

AN ACT

To amend sections 5703.02, 5717.01, 5717.011, 5717.02, and 5717.04 and to enact sections 5703.021 and 5717.031 of the Revised Code to make changes to the law governing the Board of Tax Appeals, including authorizing a small claims docket within the Board, requiring the Board to adopt rules to manage appeals and operate a mediation program, requiring the Board to receive notices of appeal and statutory transcripts electronically, providing pleading standards for appeals to the Board, and expressly authorizing the Board to consider motions.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:

SECTION 1. That sections 5703.02, 5717.01, 5717.011, 5717.02, and 5717.04 be amended and sections 5703.021 and 5717.031 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as follows:

Sec. 5703.02. There is hereby created the board of tax appeals, which shall exercise the following powers and perform the following duties:

(A) Exercise the authority provided by law to hear and determine all appeals of questions of law and fact arising under the tax laws of this state in appeals from decisions, orders, determinations, or actions of any tax administrative agency established by the law of this state, including but not limited to appeals from:

- (1) Actions of county budget commissions;
- (2) Decisions of county boards of revision;
- (3) Actions of any assessing officer or other public official under the tax laws of this state;
- (4) Final determinations by the tax commissioner of any preliminary, amended, or final tax assessments, reassessments, valuations, determinations, findings, computations, or orders made by ~~him~~ the tax commissioner;
- (5) Adoption and promulgation of rules of the tax commissioner.

(B) Appoint a secretary of the board of tax appeals, who shall serve in the unclassified civil service at the pleasure of the board, and any other employees as are necessary in the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties and functions that the board is by law authorized and required to exercise, and prescribe the duties of all employees, and to fix their compensation as provided by law;

(C) Maintain a journal, which shall be open to public inspection and in which the secretary shall keep a record of all of the proceedings and the vote of each of its members upon every action taken by it;

(D) Adopt and promulgate, in the manner provided by section 5703.14 of the Revised Code, and enforce all rules relating to the procedure of the board in hearing appeals it has the authority or duty to hear, and to the procedure of officers or employees whom the board may appoint; provided that section 5703.13 of the Revised Code shall apply to and govern the procedure of the board. Such rules shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

(1) Rules governing the creation and implementation of a mediation program, including procedures for requesting, requiring participation in, objecting to, and conducting a mediation;

(2) Rules requiring the tax commissioner, county boards of revision, and municipal boards of appeal created under section 718.11 of the Revised Code to electronically file any transcript required to be filed with the board of tax appeals, and instructions and procedures for the electronic filing of such transcripts.

(3) Rules establishing procedures to control and manage appeals filed with the board. The procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the establishment of a case management schedule that shall include expected dates related to discovery deadlines, disclosure of evidence, pre-hearing motions, and the hearing, and other case management issues considered appropriate.

Sec. 5703.021. (A) There is hereby established a small claims docket within the board of tax appeals.

(B) An appeal may be filed with the board of tax appeals and assigned to the small claims docket as authorized under division (C) of this section, provided the appeal is either of the following:

(1) Commenced under section 5717.01 of the Revised Code in which the property at issue qualifies for the partial tax exemption described in section 319.302 of the Revised Code; or

(2) Commenced under section 5717.011 or 5717.02 of the Revised Code when the amount in controversy claimed by the taxpayer does not exceed

ten thousand dollars exclusive of interest and penalty. The board by rule may modify the jurisdictional dollar threshold for cases qualifying for the small claims docket.

(C)(1) An appeal may be assigned to the small claims docket only if either of the following applies:

(a) The appellant is one or more taxpayers that requests assignment of the appeal to the small claims docket;

(b) The appellant is not a taxpayer, and the appellant files with the notice of appeal a written statement from every taxpayer that is a party to the appeal stating that each such taxpayer consents to the appeal being assigned to the small claims docket.

(2) After an appeal is assigned to the small claims docket or the regular docket, the board may reassign the case to the regular docket or the small claims docket, respectively, only with the written consent of all the parties or as authorized under division (D) of this section.

(D) Notwithstanding division (B) of this section, the board shall reassign an appeal initially assigned to the small claims docket to the regular docket upon the request of a party that is a taxpayer, when the appeal presents an issue of public or great general interest or presents a constitutional issue, or when the board determines that the appeal does not meet the requirements of division (B) of this section.

(E) The board shall adopt rules to implement procedures to provide informal review of the taxpayers' appeals in the small claims docket, which may include telephonic hearings.

(F) A decision or order for an appeal assigned to the small claims docket shall be conclusive as to all parties and may not be appealed, and shall be recorded in the journal required by division (C) of section 5703.02 of the Revised Code, but such a decision or order shall not be considered as precedent in any other case, hearing, or proceeding.

(G) The appearance of an attorney at law licensed to practice law in this state on behalf of any party to an appeal assigned to the small claims docket is permitted but not required. A person other than a natural person, which is a real party in interest as taxpayer or claimant, or an entity that may participate by statute, may commence such an appeal or appear through an attorney at law licensed to practice law in this state. Such an organization may, through any bona fide officer, partner, member, trustee, or salaried employee, file and present its claim or defense in any appeal assigned to the small claims docket, provided the organization does not, in the absence of representation by an attorney at law licensed to practice law in this state, engage in cross-examination, argument, or other acts of advocacy. The

board may provide by rule for additional guidelines applicable to practice before the board.

Sec. 5717.01. An appeal from a decision of a county board of revision may be taken to the board of tax appeals within thirty days after notice of the decision of the county board of revision is mailed as provided in division (A) of section 5715.20 of the Revised Code. Such an appeal may be taken by the county auditor, the tax commissioner, or any board, legislative authority, public official, or taxpayer authorized by section 5715.19 of the Revised Code to file complaints against valuations or assessments with the auditor. Such appeal shall be taken by the filing of a notice of appeal, in person or by certified mail, express mail, facsimile transmission, electronic transmission, or by authorized delivery service, with the board of tax appeals and with the county board of revision. If notice of appeal is filed by certified mail, express mail, or authorized delivery service as provided in section 5703.056 of the Revised Code, the date of the United States postmark placed on the sender's receipt by the postal service or the date of receipt recorded by the authorized delivery service shall be treated as the date of filing. If notice of appeal is filed by facsimile transmission or electronic transmission, the date and time the notice is received by the board shall be the date and time reflected on a timestamp provided by the board's electronic system, and the appeal shall be considered filed with the board on the date reflected on that timestamp. Any timestamp provided by another computer system or electronic submission device shall not affect the time and date the notice is received by the board. Upon receipt of such notice of appeal such county board of revision shall by certified mail notify all persons thereof who were parties to the proceeding before such county board of revision, and shall file proof of such notice with the board of tax appeals. The county board of revision shall thereupon certify to the board of tax appeals a transcript of the record of the proceedings of the county board of revision pertaining to the original complaint, and all evidence offered in connection therewith. Such appeal may be heard by the board of tax appeals at its offices in Columbus or in the county where the property is listed for taxation, or the board of tax appeals may cause its examiners to conduct such hearing and to report to it their findings for affirmation or rejection. An appeal may proceed pursuant to section 5703.021 of the Revised Code on the small claims docket if the appeal qualifies under that section.

The board of tax appeals may order the appeal to be heard on the record and the evidence certified to it by the county board of revision, or it may order the hearing of additional evidence, and it may make such investigation concerning the appeal as it deems proper.

Sec. 5717.011. (A) As used in this chapter, "tax administrator" has the same meaning as in section 718.01 of the Revised Code.

(B) Appeals from a municipal board of appeal created under section 718.11 of the Revised Code may be taken by the taxpayer or the tax administrator to the board of tax appeals or may be taken by the taxpayer or the tax administrator to a court of common pleas as otherwise provided by law. If the taxpayer or the tax administrator elects to make an appeal to the board of tax appeals or court of common pleas, and subject to section 5703.021 of the Revised Code with respect to appeals assigned to the small claims docket, the appeal shall be taken by the filing of a notice of appeal with the board of tax appeals or court of common pleas, the municipal board of appeal, and the opposing party. The notice of appeal shall be filed within sixty days after the day the appellant receives notice of the decision issued under section 718.11 of the Revised Code. ~~The~~ An appeal filed with a court of common pleas is governed by the Rules of Civil Procedure and other rules of practice and procedure applicable to civil actions. For an appeal filed with the board of tax appeals, the notice of appeal may be filed in person or by certified mail, express mail, facsimile transmission, electronic transmission, or by authorized delivery service as provided in section 5703.056 of the Revised Code. If the notice of appeal is filed by certified mail, express mail, or authorized delivery service as provided in section 5703.056 of the Revised Code, the date of the United States postmark placed on the sender's receipt by the postal service or the date of receipt recorded by the authorized delivery service shall be treated as the date of filing with the board. If notice of appeal is filed by facsimile transmission or electronic transmission, the date and time the notice is received by the board shall be the date and time reflected on a timestamp provided by the board's electronic system, and the appeal shall be considered filed with the board on the date reflected on that timestamp. Any timestamp provided by another computer system or electronic submission device shall not affect the time and date the notice is received by the board. The notice of appeal shall have attached thereto and incorporated therein by reference a true copy of the decision issued under section 718.11 of the Revised Code ~~and shall specify the errors therein complained of~~, but failure to attach a copy of such notice and incorporate it by reference in the notice of appeal does not invalidate the appeal.

(C) A notice of appeal for an appeal filed with the board of tax appeals shall contain a short and plain statement of the claimed errors in the decision of the municipal board of appeal showing that the appellant is entitled to relief and a demand for the relief to which the appellant claims to be

entitled. An appellant may amend the notice of appeal once as a matter of course within sixty days after the certification of the transcript. Otherwise, an appellant may amend the notice of appeal only after receiving leave of the board or the written consent of each adverse party. Leave of the board shall be freely given when justice so requires.

(D) Upon the filing of a notice of appeal with the board of tax appeals, the municipal board of appeal shall certify to the board of tax appeals a transcript of the record of the proceedings before it, together with all evidence considered by it in connection therewith. Such appeals may be heard by the board at its office in Columbus or in the county where the appellant resides, or it may cause its examiners to conduct such hearings and to report to it their findings for affirmation or rejection. The board may order the appeal to be heard upon the record and the evidence certified to it by the administrator, but upon the application of any interested party the board shall order the hearing of additional evidence, and the board may make such investigation concerning the appeal as it considers proper. An appeal may proceed pursuant to section 5703.021 of the Revised Code on the small claims docket if the appeals qualifies under that section.

~~(D)~~(E) If an issue being appealed under this section is addressed in a municipal corporation's ordinance or regulation, the tax administrator, upon the request of the board of tax appeals, shall provide a copy of the ordinance or regulation to the board of tax appeals.

Sec. 5717.02. (A) Except as otherwise provided by law, appeals from final determinations by the tax commissioner of any preliminary, amended, or final tax assessments, reassessments, valuations, determinations, findings, computations, or orders made by the commissioner may be taken to the board of tax appeals by the taxpayer, by the person to whom notice of the tax assessment, reassessment, valuation, determination, finding, computation, or order by the commissioner is required by law to be given, by the director of budget and management if the revenues affected by that decision would accrue primarily to the state treasury, or by the county auditors of the counties to the undivided general tax funds of which the revenues affected by that decision would primarily accrue. Appeals from the redetermination by the director of development services under division (B) of section 5709.64 or division (A) of section 5709.66 of the Revised Code may be taken to the board of tax appeals by the enterprise to which notice of the redetermination is required by law to be given. Appeals from a decision of the tax commissioner or county auditor concerning an application for a property tax exemption may be taken to the board of tax appeals by the applicant or by a school district that filed a statement concerning that

application under division (C) of section 5715.27 of the Revised Code. Appeals from a redetermination by the director of job and family services under section 5733.42 of the Revised Code may be taken by the person to which the notice of the redetermination is required by law to be given under that section.

(B) The appeals shall be taken by the filing of a notice of appeal with the board, and with the tax commissioner if the tax commissioner's action is the subject of the appeal, with the county auditor if the county auditor's action is the subject of the appeal, with the director of development services if that director's action is the subject of the appeal, or with the director of job and family services if that director's action is the subject of the appeal. The notice of appeal shall be filed within sixty days after service of the notice of the tax assessment, reassessment, valuation, determination, finding, computation, or order by the commissioner, property tax exemption determination by the commissioner or the county auditor, or redetermination by the director has been given as provided in section 5703.37, 5709.64, 5709.66, or 5733.42 of the Revised Code. The notice of appeal may be filed in person or by certified mail, express mail, facsimile transmission, electronic transmission or by authorized delivery service. If the notice of appeal is filed by certified mail, express mail, or authorized delivery service as provided in section 5703.056 of the Revised Code, the date of the United States postmark placed on the sender's receipt by the postal service or the date of receipt recorded by the authorized delivery service shall be treated as the date of filing. If notice of appeal is filed by facsimile transmission or electronic transmission, the date and time the notice is received by the board shall be the date and time reflected on a timestamp provided by the board's electronic system, and the appeal shall be considered filed with the board on the date reflected on that timestamp. Any timestamp provided by another computer system or electronic submission device shall not affect the time and date the notice is received by the board. The notice of appeal shall have attached to it and incorporated in it by reference a true copy of the notice sent by the commissioner, county auditor, or director to the taxpayer, enterprise, or other person of the final determination or redetermination complained of, ~~and shall also specify the errors therein complained of,~~ but failure to attach a copy of that notice and to incorporate it by reference in the notice of appeal does not invalidate the appeal.

(C) A notice of appeal shall contain a short and plain statement of the claimed errors in the determination or redetermination of the tax commissioner, county auditor, or director showing that the appellant is entitled to relief and a demand for the relief to which the appellant claims to

be entitled. An appellant may amend the notice of appeal once as a matter of course within sixty days after the certification of the transcript. Otherwise, an appellant may amend the notice of appeal only after receiving leave of the board or the written consent of each adverse party. Leave of the board shall be freely given when justice so requires.

(D) Upon the filing of a notice of appeal, the tax commissioner, county auditor, or the director, as appropriate, shall certify to the board a transcript of the record of the proceedings before the commissioner, auditor, or director, together with all evidence considered by the commissioner, auditor, or director in connection with the proceedings. Those appeals or applications may be heard by the board at its office in Columbus or in the county where the appellant resides, or it may cause its examiners to conduct the hearings and to report to it their findings for affirmation or rejection.

~~(D)~~(E) The board may order the appeal to be heard upon the record and the evidence certified to it by the commissioner, county auditor, or director, but upon the application of any interested party the board shall order the hearing of additional evidence, and it may make an investigation concerning the appeal that it considers proper. An appeal may proceed pursuant to section 5703.021 of the Revised Code on the small claims docket if the appeal qualifies under that section.

Sec. 5717.031. The board of tax appeals may consider and decide motions, including, but not limited to, motions in limine, before the board makes a decision on any matter.

Sec. 5717.04. ~~The~~ This section does not apply to any decision and order of the board made pursuant to section 5703.021 of the Revised Code. Any such decision and order shall be conclusive upon all parties and may not be appealed.

The proceeding to obtain a reversal, vacation, or modification of a decision of the board of tax appeals shall be by appeal to the supreme court or the court of appeals for the county in which the property taxed is situate or in which the taxpayer resides. If the taxpayer is a corporation, then the proceeding to obtain such reversal, vacation, or modification shall be by appeal to the supreme court or to the court of appeals for the county in which the property taxed is situate, or the county of residence of the agent for service of process, tax notices, or demands, or the county in which the corporation has its principal place of business. In all other instances, the proceeding to obtain such reversal, vacation, or modification shall be by appeal to the court of appeals for Franklin county.

Appeals from decisions of the board determining appeals from decisions of county boards of revision may be instituted by any of the persons who

were parties to the appeal before the board of tax appeals, by the person in whose name the property involved in the appeal is listed or sought to be listed, if such person was not a party to the appeal before the board of tax appeals, or by the county auditor of the county in which the property involved in the appeal is located.

Appeals from decisions of the board of tax appeals determining appeals from final determinations by the tax commissioner of any preliminary, amended, or final tax assessments, reassessments, valuations, determinations, findings, computations, or orders made by the commissioner may be instituted by any of the persons who were parties to the appeal or application before the board, by the person in whose name the property is listed or sought to be listed, if the decision appealed from determines the valuation or liability of property for taxation and if any such person was not a party to the appeal or application before the board, by the taxpayer or any other person to whom the decision of the board appealed from was by law required to be sent, by the director of budget and management if the revenue affected by the decision of the board appealed from would accrue primarily to the state treasury, by the county auditor of the county to the undivided general tax funds of which the revenues affected by the decision of the board appealed from would primarily accrue, or by the tax commissioner.

Appeals from decisions of the board upon all other appeals or applications filed with and determined by the board may be instituted by any of the persons who were parties to such appeal or application before the board, by any persons to whom the decision of the board appealed from was by law required to be sent, or by any other person to whom the board sent the decision appealed from, as authorized by section 5717.03 of the Revised Code.

Such appeals shall be taken within thirty days after the date of the entry of the decision of the board on the journal of its proceedings, as provided by such section, by the filing by appellant of a notice of appeal with the court to which the appeal is taken and the board. If a timely notice of appeal is filed by a party, any other party may file a notice of appeal within ten days of the date on which the first notice of appeal was filed or within the time otherwise prescribed in this section, whichever is later. A notice of appeal shall set forth the decision of the board appealed from and the errors therein complained of. Proof of the filing of such notice with the board shall be filed with the court to which the appeal is being taken. The court in which notice of appeal is first filed shall have exclusive jurisdiction of the appeal.

In all such appeals the ~~tax~~ commissioner or all persons to whom the decision of the board appealed from is required by such section to be sent,

other than the appellant, shall be made appellees. Unless waived, notice of the appeal shall be served upon all appellees by certified mail. The prosecuting attorney shall represent the county auditor in any such appeal in which the auditor is a party.

The board, upon written demand filed by an appellant, shall within thirty days after the filing of such demand file with the court to which the appeal is being taken a certified transcript of the record of the proceedings of the board pertaining to the decision complained of and the evidence considered by the board in making such decision.

If upon hearing and consideration of such record and evidence the court decides that the decision of the board appealed from is reasonable and lawful it shall affirm the same, but if the court decides that such decision of the board is unreasonable or unlawful, the court shall reverse and vacate the decision or modify it and enter final judgment in accordance with such modification.

The clerk of the court shall certify the judgment of the court to the board, which shall certify such judgment to such public officials or take such other action in connection therewith as is required to give effect to the decision. The "taxpayer" includes any person required to return any property for taxation.

Any party to the appeal shall have the right to appeal from the judgment of the court of appeals on questions of law, as in other cases.

SECTION 2. That existing sections 5703.02, 5717.01, 5717.011, 5717.02, and 5717.04 of the Revised Code are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3. The amendment by this act of division (D)(2) of section 5703.02 of the Revised Code takes effect January 1, 2015.

SECTION 4. Any rule adopted by the Board of Tax Appeals under division (D)(3) of section 5703.02 of the Revised Code shall apply to appeals filed with the Board on or after January 1, 2015.

Speaker _____ *of the House of Representatives.*

President _____ *of the Senate.*

Passed _____, 20____

Approved _____, 20____

Governor.

Sub. H. B. No. 138

130th G.A.

The section numbering of law of a general and permanent nature is complete and in conformity with the Revised Code.

Director, Legislative Service Commission.

Filed in the office of the Secretary of State at Columbus, Ohio, on the ____ day of _____, A. D. 20____.

Secretary of State.

File No. _____ Effective Date _____