

Article 15.

Duties of Department and Property Tax Commission as to Assessments.

§ 105-288. Property Tax Commission.

(a) **Creation and Membership.** – The Property Tax Commission is created. It consists of five members, three of whom are appointed by the Governor and two of whom are appointed by the General Assembly. Of the two appointments by the General Assembly, one shall be made upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other shall be made upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The terms of the members are for four years and expire on June 30. The General Assembly shall make its appointments in accordance with G.S. 120-121 and shall fill a vacancy in accordance with G.S. 120-122. A vacancy occurs on the Commission when a member resigns, is removed, or dies. The person appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve for the balance of the unexpired term. The Governor may remove any member for misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance.

The Commission shall have a chair and a vice-chair. The Governor shall designate one of the Commission members as the chair, to serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The members of the Commission shall elect a vice-chair from among its membership. The vice-chair serves until the member's regularly appointed term expires.

(b) **Duties.** – The Property Tax Commission constitutes the State Board of Equalization and Review for the valuation and taxation of property in the State. It shall hear appeals from the appraisal and assessment of the property of public service companies as defined in G.S. 105-333. The Commission may adopt rules needed to fulfill its duties.

(c) **Oath.** – Each member of the Property Tax Commission, as the appointed holder of an office, shall take the oath required by Article VI, § 7 of the North Carolina Constitution with the following phrase added to it: "that I will not allow my actions as a member of the Property Tax Commission to be influenced by personal or political friendships or obligations,".

(d) **Expenses.** – The members of the Property Tax Commission shall receive travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-5 and a salary as provided for by the Commission when hearing cases, meeting to decide cases, and attending training or continuing education classes on property taxes or judicial procedure. The members of the Property Tax Commission whose salaries or any portion of whose salaries are paid from State funds shall not receive travel and subsistence expenses, in accordance with G.S. 138-5(f), but shall receive a salary as provided for by the Commission under this subsection. The Secretary of Revenue shall supply all the clerical and other services required by the Commission. All expenses of the Commission and the Department of Revenue in performing the duties enumerated in this Article shall be paid as provided in G.S. 105-501.

(e) **Meetings.** – The Property Tax Commission shall meet at least once in each quarter and may hold special meetings at any time and place within the State at the call of the Chair or upon the written request of at least three members. At least 15 days' notice shall be given to each member with respect to each special meeting. A majority of the Commission members constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. (1939, c. 310, ss. 200, 201; 1941, c. 327, s. 6; 1947, c. 184; 1961, c. 547, s. 1; 1967, c. 1196, ss. 1, 2; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 193; 1991, c. 110, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1007, s. 20; c. 1016, s. 2; 1995, c. 41, s. 5; 2000-67, s. 7.11; 2005-276, s. 22.5(a); 2007-308, s. 1; 2017-206, s. 2(a).)

§ 105-289. Duties of Department of Revenue.

(a) It is the duty of the Department of Revenue:

- (1) To discharge the duties prescribed by law and to enforce the provisions of this Subchapter.
 - (2) To exercise general and specific supervision over the valuation and taxation of property by taxing units throughout the State.
 - (3) To appraise the property of public service companies.
 - (4) To keep full and accurate records of the Commission's official proceedings.
 - (5) To prepare and distribute annually to each assessor the manual developed by the Use-Value Advisory Board under G.S. 105-277.7 that establishes the cash rental rates for agricultural lands and horticultural lands and the net income ranges for forestland.
 - (6) To establish requirements for horticultural land, used to produce evergreens intended for use as Christmas trees, in lieu of a gross income requirement until evergreens are harvested from the land, and to establish a gross income requirement for this type horticultural land, that differs from the income requirement for other horticultural land, when evergreens are harvested from the land.
 - (7) To conduct studies of the cash rents for agricultural and horticultural lands on a county or a regional basis, such as the Major Land Resource Area map designated and developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The results of the studies must be furnished to the North Carolina Use-Value Advisory Board. The studies may be conducted on any reasonable basis and timetable that will be reflective of rents and values for each local area based on the productivity of the land.
- (b), (c) Repealed by Session Laws 1973, c. 476, s. 193.
- (d) In exercising general and specific supervision over the valuation and taxation of property, the Department shall provide the following:
- (1) A continuing program of education and training for local tax officials in the conduct of their duties;
 - (2) A program for testing the qualifications of an assessor and other persons engaged in the appraisal of property for a county or municipality;
 - (3) A certification program for an assessor and other persons engaged in the appraisal of property for a county or municipality; and
 - (4) Assistance to the county and/or the county attorney in developing the specifications for the proposed contract sent to the Department for review pursuant to G.S. 105-299.

The Department shall promulgate regulations to carry out its duties under this subsection.

(e) The Department of Revenue may furnish the following information to a local tax official:

- (1) Information contained in a report to it or to any other State department; and
- (2) Information the Department has in its possession that may assist a local tax official in securing complete tax listings, appraising or assessing taxable property, collecting taxes, or presenting information in administrative or judicial proceedings involving the listing, appraisal, or assessment of property.

A local tax official may use information obtained from the Department under this subsection only for the purposes stated in subdivision (2). A local tax official may not divulge or make public this information except as required in administrative or judicial proceedings under this Subchapter.

A local tax official who makes improper use of or discloses information obtained from the Department under this subsection is punishable as provided in G.S. 153A-148.1 or G.S. 160A-208.1, as appropriate.

The Department may not furnish information to a local tax official pursuant to this subsection unless it has obtained a written certification from the official stating that the official is familiar with the provisions of this subsection and G.S. 153A-148.1 or G.S. 160A-208.1, as appropriate, and that information obtained from the Department under this subsection will be used only for the purposes stated in subdivision (2).

(f) To advise local tax officials of their duties concerning the listing, appraisal, and assessment of property and the levy and collection of property taxes.

(g) To see that proper proceedings are brought to enforce the statutes pertaining to taxation and the collection of penalties and liabilities imposed by law upon public officers, officers of corporations, and individuals who fail, refuse, or neglect to comply with the provisions of this Subchapter and other laws with respect to the taxation of property, and to call upon the Attorney General of this State or any prosecuting attorney of this State to assist in the execution of the powers conferred by the laws of this State with respect to the taxation of property.

(h) To make annual studies of the ratio of the appraised value of real property to its true value and to establish for each county the median ratio as determined by the studies for each calendar year. The studies for each calendar year shall be completed by April 15 of the following calendar year. The studies shall be conducted in accordance with generally accepted principles and procedures for sales assessment ratio studies.

(i) To maintain a register of appraisal firms, mapping firms and other persons or firms having expertise in one or more of the duties of the assessor; to review the qualifications and work of such persons or firms; and to advise county officials as to the professional and financial capabilities of such persons or firms to assist the assessor in carrying out his duties under this Subchapter. The register shall include a copy of the report filed by the counties pursuant to G.S. 105-322(g)(4). It shall also include the average median sales assessment ratio and the coefficient of dispersion achieved in each county for the first two years following the county's effective date of revaluation. To be registered with the Department of Revenue, such persons or firms shall annually file a report with the Department setting forth the following information:

- (1) A statement of the firm's ownership,
- (2) A statement of the firm's financial condition,
- (3) A list of the firm's principal officers with a statement of their qualifications and experience,
- (4) A list of the firm's employees with a statement of their education, training and experience, and
- (5) A full and complete resume of each employee which the firm proposes to place in a supervisory position in any mapping or revaluation project for a county in this State. (1939, c. 310, s. 202; 1955, c. 1350, s. 10; 1967, c. 1196, s. 3; 1969, c. 7, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 47, s. 2; c. 476, s. 193; 1975, c. 275, s. 9; c. 508, s. 1; 1981, c. 387, ss. 1, 2; 1983, c. 813, s. 1; 1985, c. 601, s. 3; c. 628, s. 3; 1987, c. 45, s. 1; c. 46, s. 1; c. 440, s. 1; c. 830, s. 84(a); 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1052, s. 1; 1989, c. 79, ss. 2, 4; c. 736, s. 3; 1991, c. 110, s. 2; 1993, c. 485, s. 35; 2002-184, s. 5; 2005-313, s. 6.)

§ 105-289.1. Repealed by Session Laws 1987, c. 813, s. 12.

§ 105-290. Appeals to Property Tax Commission.

(a) Duty to Hear Appeals. – In its capacity as the State board of equalization and review, the Property Tax Commission shall hear and adjudicate appeals from boards of county commissioners and from county boards of equalization and review as provided in this section.

(b) Appeals from Appraisal and Listing Decisions. – The Property Tax Commission shall hear and decide appeals from decisions concerning the listing, appraisal, or assessment of property made by county boards of equalization and review and boards of county commissioners. Any property owner of the county may except to an order of the county board of equalization and review or the board of county commissioners concerning the listing, appraisal, or assessment of property and appeal the order to the Property Tax Commission.

(1) In these cases, taxpayers and persons having ownership interests in the property subject to taxation may file separate appeals or joint appeals at the election of one or more of the taxpayers. It is the intent of this provision that all owners of a single item of personal property or tract or parcel of real property be allowed to join in one appeal and also that any taxpayer be allowed to include in one appeal all objections timely presented regardless of the fact that the listing or valuation of more than one item of personal property or tract or parcel of real property is the subject of the appeal.

(2) When an appeal is filed, the Property Tax Commission shall provide a hearing before representatives of the Commission or the full Commission as specified in this subdivision.

a. Hearing by Commission Representatives. – The Commission may authorize one or more members of the Commission or employees of the Department of Revenue to hear an appeal, to make examinations and investigations, to have made from stenographic notes a full and complete record of the evidence offered at the hearing, and to make recommended findings of fact and conclusions of law. Should the Commission elect to follow this procedure, it shall fix the time and place at which its representatives will hear the appeal and, at least 10 days before the hearing, give written notice of the hearing to the appellant and to the clerk of the board of commissioners of the county from which the appeal is taken. At the hearing the Commission's representatives shall hear all evidence and affidavits offered by the appellant and appellee county and may exercise the authority granted by subsection (d), below, to obtain information pertinent to decision of the appeal. The representatives conducting the hearing shall submit to the Commission and to the appellant and appellee their recommended findings of fact and conclusions of law. Upon the request of any party, the representatives conducting the hearing shall also submit to the Commission and to the appellant and appellee a full record of the proceeding. The cost of providing the full record of the proceeding shall be borne by the party requesting it, unless the Commission determines for good cause that the cost should be borne by the Commission. The Commission shall review the record, the recommended findings of fact and conclusions of law, and any written arguments that may be

submitted to the Commission by the appellant or appellee within 15 days following the date on which the findings and conclusions were submitted to the parties and shall take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the recommended findings of fact and conclusions of law and issue an appropriate order as provided in subdivision (b)(3), below.
 2. Make new findings of fact or conclusions of law based upon the materials submitted by the Commission's representatives and issue an appropriate order as provided in subdivision (b)(3), below.
 3. Rehear the appeal under the procedure provided in subdivision (b)(2)b, below, with respect to any portion of the record or recommended findings of fact or conclusions of law.
- b. Hearing by Full Commission. – Should the Commission elect not to employ the procedure provided in subdivision (b)(2)a, above, it shall fix a time and place at which the Commission shall hear the appeal and, at least 10 days before the hearing, give written notice of the hearing to the appellant and to the clerk of the board of commissioners of the county from which the appeal is taken. At the hearing the Commission shall hear all evidence and affidavits offered by the appellant and appellee county and may exercise the authority granted by subsection (d), below, to obtain information pertinent to decision of the appeal. The Commission shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law and issue an appropriate order as provided in subdivision (b)(3), below.
- (3) On the basis of the findings of fact and conclusions of law made after any hearing provided for by this subsection (b), the Property Tax Commission shall enter an order (incorporating the findings and conclusions) reducing, increasing, or confirming the valuation or valuations appealed or listing or removing from the tax lists the property whose listing has been appealed. A certified copy of the order shall be delivered to the appellant and to the clerk of the board of commissioners of the county from which the appeal was taken, and the abstracts and tax records of the county shall be corrected to reflect the Commission's order.
- (4) Interest on Overpayments. – When an order of the Property Tax Commission reduces the valuation of property or removes the property from the tax lists and, based on the order, the taxpayer has paid more tax than is due on the property, the taxpayer is entitled to receive interest on the overpayment in accordance with this subdivision. An overpayment of tax bears interest at the rate set under G.S. 105-241.21 from the date the interest begins to accrue until a refund is paid. Interest accrues from the later of the date the tax was paid and the date the tax would have been considered delinquent under G.S. 105-360. A refund is considered paid on a date determined by the governing body of the taxing unit that is no sooner than five days after a refund check is mailed.

(c) Appeals from Adoption of Schedules, Standards, and Rules. – It shall be the duty of the Property Tax Commission to hear and to adjudicate appeals from orders of boards of county commissioners adopting schedules of values, standards, and rules under the provisions of G.S.

105-317 as prescribed in this subsection (c), and the adoption of such schedules, standards, and rules shall not be subject to appeal under any other provision of this Subchapter.

- (1) A property owner of the county who, either separately or in conjunction with other property owners of the county, asserts that the schedules of values, standards, and rules adopted by order of the board of county commissioners do not meet the true value or present-use value appraisal standards established by G.S. 105-283 and G.S. 105-277.2(5), respectively, may appeal the order to the Property Tax Commission within 30 days of the date when the order adopting the schedules, standards, and rules was first published, as required by G.S. 105-317(c).
- (2) Upon such an appeal the Property Tax Commission shall proceed to hear the appeal in accordance with the procedures provided in subdivisions (b)(1) and (b)(2), above, and in scheduling the hearing upon such an appeal, the Commission shall give it priority over appeals that may be pending before the Commission under the provisions of subsection (b), above. The decision of the Commission upon such an appeal shall be embodied in an order as provided in subdivision (c)(3), below.
- (3) On the basis of the findings of fact and conclusions of law made after any hearing provided for by this subsection (c), the Property Tax Commission shall enter an order (incorporating the findings and conclusions):
 - a. Modifying or confirming the order adopting the schedules, standards, and rules challenged, or
 - b. Requiring the board of county commissioners to revise or modify its order of adoption in accordance with the instructions of the Commission and to present the order as thus revised or modified for approval by the Commission under rules and regulations prescribed by the Commission.

(d) **Witnesses and Documents.** – Upon its own motion or upon the request of any party to an appeal, the Property Tax Commission, or any member of the Commission, or any employee of the Department of Revenue so authorized by the Commission shall examine witnesses under oath administered by any member of the Commission or any employee of the Department so authorized by the Commission, and examine the documents of any person if there is ground for believing that information contained in such documents is pertinent to the decision of any appeal pending before the Commission, regardless of whether such person is a party to the proceeding before the Commission. Witnesses and documents examined under the authority of this subsection (d) shall be examined only after service of a subpoena as provided in subdivision (d)(1), below. The travel expenses of any witness subpoenaed and the cost of serving any subpoena shall be borne by the party that requested the subpoena.

- (1) The Property Tax Commission, a member of the Commission, or any employee of the Department of Revenue authorized by the Commission, is authorized and empowered to subpoena witnesses and to subpoena documents upon a subpoena to be signed by the chairman of the Commission directed to the witness or witnesses or to the person or persons having custody of the documents sought. Subpoenas issued under this subdivision may be served by any officer authorized to serve subpoenas.

- (2) Any person who shall willfully fail or refuse to appear, to produce subpoenaed documents in response to a subpoena, or to testify as provided in this subsection (d) shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
- (3) Upon a motion, the Property Tax Commission, or a member of the Commission may quash a subpoena if, after a hearing, the Commission finds any of the following:
 - a. The subpoena requires the production of evidence that does not relate to a matter in issue.
 - b. The subpoena fails to describe with sufficient particularity the evidence required to be produced.
 - c. The subpoena is subject to being quashed for any other reason sufficient in law.

(d1) Hearing on Motion to Quash Subpoena; Appeal. – A hearing on a motion to quash a subpoena pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of this section shall be heard at least 10 days prior to the hearing for which the subpoena was issued. The denial of a motion to quash a subpoena is subject to immediate judicial review in the Superior Court of Wake County or in the superior court of the county where the person subject to the subpoena resides.

(d2) Business Entity Representation. – If a property owner is a business entity, the business entity may represent itself using a nonattorney representative who is one or more of the following of the business entity: (i) officer, (ii) manager or member-manager, if the business entity is a limited liability company, (iii) employee whose income is reported on IRS Form W-2, if the business entity authorizes the representation in writing, or (iv) owner of the business entity, if the business entity authorizes the representation in writing and if the owner's interest in the business entity is at least twenty-five percent (25%). Authority for and prior notice of nonattorney representation shall be made in writing, under penalty of perjury, to the Commission on a form provided by the Commission.

(e) Time Limits for Appeals. – A notice of appeal from an order of a board of county commissioners, other than an order adopting a uniform schedule of values, or from a board of equalization and review shall be filed with the Property Tax Commission within 30 days after the date the board mailed a notice of its decision to the property owner. A notice of appeal from an order adopting a schedule of values shall be filed within the time set in subsection (c).

(f) Notice of Appeal. – A notice of appeal filed with the Property Tax Commission shall be in writing and shall state the grounds for the appeal. A property owner who files a notice of appeal shall send a copy of the notice to the appropriate county assessor.

(g) What Constitutes Filing. – A notice of appeal submitted to the Property Tax Commission by a means other than United States mail is considered to be filed on the date it is received in the office of the Commission. A notice of appeal submitted to the Property Tax Commission by United States mail is considered to be filed on the date shown on the postmark stamped by the United States Postal Service. If an appeal submitted by United States mail is not postmarked or the postmark does not show the date of mailing, the appeal is considered to be filed on the date it is received in the office of the Commission. A property owner who files an appeal with the Commission has the burden of proving that the appeal is timely. (1939, c. 310, ss. 202, 1107, 1109; 1955, c. 1350, s. 10; 1967, c. 1196, s. 3; 1969, c. 7, ss. 1, 2; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 193; 1987, c. 295, ss. 3, 9; c. 680, ss. 4, 5; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1005, ss. 1, 2; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1016, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 713; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1997-205, s. 1; 2007-251, ss. 3, 4; 2007-491, s. 44(1)a; 2014-120, s. 7(b).)

§ 105-291. Powers of Department and Commission.

(a) General Powers. – The Department of Revenue is authorized to exercise all powers reasonably necessary to perform the duties imposed upon it by this Subchapter and other laws of this State.

(b) Rule-Making Power. – The Department may adopt such rules and regulations, not inconsistent with law, as the Department may deem necessary to perform the duties or responsibilities of this Chapter.

(c) General Investigatory Authority. – In exercising general and specific supervision over the valuation and taxation of property, the Department or any authorized deputy shall have power to examine witnesses under oath administered by any member or authorized deputy and to examine the documents of any State department, county, city, town, or taxpayer if there is ground for believing that the witnesses have or that the documents contain information pertinent to the subject of the Department's inquiry. Witnesses and documents examined under the authority of this subsection (c) may be obtained through service of subpoenas as provided in subdivision (c)(1), below.

- (1) To obtain the testimony of witnesses or to obtain access to the documents enumerated in this subsection (c), the Department or any authorized deputy is authorized and empowered to subpoena witnesses and to subpoena documents upon a subpoena to be signed by the Secretary of Revenue directed to the witness or to the person having custody of the documents sought, and to be served by any officer authorized to serve subpoenas.
- (2) Any person who shall willfully fail or refuse to appear; to produce subpoenaed documents before the Department or authorized deputy in response to a subpoena; or to testify as provided in this subsection (c) shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(d) Certification of Actions. – The Property Tax Commission shall have power to certify copies of its records, orders, and proceedings by attesting the copies with its official seal, and copies of records, orders, or proceedings so certified shall be received in evidence in all courts of this State with like effect as certified copies of other public records.

(e) Power to Require Reports. – In its discretion, the Department may require tax supervisors, clerks of boards of county commissioners, and county accountants to file with it, when called for, complete reports of the appraised and assessed value of all real and personal property in the counties, itemized as the Department may prescribe.

(f) Power to Prescribe Record Forms. – The Department may prescribe the forms, books, and records to be used in the listing, appraisal, and assessment of property and in the levying and collection of property taxes, and how the same shall be kept.

(g) Power to Recommend Appraisal Standards. – The Department may develop and recommend standards and rules to be used by tax supervisors and other responsible officials in the appraisal of specific kinds and categories of property for taxation. (1939, c. 310, s. 203; 1945, c. 955; 1951, c. 798; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 193; 1993, c. 539, s. 714; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§§ 105-292 through 105-293: Repealed by Session Laws 1973, c. 476, s. 193.