

Planning of the SML Fireworks Display is a collaborative process between the SVFC & Parkway Marina. The fireworks display became so popular that, after the 2000 show, the marina asked several organizations if they would help out. The Saunders Volunteer Fire Company agreed, and the event has been a fundraiser for them ever since.

The planning process has evolved each year. Typically, volunteers from the fire company and the marina meet once or twice per month primarily to assign and review the projects of each member. We also discuss issues and make resolutions regarding those issues. The meetings take place in the evening, after each member gets off work.

We began planning for 2008 in July of 2007. The concern going into '08 was how to improve fundraising enough for the fire company to justify the time spent planning the event. Through-out 2007, we analyzed which aspects of the event needed improvement and how best to make those improvements. This involved talking with our sponsors and event participants. The primary issue seems to be recognition of the event as a fundraiser for the fire co.

In January '08, volunteers from the fire co and marina staff met to discuss the future of the event. The fire co agreed to move forward as long as we implemented several improvements that we hope will help fundraising. We elected a chairman and begin assigning projects to committee member volunteers.

Each committee member takes responsibility for one or more aspects of the planning. The majority of the work takes place outside committee meetings by each committee member. Individual members usually meet with each other in between the planning meetings to work on their projects where those projects overlap. Some of this tasks include negotiating contracts, applying for permits, writing, calling and visiting sponsors, updating, printing and distributing various forms, securing vendors and creating, reproducing and distributing promotional materials. And, there's a lot more than this!

There are several major planning aspects, including, but not limited to, Bookkeeping, Traffic & Parking, Promotions, Grounds Prep, Vendors, Sponsorships, Alcohol Beverage Control, and Entertainment. As the popularity of the event has grown, so has the responsibility of administering the event. This has required more and more time of each member.

Marina staff begin prepping the grounds the week before. Event-day begins at sunrise, putting finishing touches on the grounds prep and helping vendor's set-up. After working through the hot July weather (which usually includes a quick rain shower), there will be several pre-event meetings to coordinate staff. The gates open at 5:30pm, with event-day staff controlling parking, assisting attendees and vendors. About 15 minutes before the fireworks, the fire company clears attendees out the fire safety zone. Then we sit back and watch a year's worth of planning go by in about 20 minutes! And, it's always worth it.

After the show, event staff assist attendees, coordinate an orderly dismissal of vehicle traffic, and begin clean-up. Sometime after midnight, the last of the event staff goes home. And, the next day the marina staff is finishes cleaning up the event grounds.

This year, the tens of thousands of people to enjoy this event have the opportunity to donate online and even keep track of how many donations the fire company receives simply by visiting [SMLFireworks.org](http://SMLFireworks.org). You may also donate by mail at SVFC, PO Box 14, Huddleston, VA 24104. We've already begun discussing 2009, and hope that we be able to hold the event once again.