Board Vice President Larry Adams called the Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Library at Macomb Jr./Sr. High School. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, roll was taken with the following members present: Kiah, Bierman, Sutton, Adams, and Thompson. Members Colvin and Shouse were absent.

Mr. Adams opened the hearing regarding the proposed reduction in force. Superintendent Reuschel gave an overview of the cost containment plan adopted by the Board at its March 20, 2013, regular meeting and the reasons therefor. She explained that the proposed reduction in force is part of the plan’s reduction in personnel costs for FY 2014 totaling $337,113, noting that the plan includes other cost containment measures: compaction of the schedule at MJSHS, Title I funding cut of $88,000, hiring new teachers to fill positions vacated by retirees, reduction of program assistant hours to 5/day, cut in extracurricular budget of $28,000, reductions in Board travel, elimination of appraisal and gifted line items, and reduction in the contingency line item for a total reduction of $435,324 for FY 14. The Board’s plan calls for approximately the same amount of reduction in each of the next three years in order to compensate for decreased state funding and dwindling fund balances. Superintendent Reuschel thanked the community for its financial support of the District and stressed that the community and the District can work together to get through the current financial crisis.

Member Kiah opened discussion regarding the proposed reduction in force with an explanation of the goal the Board is trying to achieve through its cost containment plan. That goal is for the District to maintain a position of strength and avoid being one of the projected 165 districts statewide that may close next year. Member Bierman noted that up to this point, the District has absorbed the cuts in state funding without taking drastic action, but that is no longer possible and the District must cut its budget in order to avoid spending down its fund balances entirely. The Board made the decision to begin cost containment based on the Strategic Plan and what is core to the District’s curriculum. Superintendent Reuschel advised that the proposed releases are based on what the District knows at this time about next year’s funding from the State. She emphasized that this debt crisis was brought on by lack of payment by the State of statutorily required obligations, and that the projected GSA deficit for FY 14 will be even greater at a projected 80%.

At 7:24 p.m., President Shouse called for public comment and the following individuals came forward: Suellyn Rieckelman (MSHS Teacher) – requested that the Board re-examine the RIFs in light of upcoming retirements and find a way to keep the teachers and programs; Merikay Potter (MSHS Teacher) – frustrated and angered by the State’s neglect. There must be prudent and reasonable actions that can be taken to contain costs. Statements that students are not impacted are false – these cuts come at a terrible cost to the children (larger class sizes and diminished class offerings) and the community. Choosing to cut highly qualified professionals undermines our children’s futures; Gloria Delaney Barrman (community member) – human relationships are the heart of learning – cutting teachers negatively impacts students. Emphasized the increase in the number of ELL students and the vital role Tonya Hamer plays in the ELL/ESL program and relationship with WIU. Noted the legal obligation to those learners and the availability of state and federal funds to support the program and the position and offered to help seek and secure those funds. Marcia Brown (MSHS Teacher) – noted negative impact on foreign language department if RIFs are approved and
emphasized importance of having qualified teachers; Terry Krehbiel (MSHS Teacher) – not able to have confidence in the process used to arrive at decisions regarding cost containment. Looking for evidence of shared sacrifice and wisdom of choices (ex. cut musical or ELL/ESL?); Maureen Wallen (Lincoln Teacher) – emphasized the importance of Pre-K program and asked the Board to consider cutting program assistants’ hours by 15 minutes/day to keep hours under 30/week. Cutting Title I and Pre-K funding will save money in the present, but will cost in the future in the form of new positions and will negatively impact the poorest and most vulnerable students in the District; Scott Palmer (parent) – proposed shared sacrifice in the form of a 3.3% reduction in salaries across the board with administrators taking a larger cut as they are more highly compensated. That would equate to a 3% budget cut, preserve jobs, and have no negative impact on students; Tammy La Prad (field supervisor - WIU) – speaking on behalf of Tonya Hamer. Loss of Mrs. Hamer removes a valuable resource that would get the ELL/ESL program where it needs to be in 5 years. She is a resource we need to tap into, not eliminate; Noelle Flynn (Lincoln Teacher) – expressed support for program assistants and the work they do helping to teach students reading and math and emphasized the importance of the support the PA’s provide; Maggie McGowan (MSHS Senior) – noted that students have not been informed of the financial situation or the impact of the cost containment plan. They have not had a chance to express their opinions. Also disturbed that as a future ESL teacher, she may not be able to return to Macomb to help English Language Learners; Abe Matlak (MSHS Senior) – pointed out that the student body was not informed about the financial situation and could not contribute in any way to the decisions. He noted that the school’s success is based on the strength of personnel and the relationships between students and teachers. Cutting programs can only have a negative effect; Kaitlyn Twaddle (MSHS Senior) – compared MSHS students and faculty to family and asked the Board to reconsider cuts in classes, programs, and personnel; Bree Bracey (MSHS Junior) – spoke on behalf of Mrs. Hamer and Mrs. Hance. She will not be able to take her 4th year of French due to cuts; Andrea Williams (parent) – expressed dismay that decisions had already been made between the time information appeared in the paper following the March Board meeting and this meeting. Likely that a majority of parents do not realize what is happening. Spoke about 4-year plan students are asked to construct when freshmen and how many take that assignment very seriously and follow it closely. Students are not advised that they may not be able to complete a four-year course (such as French). This, in essence, is breaking a contract with the student; Meghana Babu (MSHS Junior) – will not be able to complete four-year course of study in French. This may impact consideration of college applications as there will be no explanation on the transcript for the lack of a fourth year. Would appreciate being able to finish the course of study as planned.

At 8:07 p.m., member Sutton moved, and member Thompson seconded, to close the hearing. Members voting “yes”: Kiah, Bierman, Sutton, Adams, and Thompson. Members voting “no”: none. Motion carried.