



Getting Along: How an ESD Works with Cities

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What is “Getting Along”?

- Taking inventory of ESDs’ and Cities’ abilities to work together
- Asking the ‘Whys’
(Unpacking the issues/Peeling the onion)
- Identifying mutual challenges, gains, and service models
- Finding common grounds to build/nurture ESD and City relationships
- Understanding that “Getting Along” is different for every ESD and City

TCESD No. 6 (Lake Travis Fire Rescue) serves:

- City of Bee Cave (Home Rule) – Large multi-million-dollar joint CIP project
- City of Lakeway (Home Rule) – Cost shared position and risk reduction prog.
- Village of The Hills (General Rule) – Large risk reduction program
- City of Austin (Home Rule, In Extra Territorial Jurisdiction/ETJs Code Enforcement, Automatic Aid Agreements for emergency responses)
- Possible future incorporation concepts with two areas of currently unincorporated areas within the ESD.

Are we really “*THAT*” different than a city?

ESDs and Cities are political subdivisions of the State of Texas

- Each political subdivision has limited geographic boundaries. These boundaries may overlap with those of other political subdivisions. **A county or ESD, for example, may contain more than one city. Cities may span multiple counties.**
- Each political subdivision has the power to impose **ad valorem tax**.
- Each political subdivision has locally **elected** or **appointed** government members.
- Each political subdivision draws its **specific authority** from state law.

Asking the Whys...

Why does the ESD want/need to continue to provide service itself **vs.** funding to the City to provide it?

Why does the ESD deploy its services the way it does currently?

Why have the issues/concerns not been jointly discussed before in open ESD planning sessions?

Why does the City want/need to provide service over the ESD providing it?

Why does the City feel it could provide similar services to the **level** the ESD does currently?

Why have the issues/concerns not been jointly discussed before in open City planning sessions?

Challenges ESDs and Cities share...

- Asked to do more with less (funding/authorities/resources), leading to mission creep
- Legislatively speaking, more losses and challenges than gains each session
- In most cases, a lack of proper strategic planning that includes external stakeholders as a significant element of the process, not a check box task
- Believing the other can/cannot do it better, faster, cheaper...
- Developing trust, respect, and mutual understanding of each other's value in serving the community

Identifying mutual challenges, gains, & models

- Joint Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)
- Enhanced service agreements & cost share positions
- Jointly tackling legislative changes and proposals
- Sales Tax usage agreements and leveraging a City's tax incentive abilities
- Being an actual participant in each other's strategic planning initiatives and economic development processes

My experience working with City Managers (CM) as an ESD Chief ...

- CMs initially, unless educated on how **YOUR** ESD works in their city, go with what they know from their last job... the good and the bad
- CMs may look at the ESDs as a barrier or “in the way” of allowing the city to expand or do what it has the authority to do; competition for brand, funding, and oversight
- CMs may be “bottom line” thinkers if services are similar or close to equal to what is being currently offered by the ESD, but they feel the city can do it cheaper
- CMs have many people in their ears telling them what life could be like without an ESD in the city... *become one of the people in the CM's ear.*

Finding common grounds...

- Finding simple and easy wins to start ...
 - Sharing weekly or monthly updates and on-goings
 - Ensuring each party gets an invite to meetings or events that would have some value in supporting the various missions
 - Finding moments to bring the teams together to “break bread,” often with no agenda...
 - Including each other during planning and idea-generation sessions
 - Be honest with your numbers – Funding \$, response data, and future forecasts and demands
- Understanding each other’s “Why” and finding mutually beneficial approaches toward service
 - Review each other’s Why, vision, goals, and **OBJECTIONS**
 - **Find a champion in the city or community that is not part of the ESD**
- Ask, “What would our collective communities expect us to work together on or towards, in the future?”

“Getting Along” is different for every ESD and City

- Never forget whom we’re all supposed to be serving...
- Managing expectations
- Being comfortable to disagree
- Rebuilding trust and establishing ground rules
- “In God we trust, all others need to bring data”

Resources

Parker County ESD 1/City of Willow Park Annexation – Voters approved the ESD to annex the city fire department <https://www.community-news.com/stories/voters-approve-esd1-annexing-fire-department,11415>

Making the Pieces Fit - <https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Jack-W-Snook/dp/0763742112> – currently out of print

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Cities Served Bee Cave, Lakeway, Village of The Hills, Austin (ETJ & Auto Aid)

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