

# Managing VFD Transition to an ESD Service Provider

February 23, 2024

## What this presentation is about

*A “How to Guide” addressing some of the key issues faced in managing growth with 2 small traditional VFDs*

*How we worked together and in cooperation with our ESD board, increased membership, improved reputation, built strong community support, merged & transitioned to an ESD Service Provider, without alienating our volunteers*



## What this presentation is not about

*This is not the story of a VFD moving to a career department,  
we remain volunteer focused*

*It is also not the story of ego leading to a fight  
between a VFD and an ESD, City, County  
or local high school marching band*



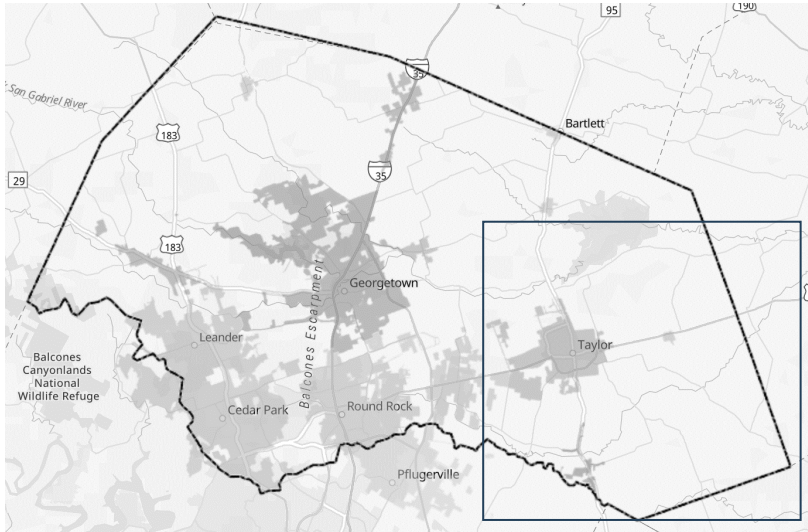
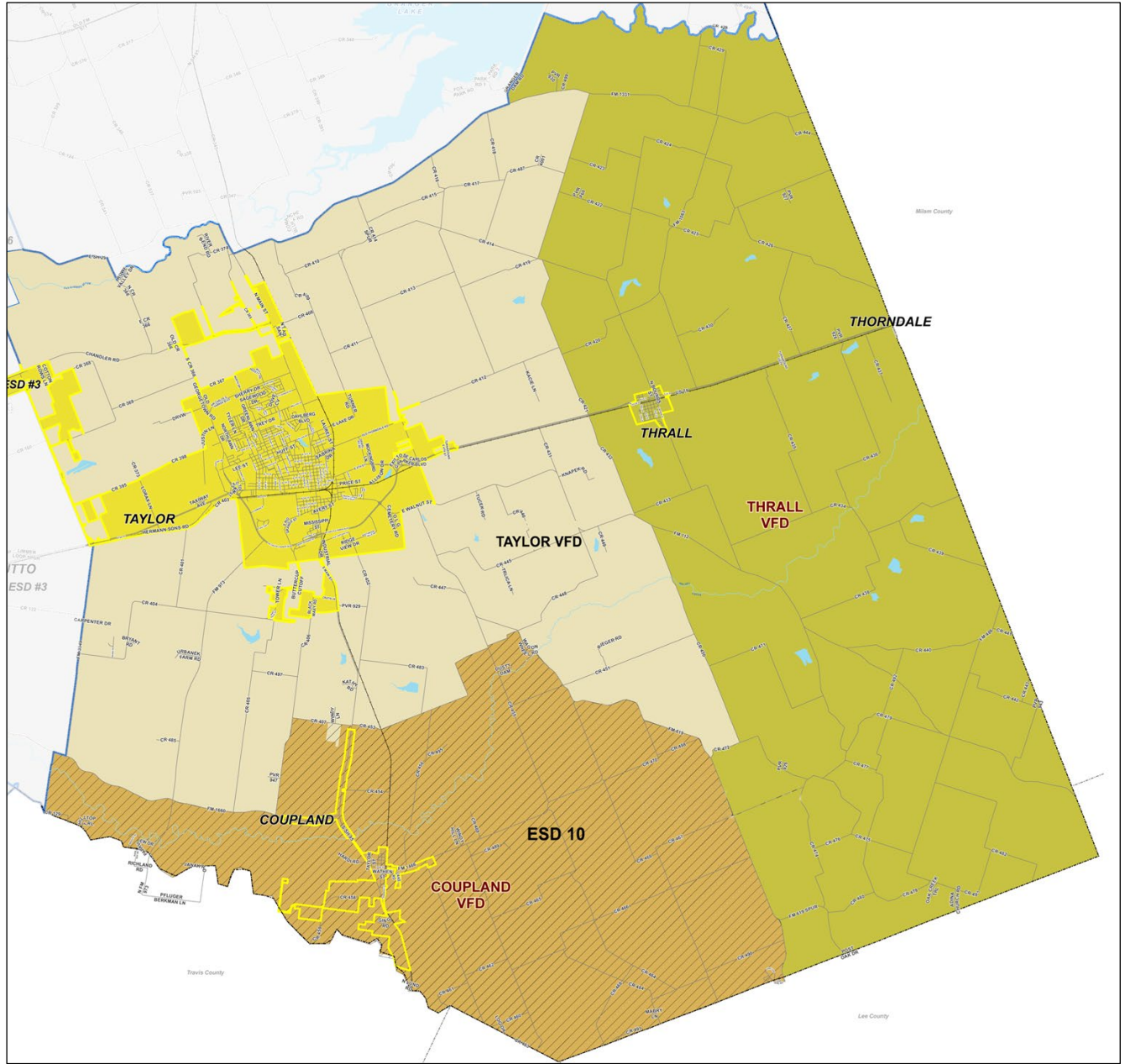
# Williamson County ESD 10 Mission Statement

*We are a mission driven organization of first responders dedicated to the public safety of the residents, business owners and visitors of ESD 10.*

*Additionally, we work with our partners in public safety to assist in reasonable, cooperative manners to assist all areas of Williamson County and other adjoining areas outside of Williamson County.*



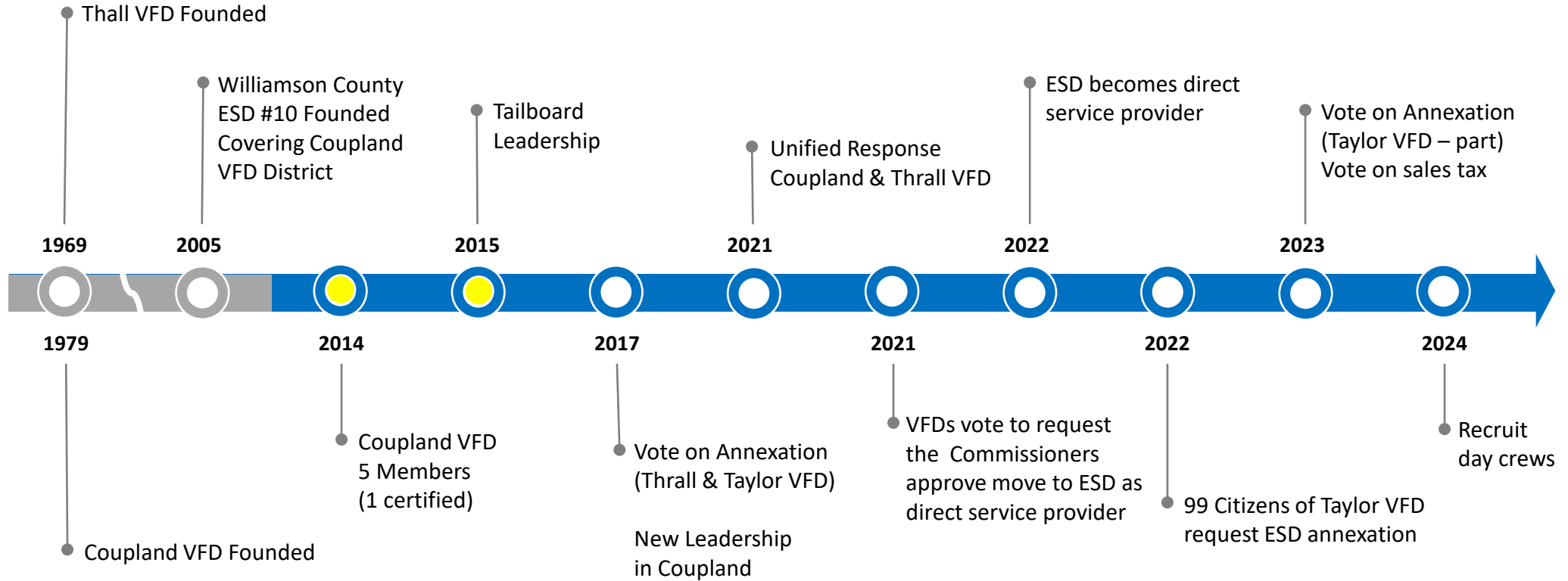
# 2015 Map



South-Eastern Williamson County Volunteer Fire Departments in 2015



# Timeline



# 2015 Tailboard leadership



# 2015 Tailboard leadership

The Coupland firefighters felt a need for improvement, they started working on the things within their control:

- Scheduling work days to clean/paint the station
- Volunteering to attend community events
- Setting up in-house training
- Requesting Summer Fire School Training  
(and volunteering to complete the grant paperwork)
- Requesting EMR training, with some and self-enrolling in EMT training on their own time/dime
- Volunteering to step-up-recruitment on social media
- Improving on call discipline within their ranks





# Community engagement



# Community engagement



Participation in community events is an essential part of building the department's profile. The 4th of July parade alone is not enough. You have to attend all of it.

# Community engagement

- City Council Meeting
  - *Have a representative at every meeting*
  - *Get a Fire Dept report on the agenda*
- Community Associations
  - These types of organizations are always looking for content, offer CPR training, review of call throughout the year, fire safety content
- Ensure the FD Fundraiser has a Community Aspect
- Fire Prevention Week
- Shattered Dreams
- Stop the Bleed Training
- CPR Training
- Trick or Treat
- National Night Out
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade
- Christmas Gift Delivery
- Holiday Parade
- Deliver Santa to the event



# Uniform



Part of VFD discipline and a positive community image is sticking to an attire & appearance policy

As well as improving public perception, a professional appearance improves scene safety and boosts confidence in the people we're there to help



# Social media



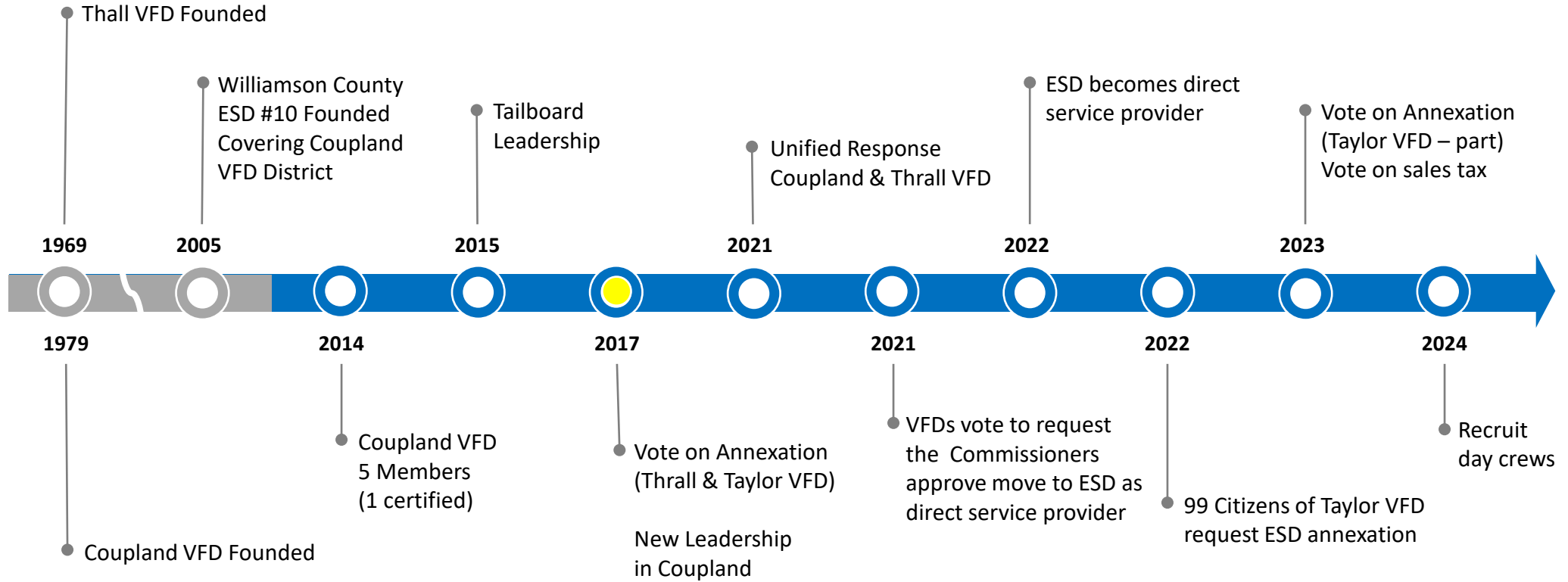
Social media is another “always on” tool to help keep the department in the public’s mind

# Social media

- Fire Safety Messaging
- Recruitment Messaging
- After The Call
  - Respectfully satisfy the curiosity of the public with basic information
- Whenever a photogenic opportunity presents itself, take it
- Community Event Participation
- Feel Good Stories
- Establish a Social Media Policy

*Whether you're battling hundreds of acres of outside fire, directing traffic or scrubbing the bay floor... Never miss an opportunity to remind your community that you are out working for them, at any time, in all weathers.*

# Timeline



# 2017 Annexation, Thrall & Taylor VFDs





# 2017 Annexation, Thrall & Taylor VFDs

Williamson County ESD 10 was created by a vote in 2005, covering the old Coupland fire district.

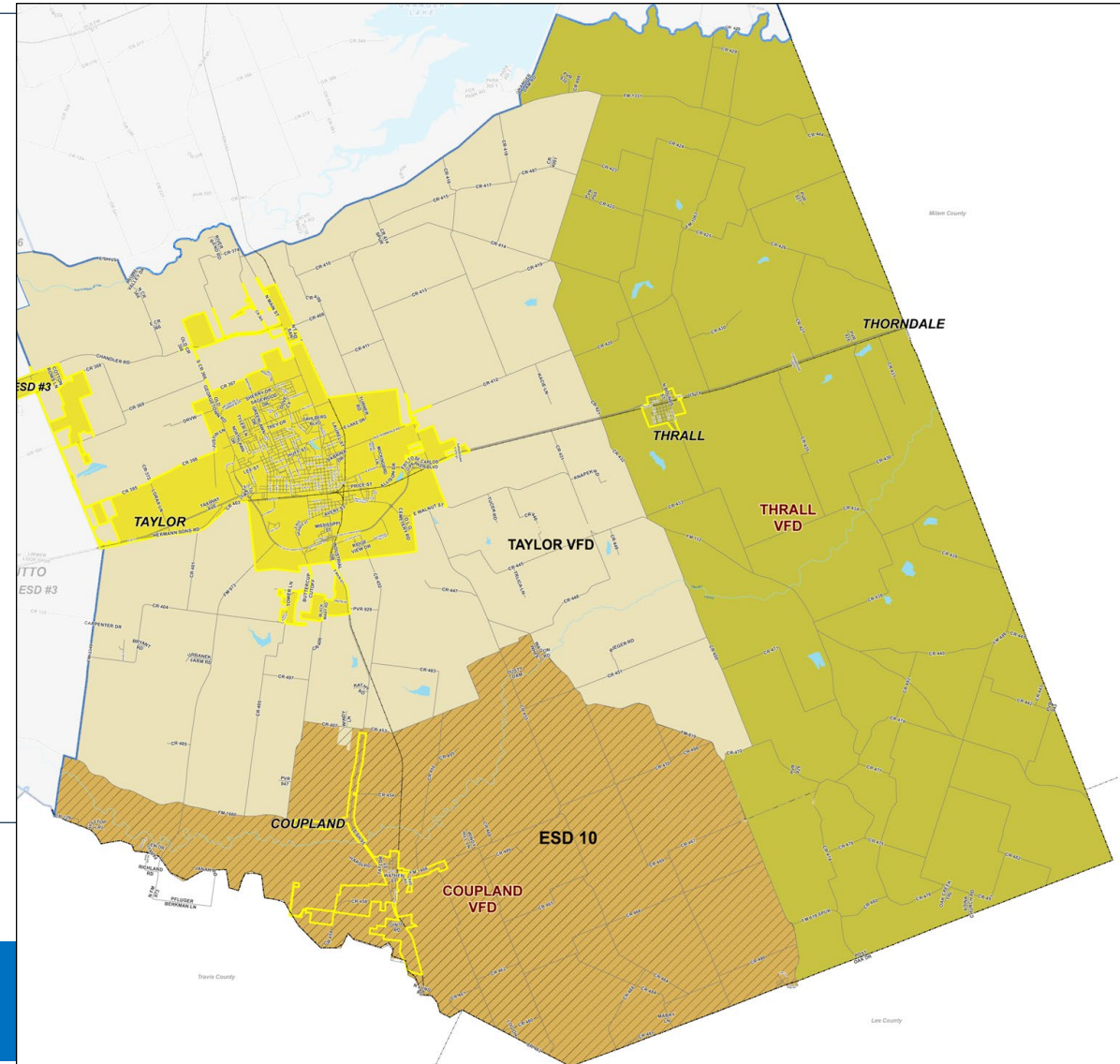
This quickly improved the level of service that could be provided within the district, including the building of a new station in 2009.



1979 - 2009



2009 -



Thrall, Taylor and Coupland VFDs had been in an auto-aid agreement for several years.

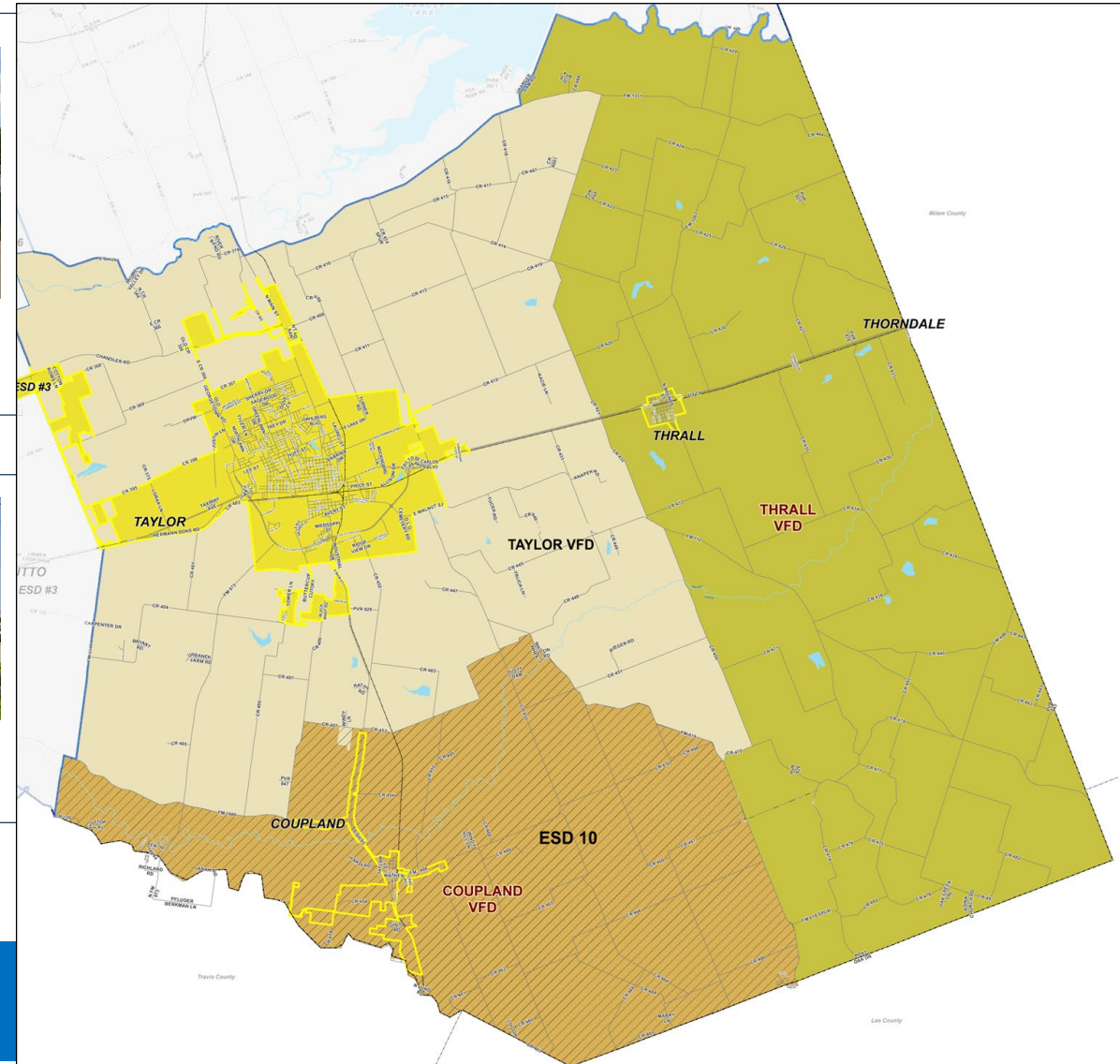
Taylor VFD is a separate entity from and in no way related to the municipal City of Taylor Fire Department

# 2017 Annexation, Thrall & Taylor VFDs

In 2017 Thrall VFD was operating on its fund-raising income and managing an increasing call volume. Its fleet was aging, with a 3 seater engine dating to 1996, and unable to replace out of date PPE.



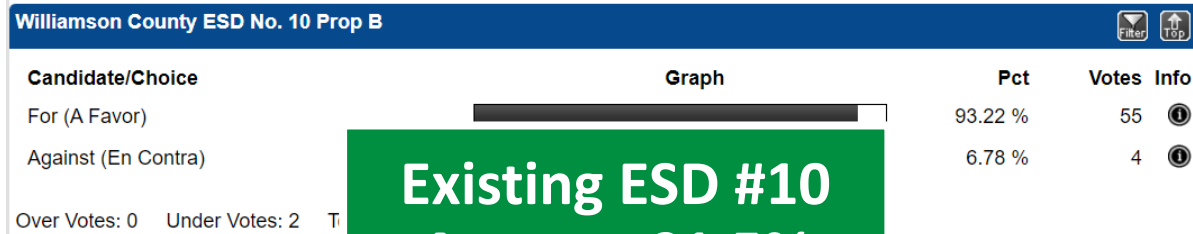
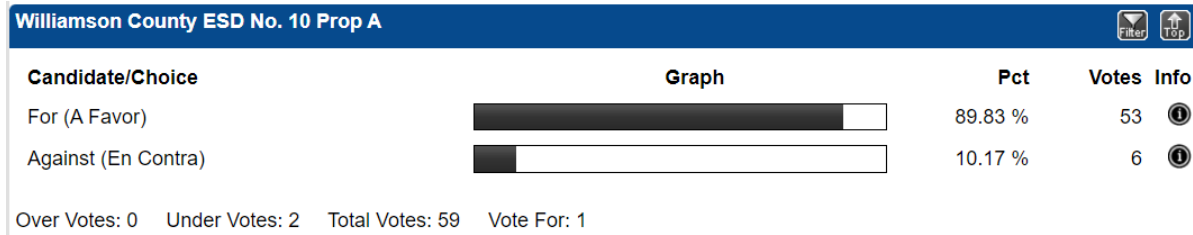
In 2017 Taylor VFD had a moderately healthy income from bingo, but that was declining. Like all VFDs they had issues recruiting and retaining good volunteers.



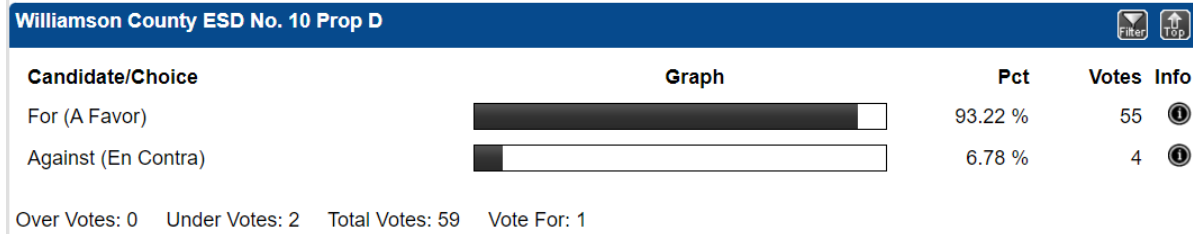
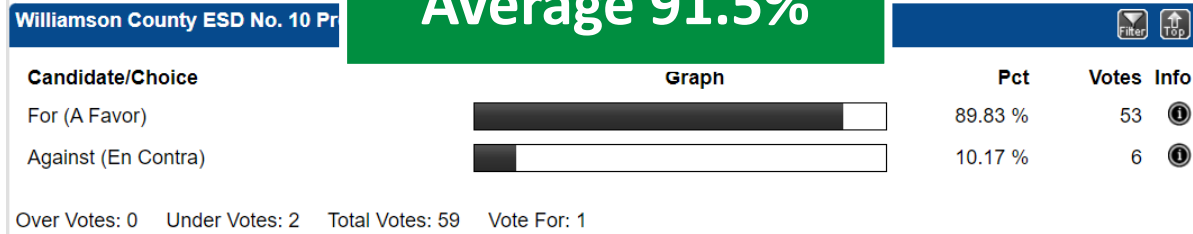
Thrall, Taylor and Coupland VFDs had been in an auto-aid agreement for several years.

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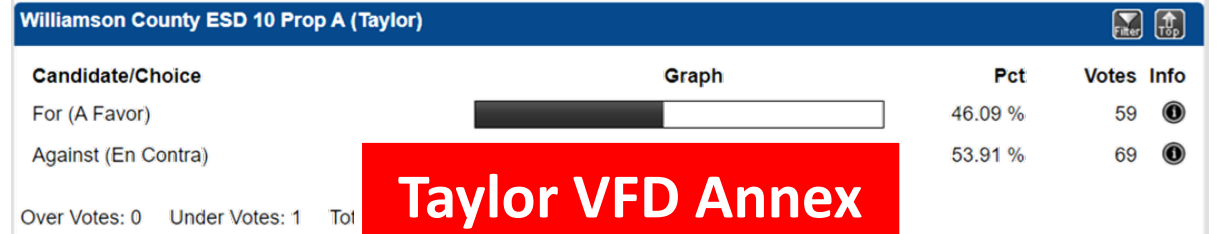
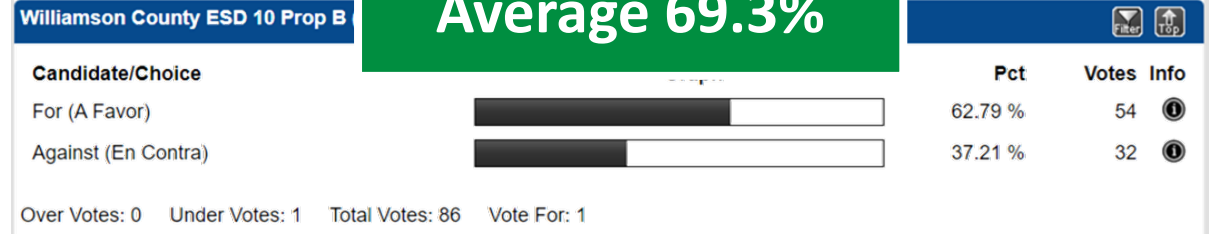
# 2017 Annexation, Thrall & Taylor VFDs - Results



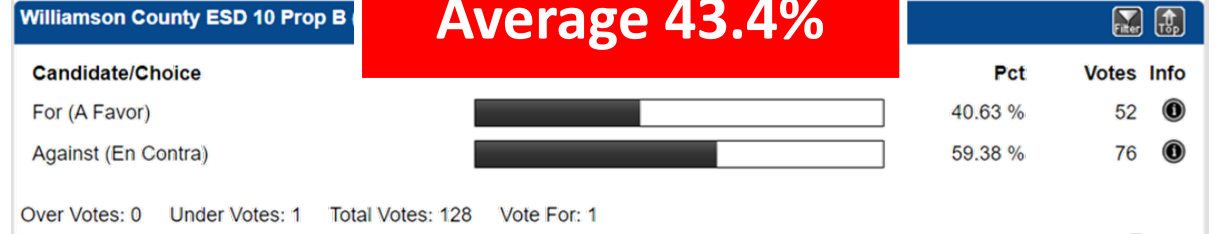
**Existing ESD #10  
Average 91.5%**



**Thrall VFD Annex  
Average 69.3%**



**Taylor VFD Annex  
Average 43.4%**



Source: Williamson County TX Elections Archive. ESD 10 does not advocate any position in an election. Taylor VFD is a separate entity from and in no way related to the municipal City of Taylor Fire Department.

## The Impact of 2017

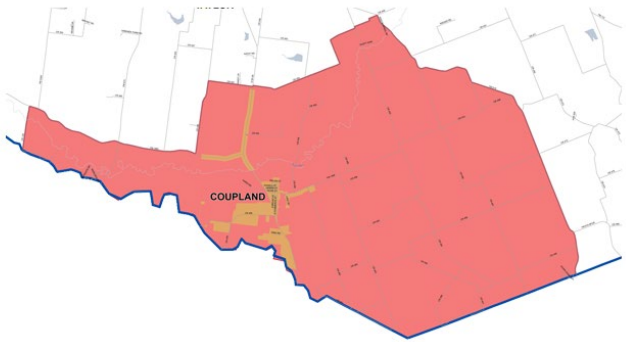
*The tailboard leadership in Coupland VFD resulted in a change of leadership at the Chief Officer level*

*Thrall VFD joined the ESD*

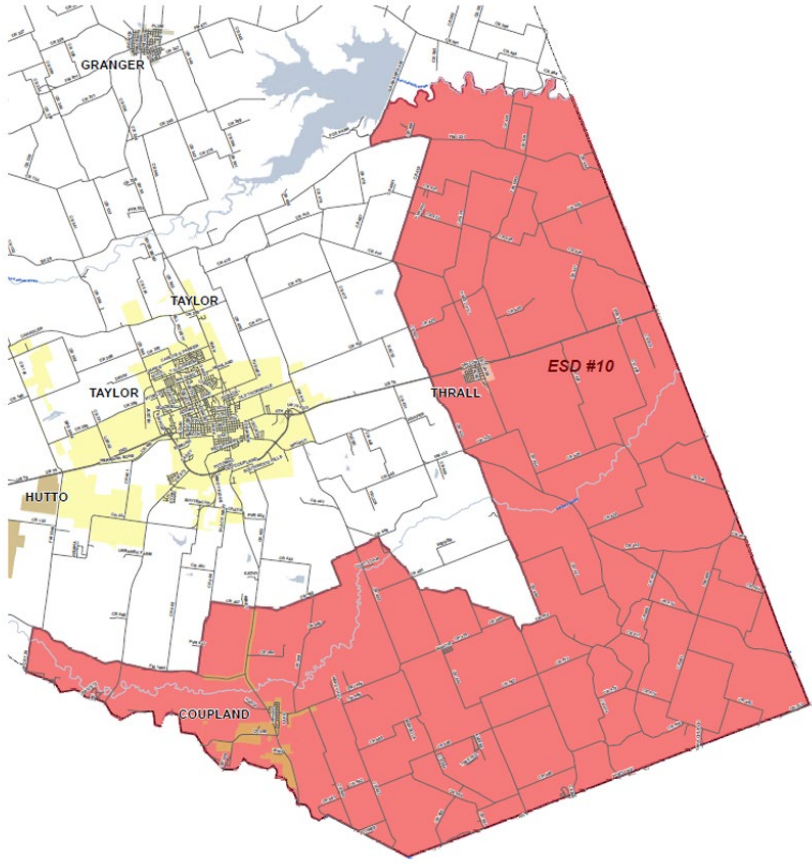
*This resulted in two VFDs with a desire for improvement, both working under the same ESD*



# Coverage area



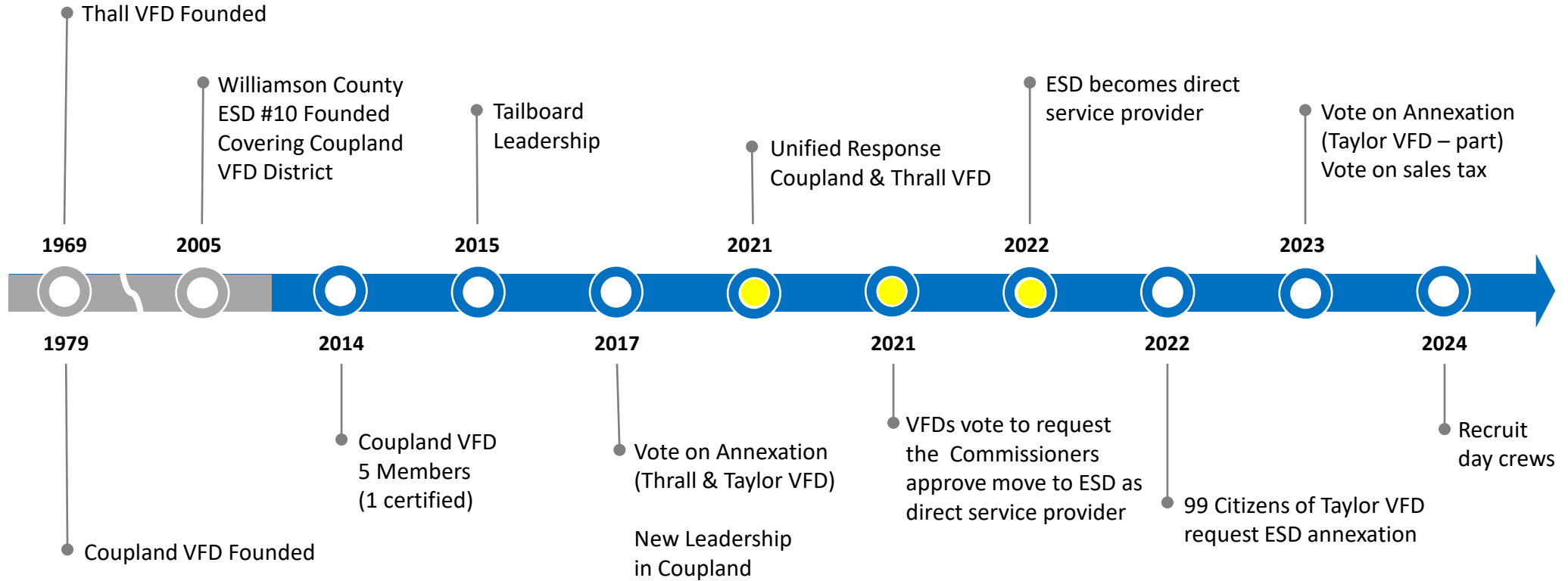
**2005**  
**60 Sq Miles**



**2017**  
**168 Sq Miles**



# Timeline



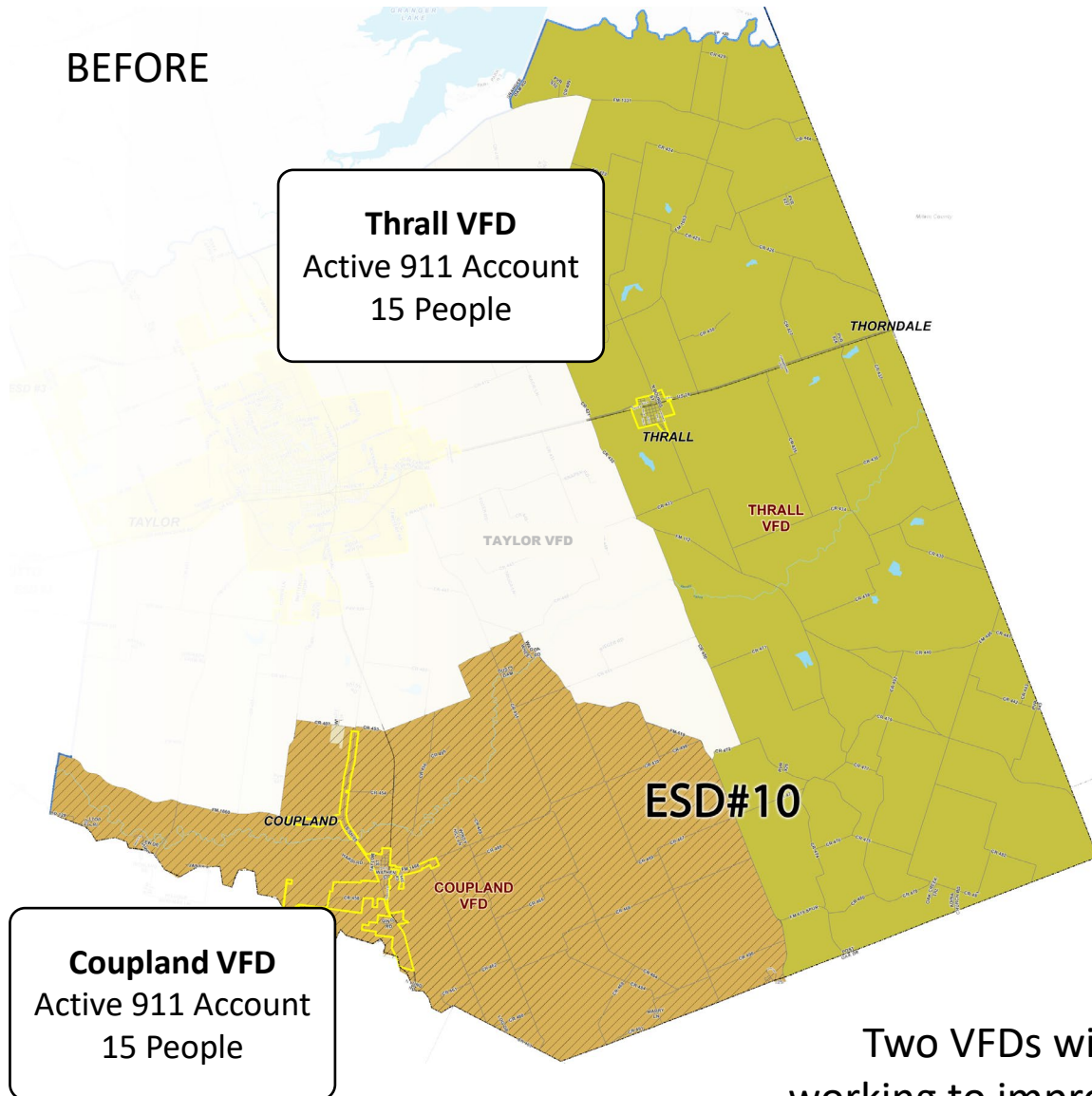
2021 / 2022

Unified response between VFDs, followed  
by move to the ESD as service provider

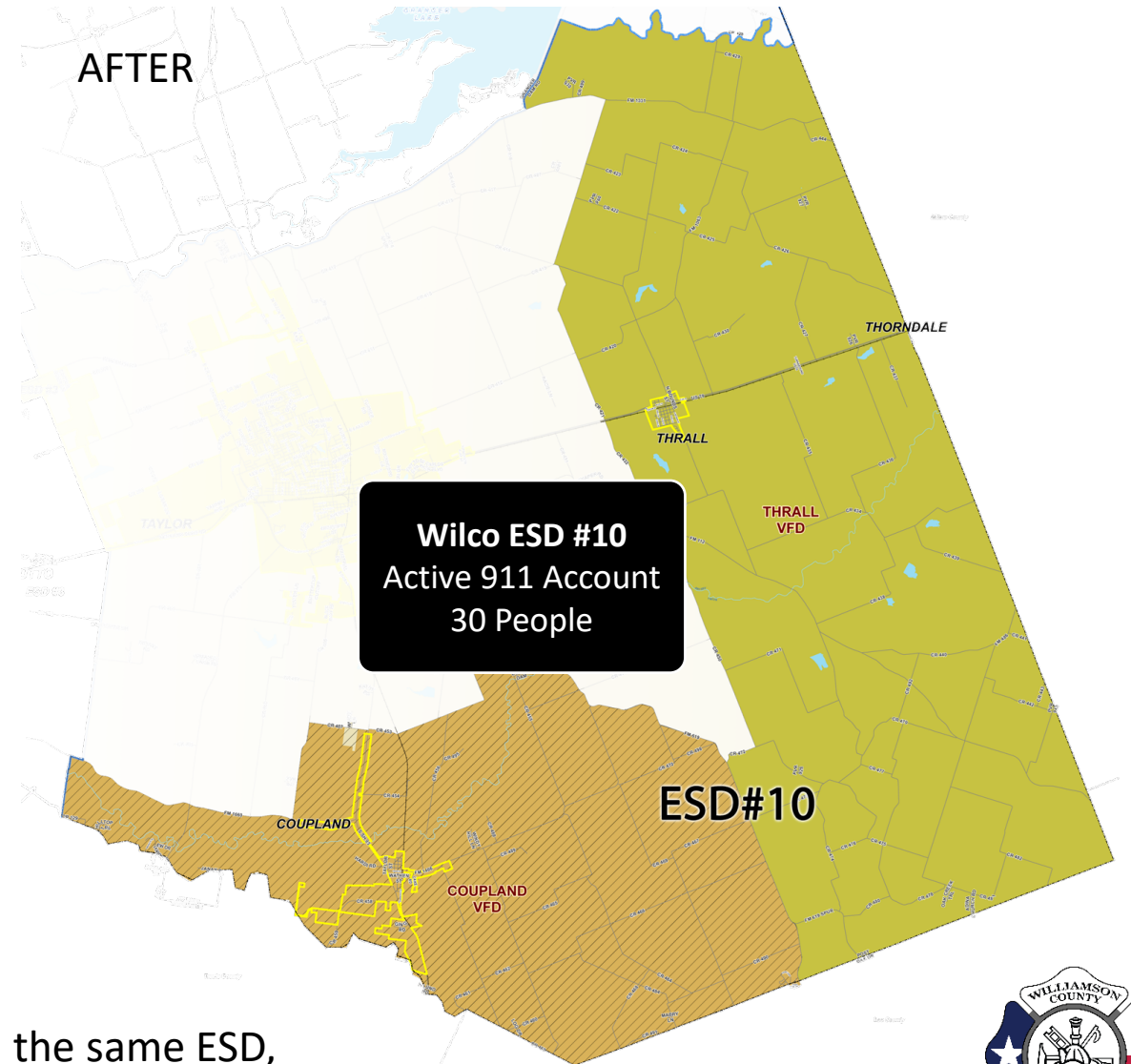


# Unified response within ESD #10

BEFORE



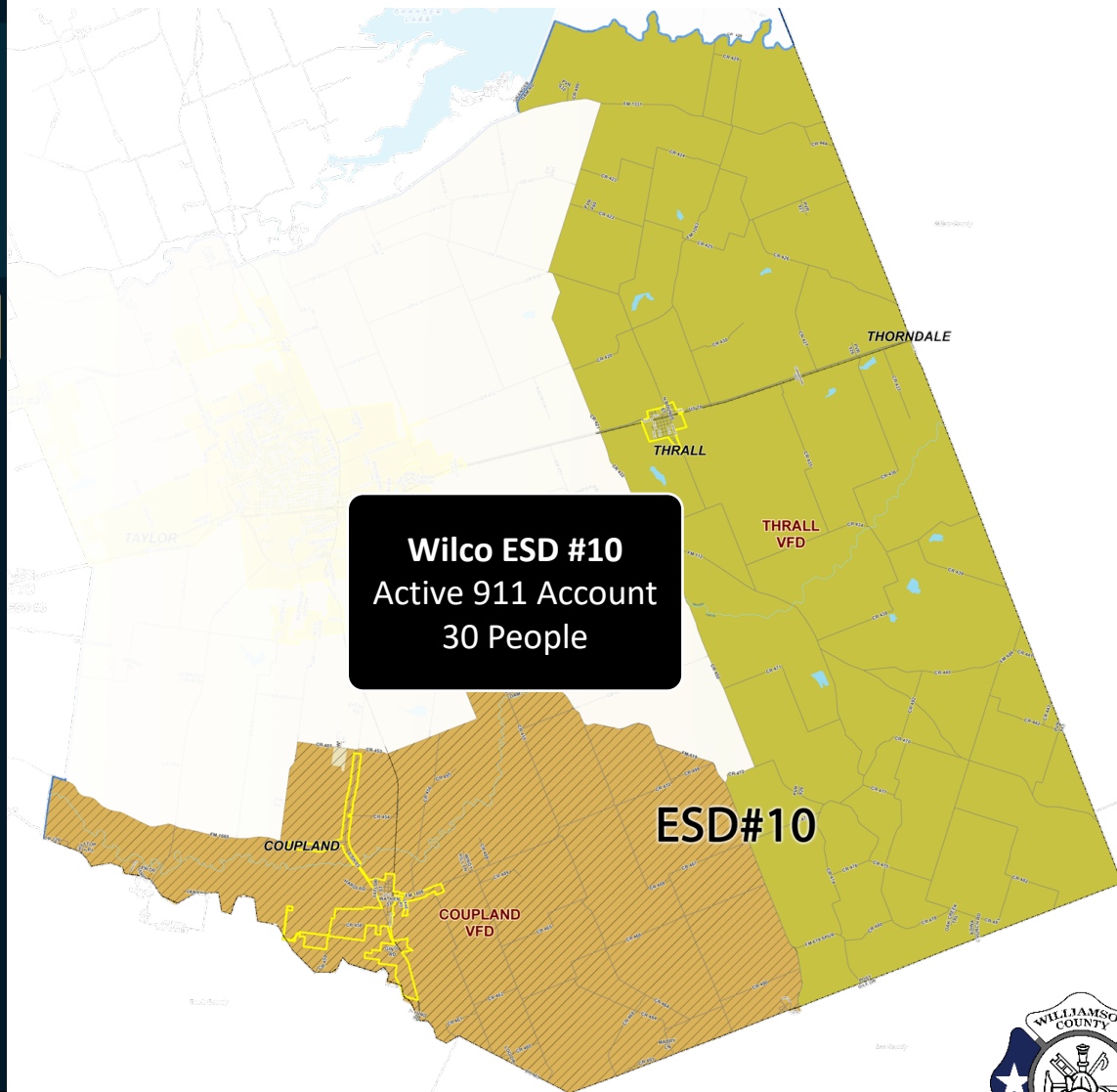
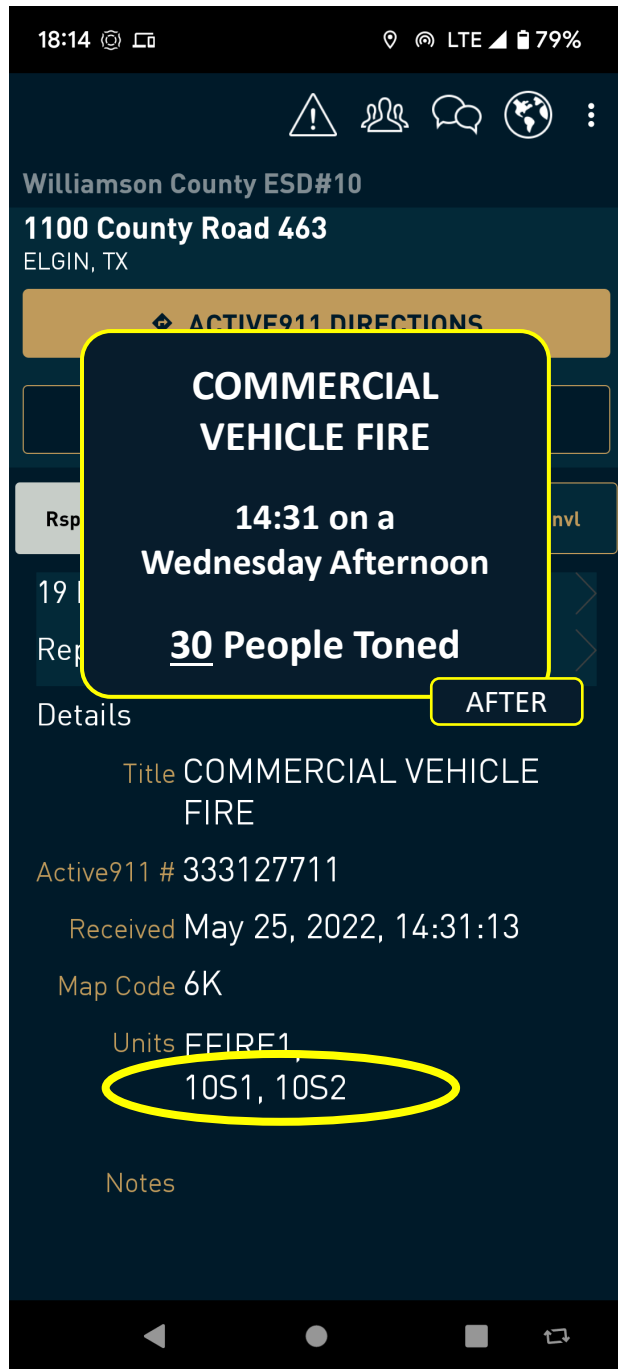
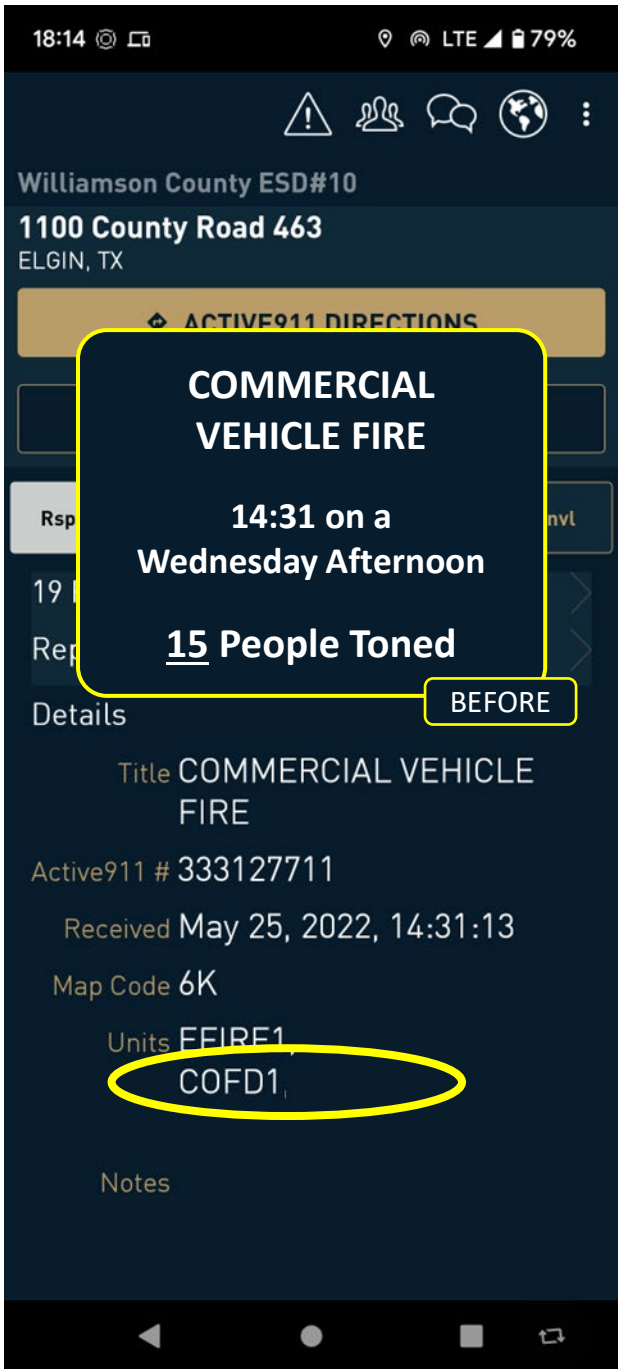
AFTER

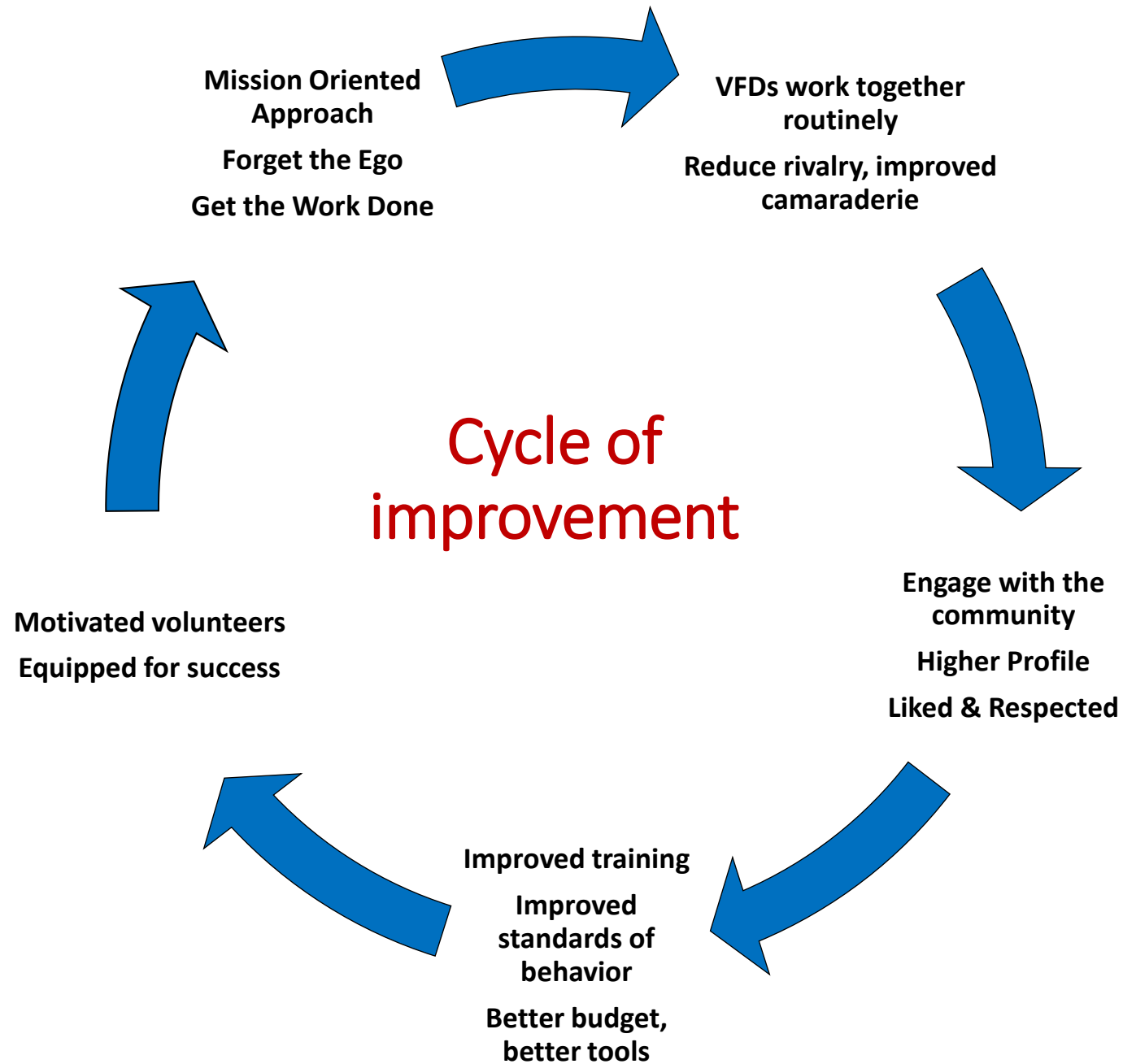


Two VFDs within the same ESD,  
working to improve response coverage.









# Tangible results and growth

**ISO  
9/10**

Pre 2014\*

**ISO  
5/5X**

2018\*

**NEXT ISO  
REVIEW**

2024\*\*

Rural VFD with a 99.4% response rate\*\*\*  
508 calls in 2022, 788 calls in 2023

\* Based on the pre 2017 ESD borders    \*\* Based on the post 2023 ESD borders    \*\*\* Based on 2022 call response rate analysis



# Building for growth

We had seen a steady growth in call volume for several years, in-line with growth in the Austin area.

Then... 3.7 miles from the edge of the district

*Austin American Statesman*

**Samsung confirms site near Taylor for \$17 billion chip plant**

*The New York Times*

**Samsung will build a \$17 billion chip plant in Texas**

*The Dallas Morning News*

**Incentive package to lure Samsung to Taylor is the biggest in Texas history**



# Preparing the move to ESD direct service provider

- Expected increase in efficiency of operations
- Decrease paperwork & overhead of multiple VFDs
- ESD board allowed VFDs to shape operational recommendation
- Build on good ESD/VFD relationship to design for the future
- Designed for a long-term future, with advantage of current personalities
- ESD board approves strategy, VFDs leading voice on operations
- VFD membership had a “spirited debate” on merging, followed by a unanimous vote in favor



# After becoming direct service provider

- Unified response model
- Unified command structure
- Improved efficiency in apparatus and equipment deployment
- Unified 5-year plan
- Increase in revenue from property & sales tax
- Efficiency of budget model from unified structure and multi-year plan
- Blue Card training for all officers

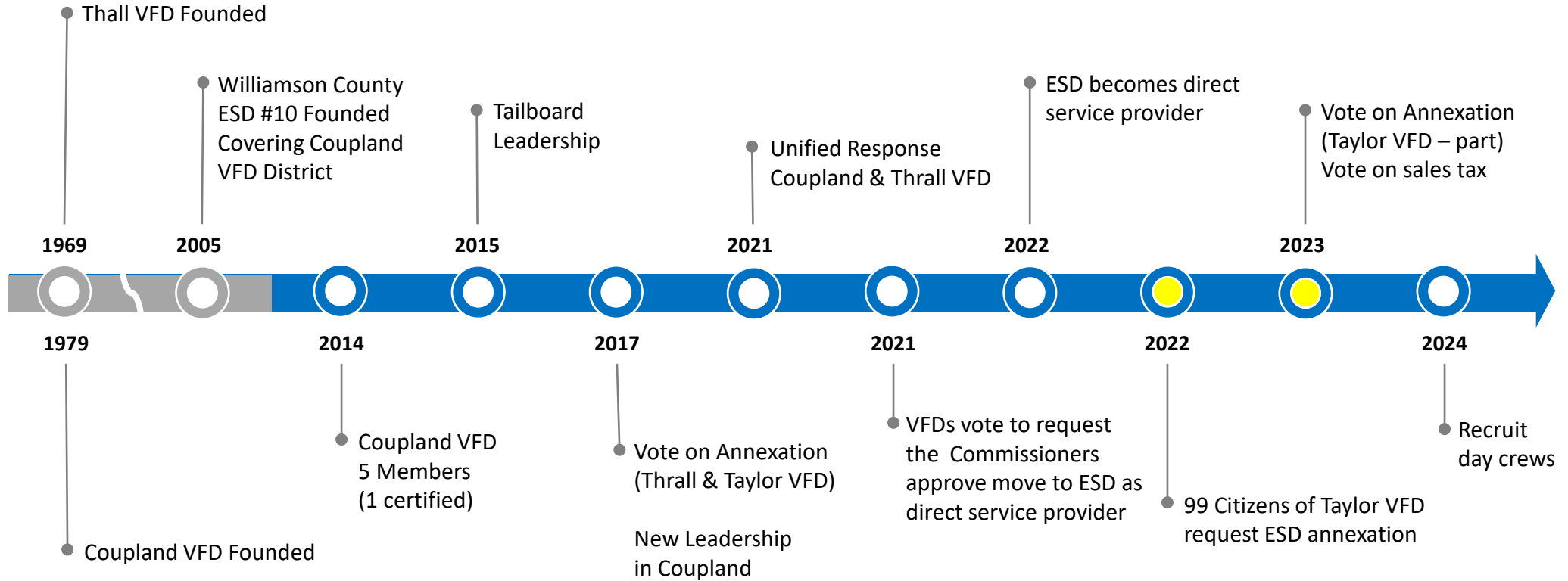


# Practical considerations of a move

- Work with Comms on how you're dispatched
- Merging/Revising SOPs and SOGs
- Revised numbering/unit nomenclature (clarity & brevity)
- Talk to VFIS before you make the move
- Ownership of apparatus, equipment, property and records
- Role of the VFD moving forward (auxiliary? by-laws)
- Communicate the new branding, maintain the "family history"



# Timeline





2023  
Petition from citizens and  
annexation of Taylor VFD

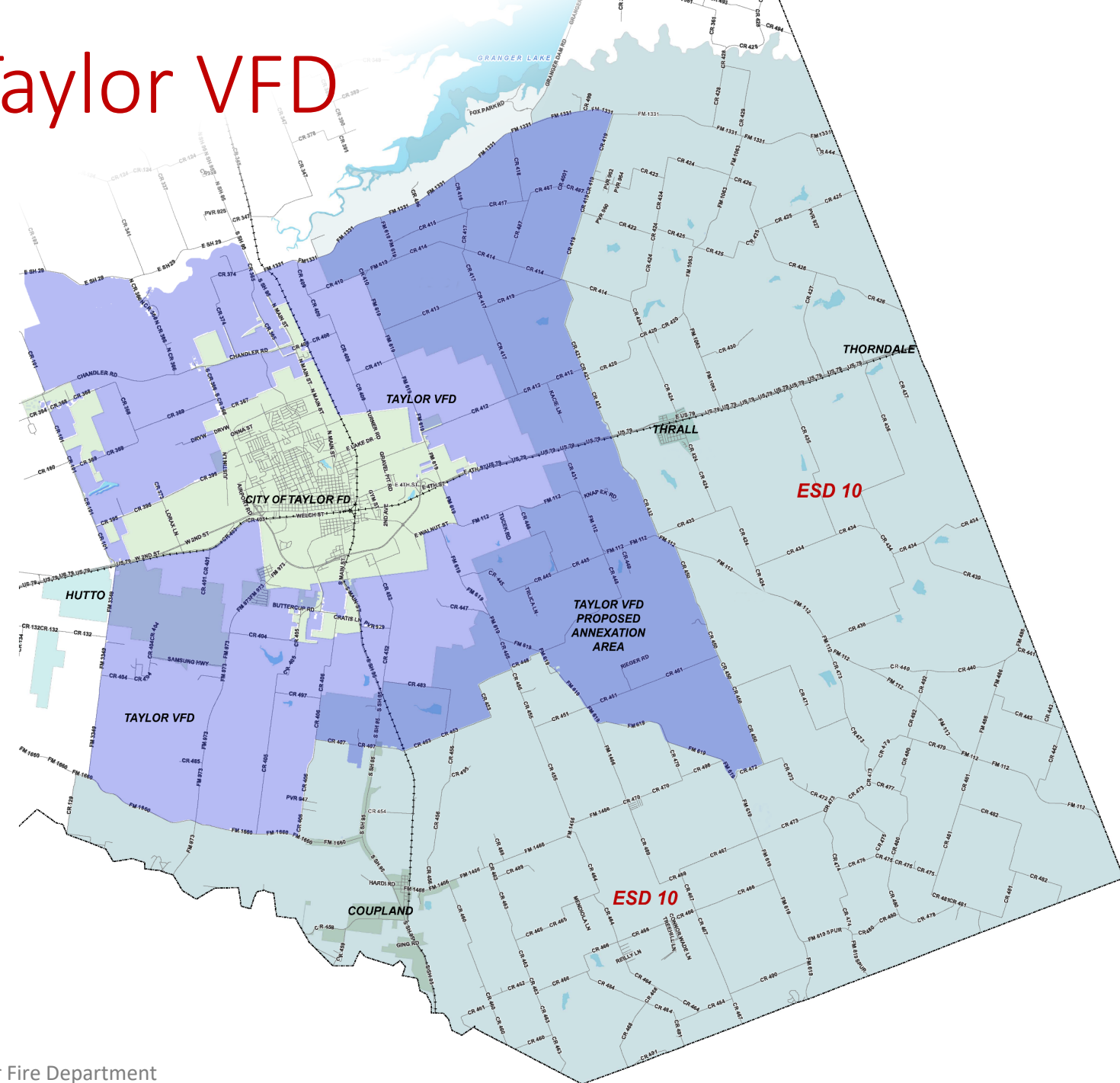


# 2023 Annexation of Taylor VFD

The 2017 annexation was driven by the VFDs.

The 2023 annexation was driven by citizens in the eastern portion of Taylor VFDs district, dissatisfied with the service.

Ninety-nine residents petitioned the ESD 10 board, requesting annexation.



# 2023 Annexation of Taylor VFD - Results

## Wilco ESD No. 10, Proposition A

Candidate/Choice	Graph	Pct	Votes	Info
For		63.17 %	259	<a href="#">i</a>
Against		36.83 %	151	<a href="#">i</a>

Over Votes: 0 Under Votes: 9

**Existing ESD #10  
Annex Taylor VFD  
Average 67.2%**

## Wilco ESD No. 10, Proposition B

Candidate/Choice	Graph	Pct	Votes	Info
For		71.29 %	288	<a href="#">i</a>
Against		28.71 %	116	<a href="#">i</a>

Over Votes: 0 Under Votes: 15 Total Votes: 404 Vote For: 1

## Wilco ESD No. 10, Taylor Territory, Proposition A

Candidate/Choice	Graph	Pct	Votes	Info
For		61.90 %	78	<a href="#">i</a>
Against		38.10 %	48	<a href="#">i</a>

Over Votes: 0 Under Votes: 0

**Taylor VFD Area  
Annexation  
Average 61.4%**

## Wilco ESD No. 10, Taylor Territory, Proposition B

Candidate/Choice	Graph	Pct	Votes	Info
For		60.80 %	76	<a href="#">i</a>
Against		39.20 %	49	<a href="#">i</a>

Over Votes: 0 Under Votes: 1 Total Votes: 125 Vote For: 1

## Wilco ESD No. 10, Proposition C

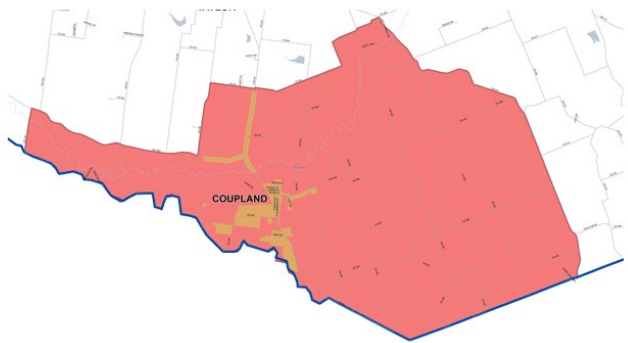
Candidate/Choice	Graph	Pct	Votes	Info
For		67.81 %	276	<a href="#">i</a>
Against		32.19 %	131	<a href="#">i</a>

Over Votes: 0 Under Votes: 12

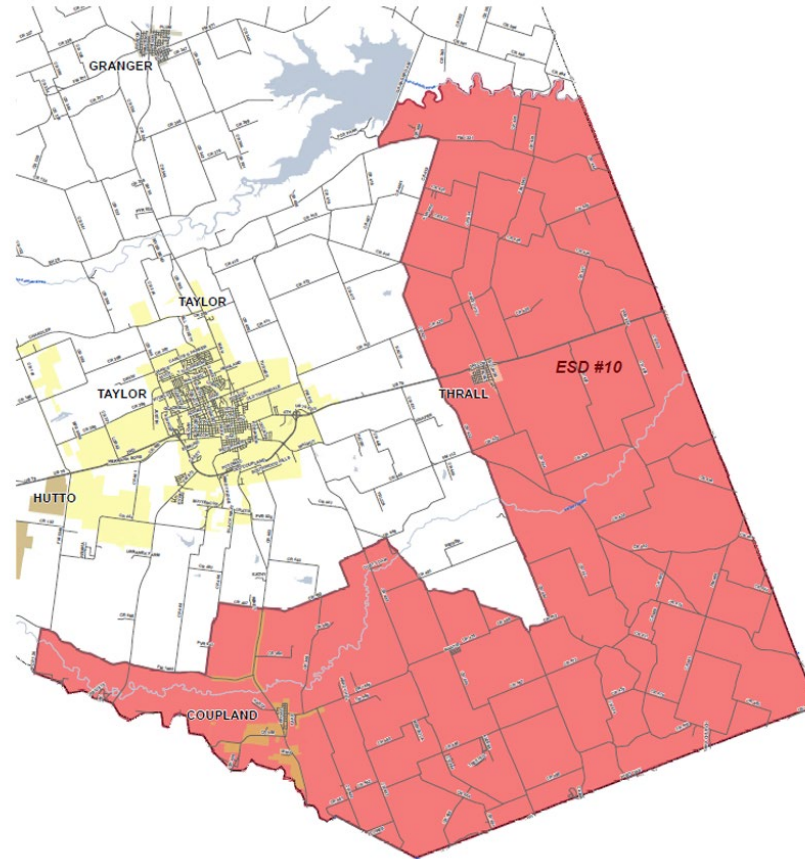
**Existing ESD #10  
Pass Sales Tax  
67.8%**



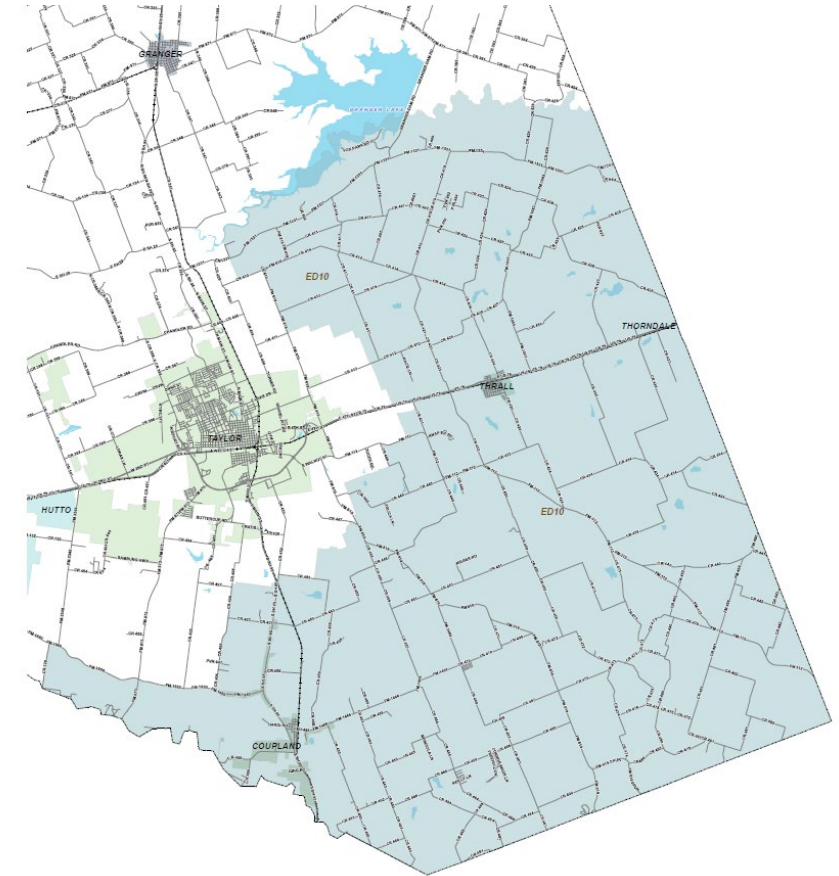
# Coverage area



**2005 - 2017**  
**60 Sq Miles**



**2017**  
**168 Sq Miles**



**2023**  
**215 Sq Miles**



**2005 vote on foundation  
of ESD #10 = 59.0%**

With the Coupland VFD reputation, before improvement  
& community outreach programs

**91.5%**

Same geographical  
area in 2017

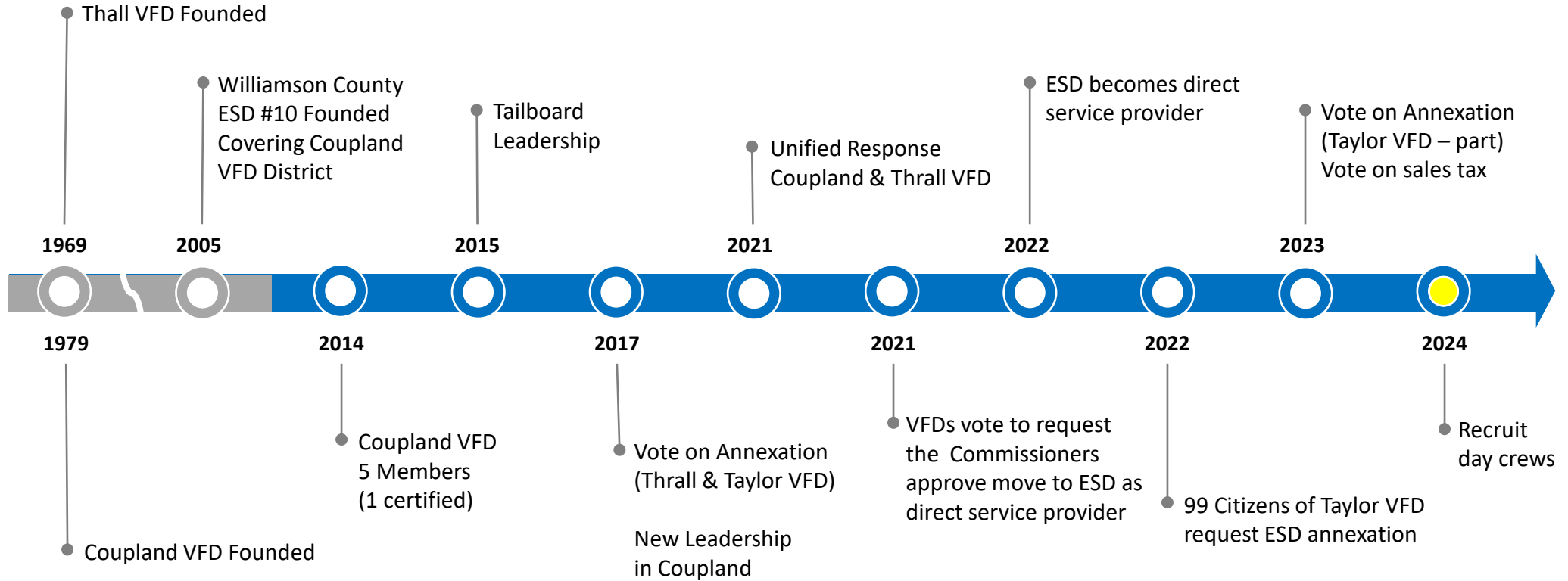
**2017 & 2023 average of votes  
within ESD #10 = 75.5%**

Two and eight years into improvement & community outreach programs

<b>Voter Turnout</b>	2005 83 voters	2017 274 voters	2023 536 voters
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# Timeline



# WILLIAMSON COUNTY ESD #10 VOLUNTEERS



2015



2024



**NOW HIRING**

**PART TIME FIREFIGHTERS**

**TO STAFF DAY CREWS AT  
COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENT  
IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY**

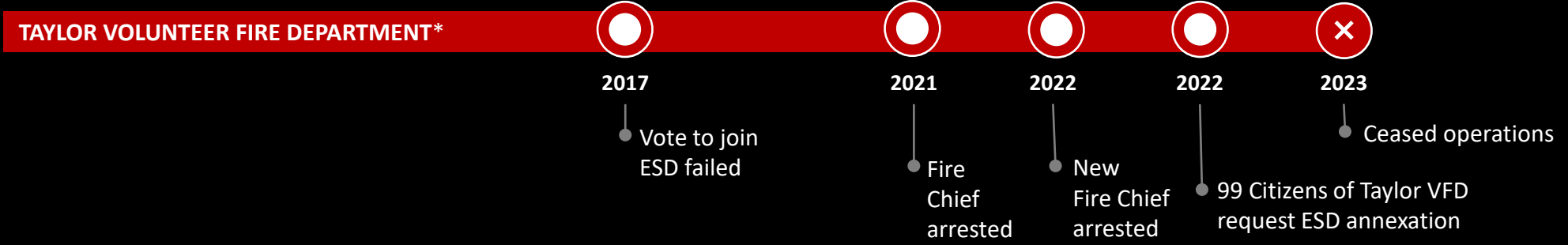
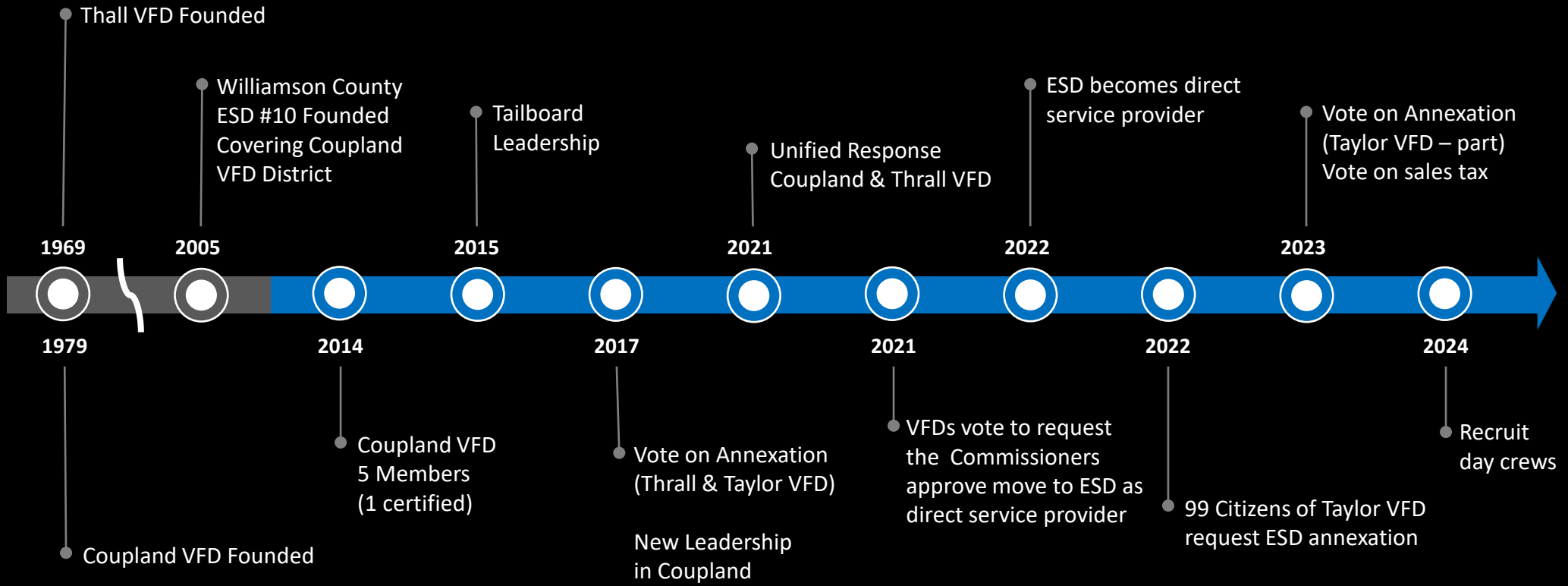
**APPLY TODAY**





# MIRROR UNIVERSE

# Alternate Timeline



\* Taylor VFD is a separate entity from and in no way related to the municipal City of Taylor Fire Department

# Summary

# Abandon all ego, ye who enter here

These types of headlines are far too common

**██████████ volunteer fire departments warn they may no longer respond to calls amid contract disputes**

**Dispute between city, volunteer firefighters results in lost-and-found fire trucks**

**Multiple volunteer firefighters resign from ██████████ Texas Fire Dept**

**Total-loss fire highlights staffing concerns in ██████████**

**██████████ County ESD board to end contract with ██████████ Volunteer Fire Department**

Concentrate on the mission, on delivering the service, working together, serving the community before serving our own pride.

## A Message for the VFD Fire Chief

*If you're Chief of a traditional VFD, funded by an ESD, accept the reality that **it's not your district anymore***

*When the voters approved an ESD, the district passed to the ESD Commissioners*

*The VFD is a contracted service provider*

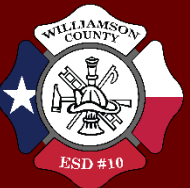
*The mission matters, delivering service matters, and though the VFD's history should be honored, the patch on the side of the truck is less important than a truck turning up, staffed appropriately*

## A Message for the ESD Commissioners

*You have responsibility for ensuring emergency service is provided for the district, but you're typically not hands on in delivering that service*

*Respect the VFD Members and the work they willing donate to you and your community. Listen to them on operational issues and **put the work into building the future vision in partnership with them***

Thank you



# We're available if you would like more information



**Mark Moellenberg**

Fire Chief

[mmoellenberg@wcesd10.org](mailto:mmoellenberg@wcesd10.org)

28 years with the fire service, volunteer & career



**Jared Cummings**

Assistant Chief

[jcumings@wcesd10.org](mailto:jcumings@wcesd10.org)

12 years with the fire service, volunteer & career



**John Roulston-Bates**

District Chief, Station 1

[jroulston@wcesd10.org](mailto:jroulston@wcesd10.org)

9 years with the fire service, all volunteer



**Zach Hall**

District Chief, Station 2

[zhall@wcesd10.org](mailto:zhall@wcesd10.org)

17 years with the fire service, volunteer & career

