

None of us at this table want to embark upon the process of significant budget cuts that we are about to tackle. But the fact is that every School District in the state is in the same situation, and this Board has a moral obligation and a legal responsibility to make the necessary adjustments to enable our schools to operate within greatly reduced revenue.

Everyone in this room likely has strong feelings about particular items on this list, Board members included. Some of them may downright offend you. Some of them may offend me. But, I urge you to consider the fact that there is a positive aspect to the exercise we are going through. It forces us to look at whether programs we have and expenditures we make; things we consider essential, really are that essential.

This Board asked and expected the Budget Advisory Team to be open minded and think outside of the everyday box. I believe they have done that, and we greatly appreciate their work...whether we happen to agree with it or not. They have begun a process that was intended to be open and thoughtful, and our School Board will finish it. In the short 10 days since their recommendations have become public,

misconceptions have surfaced. Let me be clear. Their recommendations are just that...recommendations...NOT DECISIONS. Tonight is the first time they have been presented to this School Board, and we have not discussed them. We will be listening tonight, as you will, to understand the committee's work, and asking questions. At our work session next Monday we will get into the background of that work, and will have a public hearing two weeks from tonight. Over the course of the next month or so, this Board and only this Board will make the final decision on a reduced educational program after study, community and staff input, and discussion. Finally, I would request that comments tonight and in the weeks to come be sensitive to people. We must recognize that discussions we have and decisions we reach can and will have major impacts on school children and their families, and on school employees and their families. Some of both will be in this room as those discussions occur, and that is difficult. While we must be open, frank, and objective, let us do so with compassion. We all know people who have in some way suffered as a result of the current economic crisis affecting our entire country. As a

result of action taken by this Board, people may well lose their jobs when all is said and done. The fact that this may be necessary makes it no less tragic.