

New Caney area residents express concerns over street sign removals

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For a resolution to ongoing issues regarding their street sign being removed in place of another, Hardy Road residents in New Caney recently brought these concerns to the Montgomery County Commissioner's Court.

Hardy Road is located along FM 1485, west of Lake Houston Wilderness Park. For months, the residents have had issues with their street sign that read Hardy Road was removed and allegedly replaced with "Rocha Road," by a neighbor with the same last name.

"I have lived off Hardy Road for 45 years and the sign has always said 'Hardy Road,'" resident Stella Grover said during the commissioner's court meeting. "In March, someone decided they wanted to change the name to 'Rocha Road.'"

Fellow resident Shirley Robertson shared her concerns about the property and road name as well, providing the county with information about a survey of the property. "I have lived here 62 years; do I have to change everything from Hardy Road to Rocha Road?" Robertson said during the court's May 22 meeting. "Also, what about the post office and 911. We talked with the Texas Department of Transportation about this and they put the Hardy Road sign back up. Two hours later, our sign was down and the Rocha Road sign back up. Now, we have no signs."

Montgomery County Assistant Attorney B.D. Griffin stated they are aware of the issue, but the road is a private road and not maintained by the county. "We met with the residents to look into these issues," Griffin said. "We have discovered that Hardy Road is not a county maintained road. There are different types of roads in Texas; the significance of roads in the county maintenance system is the county has administrative authority."

Around 1992, legislation passed where Montgomery County had to log all of their roads which created the definitive road log and in that process, the county adopted procedures for signs on roads including a resolution where the verbiage states that if the county puts a sign on a road that it doesn't mean the road is a county maintained road.

"The resolution does not differentiate between a private and a public road that is not county maintained or is a county maintained road so we have in information put together in our procedure books on street signs that don't limit it to county maintained roads," Griffin said.

According to Griffin, the preexisting Hardy Road sign was approved through the county, but they have not looked into any criminal action in regards to the removal of the street sign since it is not currently county maintained.

"Going forward, if the residents want the county to exercise control over the road, it would allow for us to give them advice as to whether they could press charges or not," Griffin said. "At this point, 911 says it is a private matter and we say it's a private matter"

between the two parties because it's either a private road or a public road that is not maintained by the county."

Certain functions of the roads with entities such as 911 need the correct street information to do their job so it is important for their records to meet the signs on the road which is the bigger issue with the residents' concerns, according to Griffin. "The residents need to have a petition to accept the road into the county maintenance system, have it signed by others on the street and submit it to the county," Griffin said. "If you're changing street signs whether they are county maintained or not, you're jeopardizing future emergency services to the area."

"There is no authority to approve the renaming of the street and may be one of those situations where it may not be in any governmental authority to exercise the authority over so it evolves to a private matter."

Despite talking with TxDOT and Montgomery County, a third resident, Paula Henderson shared her concerns about the roadway as well, stating, "the county said we must turn in an application, as residents, for the roadway to be taken into the county for maintenance."

"We have asked for the application," Henderson said. "because it's a private road. We need all the help we can get for this situation."