1 2 3	STATE OF NEW MEXICO ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS OFFICE TAX ADMINISTRATION ACT
4 5 6 7	IN THE MATTER OF THE PROTEST OF DENNIS CHAMPLIN TO ASSESSMENT ISSUED UNDER LETTER ID NO. L1081918896
8	v. AHO Case Number 22.08-041A, D&O No. 22-22
9	NEW MEXICO TAXATION AND REVENUE DEPARTMENT
10	DECISION AND ORDER
11	On September 28, 2022, Hearing Officer Ignacio V. Gallegos, Esq., conducted an
12	administrative hearing on the merits of the matter of the tax protest of Dennis Champlin
13	(Taxpayer) pursuant to the Tax Administration Act and the Administrative Hearings Office Act.
14	At the video conference hearing, Mr. Dennis Champlin appeared representing himself, and
15	accompanied by his wife, Karla Champlin. Staff Attorney Tim Williams appeared, representing
16	the opposing party in the protest, the Taxation and Revenue Department (Department).
17	Department protest auditor Lizette Rivera appeared as a witness for the Department. Taxpayer
18	offered no exhibits at the hearing. Department submitted exhibits A, B, C, E, and F, at the
19	hearing, which were admitted without objection. Following the hearing, Department submitted
20	an updated liabilities spreadsheet (marked by the Hearing Officer as Exhibit G), which is
21	admitted without objection. Department's Exhibits A, B, C, E, and F are duplicates of documents
22	provided in the administrative file. The administrative file is considered part of the record.
23	In quick summary, this protest involves Taxpayer's claim that as an artist he consigned
24	certain artwork to a gallery, which he believed was responsible for collecting and paying gross
25	receipts taxes for the sales it completed at an agreed-upon price. Taxpayer was unable to show any
26	contract, bill of sale, or other proof that this had in fact occurred. Consignors and consignees are

### FINDINGS OF FACT

## **Procedural Findings**

- 1. On June 30, 2021, under Letter Id. No. L1081918896, the Department issued a Notice of Assessment of Taxes and Demand for Payment to Taxpayer. Under the Assessment letter, Taxpayer owed Project Gross Receipts Tax of \$313.42, penalty of \$62.68, and interest of \$37.08 for a total assessment of tax due of \$413.18 for tax reporting periods from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018. [Administrative File; Ex. C-1, Ex. F-1].
- 2. On July 6, 2021, Taxpayer mailed a protest letter, which he dated July 5, 2021, alleging that the Department was incorrect in its assessment of tax because the income was from consignment sales of artwork, where the gallery was responsible for collection, reporting, and payment of the tax. The protest letter was stamped as received by the Department ACD Office on July 16, 2021. [Administrative File; Ex. B].
- 3. On December 17, 2021, David C. Zlotnik, Certified Public Accountant, submitted a letter on Taxpayer's behalf explaining the items contained in the Taxpayer's 2018 Schedule C, and the reason for the missing 1099 from the Long Coat Fine Art gallery. [Administrative File; Ex. E1, E2].

- 4. On January 25, 2022, the Department issued an Acknowledgment of protest letter, under Letter Id. No. L1961118640, acknowledging receipt of the Taxpayer's protest.

  [Administrative File; Ex. A].
- 5. On August 24, 2022, the Department submitted a Request for Hearing to the Administrative Hearings Office, requesting a scheduling hearing to address Taxpayer's protest. The Request for Hearing stated that the total at issue was \$413.18. [Administrative File].
- 6. On August 24, 2022, the Department submitted its Answer to Protest to the Administrative Hearings Office, claiming that the Taxpayer reported income on a federal form Schedule C without reporting the income as gross receipts, or paying the gross receipts tax. The Answer further states that the Taxpayer failed to provide an NTTC or sufficient alternative evidence of reporting or payment by another for the gross receipts tax at issue. [Administrative File].
- 7. On August 31, 2022, the Administrative Hearings Office mailed a Notice of Administrative Hearing to the parties, by first class mail and email, setting the matter for an administrative hearing on the merits of the protest on September 28, 2022. [Administrative File].
- 8. On September 16, 2022, the Department submitted the Department's Witness and Exhibit list. The Department sent the submission to Taxpayer's representative, Richard Sandoval, CPA, via email. [Administrative File].
- 9. On September 16, 2022, Richard Sandoval, CPA, submitted an email indicating that the Taxpayer declined his representation. [Administrative File].
- 10. On September 19, 2022, because the Taxpayer representative was no longer involved, the Administrative Hearings Office provided email notice to Taxpayer. [Administrative File].

- 11. The undersigned Administrative Hearing Officer Ignacio V. Gallegos conducted the merits hearing on September 28, 2022, with the parties and witnesses present in-person in Santa Fe, at the Administrative Hearings Office in the Wendell Chino Building. The Administrative Hearing Officer preserved a recording of the hearing ("Hearing Record" or "H.R."). [Administrative File].
- 12. At the hearing, the parties did not object that conducting the merits hearing satisfied the 90-day hearing requirements of Section 7-1B-8 (F) (2019). [Administrative File].
- 13. Mr. Dennis Champlin (Taxpayer) appeared on his own behalf, accompanied by his wife, Karla Champlin. Mr. Champlin testified as his sole witness. The Department was represented by Attorney Tim Williams. Protest manager, Lizette Rivera was the Department's sole witness. [Administrative File; Hearing Record].

# **Substantive Findings**

- 14. Taxpayer Dennis Champlin is a painter residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 27:15-30:05].
- 15. Taxpayer consigned certain artworks (paintings) to the Long Coat Fine Art Gallery, an art gallery in Ruidoso, New Mexico, without a written contract with the gallery. The gallery sold the painting(s) in 2018 and sent the previously agreed-upon fifty percent (50%) of the proceeds from the sale to the Taxpayer. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 27:30-32:20, 37:00-39:30].
- 16. Taxpayer claimed the income from the sales of artwork on his Federal Form 1040, Schedule C, as business income. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 28:20-29:00].

- 17. Taxpayer did not file New Mexico form CRS-1 returns to report and pay gross receipts tax during the timeframe at issue. [Administrative File; Examination of L. Rivera, H.R. 1:05:05-1:07:05, 1:11:10-1:11:50].
- 18. The Department detected a discrepancy or mismatch between the Taxpayer's federal Schedule C federal tax filings and the Taxpayer's gross receipts tax filings on CRS-1 returns between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2018, because the Taxpayer reported business income on a Schedule C, but did not report or pay gross receipts tax, leading to the assessment of gross receipts tax. Based on the discrepancy detected, the Department issued a Notice of Assessment to Taxpayer, including tax, penalty and interest. [Administrative File; Examination of L. Rivera, H.R. 44:30-52:15; Ex. F1, C1, E1 and E2].
- 19. Taxpayer provided no documentation of the sale of artwork, an invoice, a bill of sale, contracts with the gallery, a non-taxable transaction certificate (NTTC), or other documentary proof of an agreement that the gallery collect, report and pay gross receipts taxes on Taxpayer's behalf. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 30:00-32:00; 37:40-40:15].
- 20. Taxpayer has been selling his artwork over three years, although sales are rare, by his estimation. Taxpayer spoke with his CPA about his tax liabilities, and his CPA did not inform him of a need to file CRS-1 returns to report and pay gross receipts taxes. He considered the sale of his artwork as an occasional supplement to his retirement income, rather than a business.

  [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 32:30-35:10, 35:50-36:30, 37:00-37:45].
- 21. Taxpayer has in the past been subject to similar inquiries by the Department for mismatched Schedule Cs. Taxpayer has had consignment arrangements, and only one contract he

could recall, with other art galleries, not only in New Mexico. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 37:00-37:45; Examination of L. Rivera, H.R. 1:05:05-1:07:05].

- 22. During the pendency of the protest, the Department seized Taxpayer's federal income tax refund and applied it to the Taxpayer's outstanding balance. [Administrative File; Examination of D. Champlin, H.R. 37:00-37:45; Examination of L. Rivera, H.R. 1:04:20-1:05:05].
- 23. The Department provided an itemization of Taxpayer's outstanding balances, showing tax principal in the amount of \$313.42, penalty of \$72.68, interest of \$47.74, credits of (\$146.00), for a total balance of \$287.84. [Administrative File; Exhibit G].

**DISCUSSION** 

For tax year 2018, Dennis Champlin filed Schedule C forms as part of his federal personal income tax returns. The Schedule C reported business income. The Taxpayer did not file gross receipts tax returns on the combined reporting system (CRS-1) forms to the State of New Mexico during the same year. Taxpayer claimed he believed he was not required to file gross receipts, first, because the gallery was required to collect taxes at the point of sale, report those taxes and pay them and, second, because it was an occasional sale, and finally, because his CPA had not advised him to do so.

#### **Presumption of correctness**

Under NMSA 1978, Section 7-1-17 (C) (2007), the assessment issued in this case is presumed correct. Consequently, Taxpayer has the burden to overcome the assessment. *See Archuleta v. O'Cheskey*, 1972-NMCA-165, ¶11, 84 N.M. 428. Unless otherwise specified, for the purposes of the Tax Administration Act, "tax" is defined to include interest and civil penalty. *See* NMSA 1978, Section 7-1-3 (Z) (2019); *see also* Regulation 3.1.1.16 (12/29/2000). Under

The burden is also on taxpayers to prove that they are entitled to an exemption or deduction, if one should potentially apply. *See Pub. Serv. Co. v. N.M. Taxation & Revenue Dep't*, 2007-NMCA-050, ¶141 N.M. 520, 157 P.3d 85; *See also Till v. Jones*, 1972-NMCA-046, 83 N.M. 743, 497 P.2d 745. "Where an exemption or deduction from tax is claimed, the statute must be construed strictly in favor of the taxing authority, the right to the exemption or deduction must be clearly and unambiguously expressed in the statute, and the right must be clearly established by the taxpayer." *See Sec. Escrow Corp. v. State Taxation & Revenue Dep't*, 1988-NMCA-068, ¶8, 107 N.M. 540, 760 P.2d 1306. *See also Wing Pawn Shop v. Taxation & Revenue Dep't*, 1991-NMCA-024, ¶16, 111 N.M. 735, 809 P.2d 649. *See also Chavez v. Comm'r of Revenue*, 1970-NMCA-116, ¶7, 82 N.M. 97, 476 P.2d 67.

#### **Receipts under the Gross Receipts and Compensating Tax Act.**

The assessment in this protest arises from an application of the Gross Receipts and Compensating Tax Act, NMSA 1978, Sections 7-9-1 through 7-9-117, which imposes a tax for the

of taxability, a taxpayer may qualify for the benefits of various deductions and exemptions.

There is no dispute that Taxpayer's Schedule C income was derived from the sale of artwork he produced and consigned to a gallery in New Mexico. The statutory definition of "gross receipts" under Section 7-9-3.5 (2019) states, in pertinent part: ""gross receipts' means the total amount of money or the value of other consideration received from selling property in New Mexico." It is undisputed that a physical piece of artwork is tangible personal property. *See* NMSA 1978, Section 7-9-3 (P) (2). Since the Department is entitled to the presumption that all receipts of a person engaging in business are taxable, it is Taxpayer's burden to present some evidence or legal argument to show that the Taxpayer is entitled to an abatement, in full or in part, of the assessment issued in the protest. *See* Section 7-9-3.3(2019) and Section 7-9-5(A) (2019); *see also N.M. Taxation & Revenue Dep't v. Casias Trucking*, 2014-NMCA-099, ¶8. Taxpayer's evidence suggested two theories to excuse his non-filing and non-payment of gross receipts tax returns, first, that the gallery was responsible for collection and payment of the tax, and second, that the sales were occasional sales, not part of a business enterprise.

Point of sale tax collection.

Mr. Champlin's artwork was sold by an art gallery. Taxpayer believed that the gallery was responsible to collect, report and pay the tax on the sale, by passing on the tax to the buyer. This

understanding takes into consideration the everyday experience people have as buyers of goods, where the seller collects both the sales price and a tax, which the buyer pays. However, the gross receipts tax is conceptualized as a tax on the seller, not the buyer. *See* NMSA 1978, Section 7-9-4 (A) ("For the privilege of engaging in business, an excise tax... is imposed on any person engaging in business in New Mexico."). Therefore, the seller is responsible for reporting and payment of the gross receipts tax, not simply remission of taxes paid by buyers. The seller is under no obligation to pass the tax on to the buyer, but the seller is under the obligation to report gross receipts and pay the proper tax. If no tax is collected from the buyer at the point of sale, there is a method of backing out the tax from the sale price. *See* Regulation 3.2.6.8 NMAC.

The gallery accepted Mr. Champlin's artwork for sale on consignment. In this case, the consignor was Mr. Champlin. *See* NMSA 1978, Section 55-9-102 (a)(21) ("consignor means a person that delivers goods to a consignee in a consignment"). The consignee was the gallery. *See* Section 55-8-102 (a)(19) ("consignee means a merchant to which goods are delivered in a consignment."). The parties to the consignment agreed upon the sale price for the artwork but did not enter into a written contract.

Upon sale of the artwork, the gallery sent Mr. Champlin payment for his previously agreed-upon share of the sale proceeds. It is unclear if the gallery collected, reported or paid any tax on the sale. However, as a seller on consignment agreement, both the consignor and the consignee are responsible for payment of their portion of the proceeds of the sale. *See* Regulation 3.2.1.15 (B) NMAC (10/13/2021)<sup>1</sup> ("Receipts of both a consignor and a consignee from the sale of tangible personal property handled on consignment are subject to the gross receipts tax."). Gross receipts includes "any receipts from sales of tangible personal property handled on consignment." NMSA

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  The newest version of the regulation does not change the language of the previously enacted Section B, effective 10/31/2000, and applicable to the case at hand.

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Occasional sales

1978, Section 7-9-3.5 (A) (2) (a). It is undisputed that the consignor and the consignee are both sellers in this scenario. It is upon sellers that the gross receipts tax is levied. See Ranchers-Tufco Limestone Project Joint Venture v. New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department, 1983-NMCA-126, ¶83, 674 P.2d 522 ("[T]he incidence of the gross receipts tax is on the seller"). There was no evidence that the consignment contract provided any other method of tax collection, reporting, or payment. Therefore, the gross receipts tax levied on the seller-consignor is appropriate.

Mr. Champlin's assertion that the sporadic sale of his paintings was not really a business is cognizable as a claim under the occasional sales exemption to the gross receipts tax. The Gross Receipts and Compensating Tax Act provides an exemption for occasional sales or leases of property. See NMSA 1978, Section 7-9-28. The exemption "contemplates two requirements: 1) that the transaction be isolated or occasional, and 2) that the seller-lessor is not engaged or holding himself out as engaged in the business of selling or leasing the same or similar property." Kewanee Industries, Inc. v. Reese, Taxation and Revenue Department, 1993-NMSC-006, ¶ 31, 845 P.2d 1238.

The Department's regulations also itemize the criteria it uses to determine whether a particular taxpayer or sale qualifies for the exemption. See Regulation 3.2.116.8 and 3.2.116.9 NMAC. Mr. Champlin suggested that the artwork sold sporadically. The Department presented testimony that it had worked with the Taxpayer's accountant on other Schedule C mismatches over the years. Also, Mr. Champlin testified that he has art in galleries in other states. Here, it was clear that this sale of artwork in 2018 was not an isolated incident, and the Taxpayer was holding himself out to the public as an artist who sells his art. "Receipts from an isolated or occasional sale are exempt... only when the seller of the property is not engaged in the business of selling or leasing

Penalty

exemption as an occasional seller.

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Mr. Champlin did not believe he was required to file and pay gross receipts tax returns, but had no intention to evade a tax, he simply did not receive information of a need to file from his accountant. Under NMSA 1978, Section 7-1-69 (2007), when a taxpayer fails to pay taxes due to the State because of negligence or disregard of rules and regulations, but without intent to evade or defeat a tax, the Department must impose a civil negligence penalty on that taxpayer. "There shall be added to the amount assessed a penalty" under the statute. *Id*.

the same or similar property." Regulation 3.2.116.11 (A) (5/15/2001). Because the Taxpayer was

also selling similar property in the form of works of art, Taxpayer does not qualify for the

The use of the word "shall" makes the imposition of penalty mandatory in all instances where a taxpayer's actions or inactions meets the legal definition of "negligence." *See Marbob Energy Corp. v. N.M. Oil Conservation Comm'n*, 2009-NMSC-013, ¶22, 146 N.M. 24 (use of the word "shall" in a statute indicates provision is mandatory absent clear indication to the contrary).

Negligence can be found in several ways. Regulation 3.1.11.10 NMAC (1/15/01) defines "negligence" as "failure to exercise that degree of ordinary business care and prudence which reasonable taxpayers would exercise under like circumstances; inaction by taxpayers where action is required; inadvertence, indifference, thoughtlessness, carelessness, erroneous belief or inattention." Not filing gross receipts tax returns or paying the taxes on time is certainly negligence under this definition.

Taxpayer's statement of reliance on his accountant for proper advice is cognizable as a claim of nonnegligence. Regulation 3.1.11.11 NMAC (1/15/01) defines "nonnegligence" by describing several situations which may indicate an absence of negligence, allowing the Department

Taxpayer's testimony was credible that he relied on his accountant when filing personal income taxes, which included the Schedule C for business income. There was no evidence of whether the subject of gross receipts was broached between accountant and Taxpayer. Yet, even if it had been, under the plain language of the regulation, the reliance on the CPA does not excuse the failure to timely file a gross receipts tax return for the business income reported on the Schedule C. See El Centro Villa Nursing Center v. Taxation and Revenue Department, 1989-NMCA-070, ¶10, 108 N.M. 795 (inadvertent error meets the definition of civil negligence). No abatement of penalty under Regulation 3.1.11.11 NMAC (01/15/01) is allowed.

#### Conclusion.

Mr. Champlin provided no evidence to support his beliefs that the gallery collected, reported or paid the gross receipts tax on the consignment sales of his artwork. Taxpayer was engaged in business, holding himself out in various galleries and collecting payments from the sale of his art. The seller-consignor is liable for the tax on the proceeds received from the sales of his paintings. Taxpayer's reliance on a CPA to inform him to pay gross receipts taxes was misplaced. A reduction of penalty for the reliance on competent advice is not proper in this case as no gross receipts tax returns were filed. *See* Regulation 3.1.11.11 (D) NMAC.

The protest is denied.

*In the Matter of the Protest of Dennis Champlin, page 13 of 15.* 

G. Taxpayer failed to establish nonnegligence in purported reliance on advice from a 1 2 CPA, as the reliance does not excuse failing to report and pay gross receipts tax. See Regulation 3 3.1.11.11 NMAC (01/15/01); see also Regulation 3.1.11.10 NMAC (1/15/01). For the foregoing reasons, the Taxpayer's protest IS DENIED. IT IS ORDERED that the 4 5 Taxpayer pay gross receipts tax, penalty and interest as itemized in the recalculated balance sheet, 6 reduced by credit for payments made, for a total balance of \$287.84. Interest accrues until fully 7 paid. 8 DATED: November 28, 2022. 9 Ignacia V. Gallo 10 11 Ignacio V. Gallegos Hearing Officer 12 Administrative Hearings Office 13 P.O. Box 6400 14 15 Santa Fe, NM 87502 16 NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL 17 Pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 7-1-25 (2015), the parties have the right to appeal this 18 decision by filing a notice of appeal with the New Mexico Court of Appeals within 30 days of the 19 date shown above. If an appeal is not timely filed with the Court of Appeals within 30 days, this 20 Decision and Order will become final. Rule of Appellate Procedure 12-601 NMRA articulates 21 the requirements of perfecting an appeal of an administrative decision with the Court of Appeals. 22 Either party filing an appeal shall file a courtesy copy of the appeal with the Administrative 23 Hearings Office contemporaneous with the Court of Appeals filing so that the Administrative

1	Hearings Office may begin preparing the record proper. The parties will each be provided with a
2	copy of the record proper at the time of the filing of the record proper with the Court of Appeals,
3	which occurs within 14 days of the Administrative Hearings Office receipt of the docketing
4	statement from the appealing party. See Rule 12-209 NMRA.
5	CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
6	On November 28, 2022, a copy of the foregoing Decision and Order was submitted to the
7	parties listed below in the following manner:
8	First Class Mail and Email First Class Mail and Email
9 10	INTENTIONALLY BLANK