Staff Report for 2017 State Board of Equalization

September 27, 2017

File No.: 2017-CASS-WEST-004

County or City: City of West Fargo

Appellant: Antony Pietrzak

Issue: City of West Fargo residential assessment

Summary: Antony Pietrzak protests the residential assessment on parcel 02-4912-00400-000 located in the City of West Fargo.

Analysis: The City of West Fargo and the Cass County Equalization Boards approved an assessment of $472,800.00. The information submitted by Mr. Pietrzak and Nick Lee, West Fargo City Assessor, was reviewed. On September 8, 2017 an on-site visit was completed, with Mr. Pietrzak present. The submitted appeal was also discussed with Mr. Lee.

Mr. Pietrzak expressed two primary issues with the assessment of his home. First, his assessment has increased each year for two consecutive years. His concern is it will continue to increase each year. The second issue is his belief that residential lots should be valued on square footage, not the front foot method as utilized by the City of West Fargo to value lots in 90% of the city.

A complete residential reappraisal and conversion to a new CAMA system was done by the City of West Fargo in 2016. During the reappraisal they discovered the median ratio for residential sales was low. Appropriate adjustments were made in 2016 and were re-evaluated and adjusted again in 2017. Sales analysis shows the City of West Fargo’s median is now at 96% of market value.

The City of West Fargo has implemented the front foot method on 90% of residential property in the city. The front foot method is useful to establish uniformity when doing mass appraisals and is an acceptable approach to land assessment. The front foot method is often used to assess odd shaped lots, acknowledging the frontage has a greater influence on the assessment of a lot versus the rear portion. A drawback of the front foot method is it does not take into account the depth or the width of the full piece of land; however, if it is used as a whole, it is considered uniform and equal.

The City of West Fargo is in compliance in its sales ratio and has equalized its properties using the front foot method. Adjusting the assessment of Mr. Pietrzak’s home would create inequity and undermine what the City of West Fargo has worked to achieve.

Recommendation: Recommend no change in assessment at this time.