

Alderman: 'Somebody oughta assassinate that governor'

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LA VERGNE — An alderman had a suggestion at last week's meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for what to do about the state's budget woes:

"Somebody oughta assassinate that governor."

Alderman David Fleming made the statement during a discussion about how La Vergne may lose state-shared revenue. He can be heard clearly on an audiotape of the June 24 meeting that City Hall provided to *The Tennessean* at the newspaper's request.

In an interview yesterday, Fleming said the statement he made was "probably a very wrong thing for me to say," but that he did not regret making the statement.

"I'll stand behind what I said. I said it, it was wrong, but I'm here to tell you, I said that."

Fleming said his comment was not meant to be taken seriously and that he does not plan to assassinate Gov. Don Sundquist. However, Fleming said he made the comment in light of his belief that state officials are not doing their job to ease the state's budget problems.

"I think it's time someone kicked some butt down there," Fleming said. "Just look at our legislators. ... State government is shut down."

La Vergne Mayor Mike Webb said Monday he remembered Fleming making the comment at the meeting but that he was not taken aback by it.

"Nothing struck me. It was certainly no malice or intent if he did say anything. There was certainly no intent."

Neither Gov. Don Sundquist nor anyone close to him had heard about the incident, said Sean Williams, Sundquist's deputy press secretary.

"The governor is unaware of the statement and has been busy these past several weeks attending to Tennessee's budget crisis."

It is a federal crime to threaten the life of the president, but there is no Tennessee statute that makes it a crime to ask for or threaten the assassination of the governor, local attorney David Raybin said.