate since the last assessment. The board of review must determine that the value of the property as of January 1 of the current year has changed since January 1 of the previous reassessment year. This is the only ground upon which a protest pertaining to the valuation of a property can be filed in a year in which the assessor has not assessed or reassessed the property pursuant to Iowa Code section 428.4. In a year subsequent to a year in which a property has been assessed or reassessed pursuant to Iowa Code section 428.4, a taxpayer cannot protest to the board of review based upon actions taken in the year in which the property was assessed or reassessed (*Ames Black Dry Goods Co. v. Board of Review for City of Waterloo*, 260 Iowa 1269, 151 N.W.2d 534 (1967); *Commercial Merchants Nat'l Bank and Trust Co. v. Board of Review of Sioux City*, 229 Iowa 1081, 296 N.W. 203 (1941)).

c. Disposition of protests. After reaching a decision on a protest, the board of review shall give the taxpayer written notice of its decision. The notice shall contain the following information:

(1) The valuation and classification of the property as determined by the board of review.

(2) If the protest was based on the ground the property was not assessable, the notice shall state whether the exemption is allowed and the value at which the property would be assessed in the absence of the exemption.

(3) The specific reasons for the board's decision with respect to the protest.

(4) That the board of review's decision may be appealed to the district court within 20 days of the board's adjournment or May 31, whichever date is later. If the adjournment date is known, the date shall be stated on the notice. If the adjournment date is not known, the notice shall state the date will be no earlier than May 31. Notice of the appeal shall be served on the chairperson, presiding officer, or clerk of the board of review after the written notice of appeal has been filed with the clerk of district court.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 441.31 to 441.37 and Iowa Code Supplement section 441.38 as amended by 2006 Iowa Acts, House File 2794.