

The **Annual Cormorant Township Board of Appeals and Equalization** meeting was held on **Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.** at the Cormorant Community Center. Board members present were Chairperson Steve Sorenson, Supervisor John Buhaug, Supervisor Tony Hubbard, and Clerk Claudia Hanson. Additionally, Lee Brekke, new Becker County Assessor and Lisa Marschall, Cormorant Township Assessor were also present.

A. **Call to Order** by Chairperson Steve Sorenson, starting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Introductions were made, and Steve turned meeting over to Lee Brekke. Mr. Brekke has been the new County Assessor, as Tony Vigen left the position of county assessor. Mr. Brekke explained that Cormorant Township residential and seasonal market values were adjusted by State of MN mandatory increase of 5%. County wide agricultural was increased by 10% and rural vacant land was increased by 20%. Overall market values have increased significantly again from 2023-2024. Mr. Brekke answered general questions from the audience on tillable agricultural land, and then proceeded to individual appointments as follows:

**B. Cormorant Township residents who made appointments:**

1) **David & Marsha Dahlgren, 06.0352.000** = Mr. Dahlgren has property on the pond next to Big Cormorant Lake, which is actually a wetland (Bullfrog Pond, between Middle Cormorant and Big Cormorant Lake). He explained that he is taxed for lakeshore of Big Cormorant Lake, when in reality, he has no access to the big lake, unless there are high water levels and he can boat through a very narrow channel into the lake. The assessors reviewed his field card and noted a 50% reduction for lake shore, but the Dahlgrens believe there should be more of a reduction as they are situated on a slough/swamp and is not desirable lake shore. He added it has been 7-8 years since they have boated thru the channel to use Big Cormorant Lake. After further review and Board discussion, Tony motioned to approve a \$152,500 reduction in market value for their property, seconded by John, Motion carried 3-0.

2) **Jim Kaiser, 06.0043.001, 06.0043.007** = Mr. Kaiser was primarily interested in the change of tillable value from last year to this year. Mr. Brekke was having internet connection issues but guessed around \$7000 difference and advised he would obtain more definite numbers once back in the office.

3) **Jack Koland, 06.0469.012** – Mr. Koland was concerned about a 74% increase in his property value. He has a 12-acre parcel on Buffalo Lane. He is paying taxes on a value of \$883,800 from a value of \$524,800. Lisa Marschall has previously spoken to Jack about his valuation and made a reduction in value but the county assessor's clerk had not updated these changes. Also, next year, his property value will decrease some from \$883,800. The assessors also explained that wooden lots had a substantial increase in values. As the exact amount of the reduction was not updated, John motioned, seconded by Tony, to have a recommended deduction to be determined once assessor is back in office. Carried 3-0.

4) **Cormorant Park Place residents: There were 4 property owners with similar issues:**

- **Fred Sternhagen, 06.0610.518** – He never received last year's tax notice, had an increase from \$720,000 to \$900,000, questions value of the clubhouse and lastly the lot value.
- **John Mahan, 06.0610.525** – His values rose from \$451,500 to \$790,700 to \$830,000.
- **Doug Herzog, 06.0610.514**- His values increase was from \$709,000 to \$981,500.
- **Rodney Knorr, 06.0610.524** – His values rose from \$656,100 to \$927,800.

Mr. Brekke familiarized himself with this common interest community on Big Cormorant Lake, which was platted in a Tier type development. Tier 1 are lots situated closest to the lake, and remaining tiers staggered back from the prime lakeshore of Tier 1, but still all units having lake access. Lisa Marschall noted that some deductions were taken on some parcels, but both assessors believe the manner in which this community was assessed needs further review. After much discussion amongst the Board and with the owners, Tony motioned to consider up to a 75% reduction for land values of each parcel in Tier 2 and Tier 3, attributing to the location, size, and distance from Big Cormorant Lake. Seconded by Steve. Carried 3-0.

5) **Keith Holland, 06.0970.547** – Mr. Holland lives in Evergreen Terrace and requested a few corrections to his field card, notably, his attic is not finished space, only 4 foot high. In 2024, market value was \$538,000 and increased to \$798,000. After further review and discussion, Tony motioned to reduce value to \$620,000, seconded by John. Carried 3-0.

6) **Larry Costello 06.624.000/Mike Costello 06.0625.000 (walk in)** – These two owners who live next to each other on Big Cormorant Lake, have 2 mutually unique small separate lots extending from the back of their houses going into the lake. This was a result of an old

road that was present in the 1950s-1960s on the shore of Big Cormorant when the lake levels were about 10 feet lower. Both owners noted a significant increase in tax for these unusual lots, which part of the lots are under water since the 1960s. Much discussion occurred and assessors advised that they cannot change the amount of taxes due this year (as the owners should have appealed amount last year). But both assessors recommended the lots should be combined with the primary residential lot. An office visit was recommended to resolve this, which both owners were agreeable to.

7) **Steve & Susan Richard, 06.1050.000** – Mr. Steve Richard was concerned about the square footage of his house and asked to have it remeasured. He feels his house is smaller than the 5 neighbor's values who live near him and are comparable properties, however his property is valued much higher. His property is on Tosten-Errickson Lane, on the south side of Big Cormorant Lake. Board reviewed and Lisa Marschall offered to visit his site to remeasure square footage.

8) **Mark Nielson, 06.003.000** – Mr. Nielson is a farmer, has agricultural property on the north side of Leaf Lake. His primary question is about his tillable acreage and that there is no correlation between the 25% increase in his market value and the 49% increase in his taxes. Lee Brekke invited him to his office to look further and answer his question.

**C. Calls or correspondence received:** Lisa Marschall informed Board of additional email questions and calls were received.

1). **Kristine & Eric Richman, 06.1051.000** = This was brought to Lisa's attention regarding the condition of a moved-in house. After further review, Lisa believes this house needed a 25% reduction as the house's condition is worse than initially assessed and needs a lot of work, Steve motioned, seconded by Tony, to grant 25% reduction in house value, carried 3-0.

**D. Pending Parcels which are in process of further consideration:**

Lisa Marschall received these inquiries before today's meeting that are still being considered for any adjustments:

- 1) Daniel Springer 06.0354.000
- 2) Shawna Slabik, 06.0777.103
- 3) Don Hulbert 06.1109.000
- 4) Steve Bratty 06.0134.000
- 5) Lana Askland 06.1135.000
- 6) Dean Jorgenson 06.0177.008
- 7) William Larson 06.0013.000
- 8) Jody Longbella 06.0994.000

**E. Adjournment** – This meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm. by Steve, seconded by John, as there were no other inquiries, or concerns brought forward to the Board. Carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia M. Hanson, Clerk