Citing conflicts with nesting sea turtles, Cocoa Beach officials have scaled back plans to create a large dog-friendly beach extending from Fourth Street South to the north end of Robert P. Murkshe Memorial Park.

Instead, the city appears on track to establish a smaller dog-friendly beach at the southern half of Lori Wilson Park.

The reptile-canine debate emerged during Thursday’s Cocoa Beach City Commission meeting. The Indialantic-based Sea Turtle Preservation Society opposes the dog-friendly beaches, citing interference with daily morning nesting surveys and evening nest excavations.

Plus, the organization conjured images of dogs digging up nests, attacking stranded sea turtles, and gobbling up hatchlings.
Diane McConnell was here with a friend’s golden retriever

Laura Renfro meets Diane McConnell, who was here with

Dahlia was visiting Brevard, and loving the beach

Dahlia spots another dog with a ball at Canova Beach,

Trini made fast friends with King, once they realized

Golden retriever Trini, with the ball, playes with

Laura Renfro's dog King was loving chasing birds and

Harley was making new friends at Brevard's only dog

Golden retriever named Trini seems to be requesting

A golden retriever named Trini at Canova Beach.

Diane McConnell sends a tennis ball into the waves

Dahlia with Brittney Wood at Canova Beach
dog friendly
“In summary, Cocoa Beach Government needs to ask itself what is the bigger concern; allow residents to let dogs on the beach during nesting season, or allow endangered sea turtles to strand, nest and hatch unmolested,” STPS Chairwoman Vickie Openshaw wrote in a Wednesday letter to commissioners.
After discussion Thursday, commissioners decided to table a dog-friendly beach ordinance until May 3. That will afford City Hall staffers more time to tweak Lori Wilson Park dog beach details. Potentially, the ordinance may:

• Allow dogs on the beach from 5 to 10 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.

However, these time frames could be tweaked to reflect sunset and sunrise instead.

• Require dogs to have a harness, leash or tether that extends no more than 8 feet.

• Require dog owners to clean up after their pets.

• Establish penalties for enforcement by beach rangers and code enforcement officers.

A special magistrate could be empowered to issue alternative sentences, such as cleaning the beach for a week.

Cocoa Beach officials would set a one-year trial period to see how events transpire during the tourist town's varying seasons, City Manager Jim McKnight said.

Robert P. Murkshe Memorial Park is located at 16th Street South. Commissioner Karalyn Woulas made the motion to drop the proposed 12-block dog beach.

“I've received overwhelming correspondence since we had our last meeting on this item against allowing dogs on the beach,” Woulas said.

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