

MINUTES
TONKA BAY SPECIAL
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 19, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Special City Council meeting of the Tonka Bay City Council was called to order at 8:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present: Mayor Jennings, Council Members Anderson, Eckland, Ottum, and Wischmeier. Also present were City Administrator Holl, City Engineer Bradford, and City Attorney Nason.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Member Anderson made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Council Member Eckland seconded the motion. Ayes: Anderson, Eckland, Ottum, Wischmeier, and Jennings. The motion carried.

4. SPECIAL BUSINESS

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Response to Petition to the Minnesota Assessment Worksheet - City Engineer Bradford informed the Council that the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) received a petition late Monday night (May 12, 2025). The EQB responded the following morning, stating that the City is the responsible authority for deciding whether an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required for the project. WSB reviewed the petition's fifteen points and prepared a response. Bradford stated that the City has adequately evaluated the environmental effects of the project, based on review of the concerns. Necessary permits will be obtained, and based on Minnesota Rule 4410, an environmental review is not warranted.

Mayor Jennings questioned Council Member Ottum about her decision to submit a petition to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB). When asked why the concerns were not first brought to the City Council, Ottum said she pursued the petition because she felt the Council wasn't fully addressing resident concerns.

Ottum described the petition as a group effort, naming Kristin Viger as the writer of the petition. Jennings emphasized that only 40 of the 110 petition signers were Tonka Bay residents, noting that the petition required 100 signatures, and asked whether the signers had been informed of potential financial impacts if the project were delayed. Ottum responded no, she did not know anything and didn't want to be put on the spot.

Jennings noted that while anyone could have submitted the petition, Ottum chose to do so, and therefore it is reasonable to expect her to answer questions.

Jennings stated for the record that Council Member Kathy Ottum declined to be put on the spot regarding a petition she sponsored, which directly caused a delay in the project's progress. Jennings further noted that this was not simply an effort to halt the project—it succeeded in doing so.

Ottum stated for the record that I believed this has been a five-year catastrophe plan and those “woods” have been there, at least to my knowledge, since 1973.

Council Member Ottum stated she acted as a resident first, prompting Mayor Jennings to raise concerns about an ethical conflict of interest. Jennings reiterated that Ottum had not brought these concerns to the Council. Jennings informed Ottum that the appropriate place to raise concerns is during a Council meeting, as part of your responsibility as an elected representative of the City. Council Member Wischmeier supported Jennings, stating Ottum should have consulted City Staff first and that the petition appeared to undermine the process. Wischmeier also noted Ottum had access to information not available to the public.

A motion to approve Resolution 2025-13 Adopting Findings and Response to Petition to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board was made by Council Member Anderson. Council Member Eckland seconded the motion.

Roll call: Anderson Aye
 Eckland Aye
 Wischmeier Aye
 Jennings Aye

In accordance with advice from legal counsel, Council Member Ottum is required to recuse herself from voting on this matter due to a conflict of interest. The motion carried.

A motion to approve Resolution 2025-12 Approving Tribal Cemetery Soils Site Plan, Mound Management Plan & MOA contingent on any administrative changes by partnering agencies through consultation and authorize City Administrator to execute project documents on behalf of the City, was made by Council Member Anderson. Council Member Eckland seconded the motion.

Roll call: Anderson Aye
 Eckland Aye
 Ottum Nay
 Wischmeier Aye
 Jennings Aye

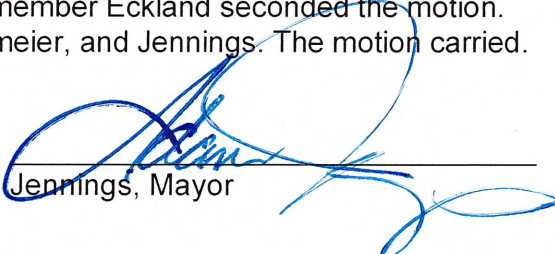
The motion carried.

City Engineer Bradford informed Council that Geislinger & Sons is ready to begin the project as soon as the notice to proceed is issued. Bradford noted that due to expected rain and site conditions, work may be delayed until later in the week.

Council Member Anderson made a motion to approve the clearing of the property in anticipation of the project. Council Member Eckland seconded the motion. Ayes: Anderson, Eckland, Wischmeier, and Jennings. Nays: Ottum. The motion carried.


5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilmember Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 pm. Councilmember Eckland seconded the motion. Ayes: Anderson, Eckland, Ottum, Wischmeier, and Jennings. The motion carried.



Jennings, Mayor

Attest:



Gildemeister, City Clerk