Chairman Kurt Flegel called the 118th annual business meeting of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association to order at 10:25 a.m. on January 13, 2021. The virtual meeting, held via Zoom, was hosted at MCIA’s office in St. Paul, Minnesota. Mr. Flegel confirmed that proper notice of the meeting had been published in the winter 2020 issue of the Minnesota Seed Grower. Mr. Flegel determined that a quorum was present and introduced the MCIA Board of Directors. The following agenda items were addressed.

Minutes and Secretary’s Report of the 2020 MCIA Annual Meeting:

Treasurer Darius Thiel moved that the meeting minutes of the 2020 MCIA Annual Meeting, as published in the spring 2020 issue of the Minnesota Seed Grower and included in the meeting’s documents, be approved. Vice Chairman Bob Ehlers seconded; the motion passed.

Treasure’s Report: Mr. Flegel indicated that a Statement of Activities and Financial Position for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2020, was included in the meeting documents. Mr. Flegel noted that complete financial reports are received by the treasurer and chairman on a regular basis and at every regular board of directors meeting. At its November 2020 meeting, the board of directors received and accepted a report of the financial condition of the association, the result of an independent audit.

President’s Report: Dr. Fawad Shah began by reporting MCIA’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. MCIA developed and implemented a preparedness plan, adopted from CDC and MDH guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of the MCIA staff.

Dr. Shah reported that MCIA is in good financial health, the fiscal year 2019–2020 was very successful, and MCIA investment funds also saw strong growth. Growth in Organic Services continued and yielded another profitable year. Bailey Webster was hired to fill an open organic certification specialist/inspector position, after Susan Stewart’s retirement. Carl Anfinson was hired in Foundation Seed Services to fill the Seed Production Coordinator position. Field inspection districts were realigned, increasing the number of districts from three to four. Tom Keskey and Dan Krenz were hired as field supervisors to fill district three and four positions.

MCIA established a relationship with West Central Technology to provide MCIA with IT support services. In April, MCIA launched a new website. The new website is secure, mobile-friendly, and has better site navigation than previous websites.

MCIA has developed a 99% Non-GMO Corn Seed Program. It has been approved by AOS-CA’s IP program standards.

Dr. Shah then reported on the MCIA’s collaboration with the University of Minnesota (UMN) in protecting the intellectual property rights of university-developed crop varieties. MCIA joined with the Farmers Yield Initiative, UMN’s general counsel and the dean and director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to address the issue of “brown bagging” and level the playing field for all seed producers and sellers.

MCIA’s Seed Laboratory successfully developed and implemented a Quality Management System and received accreditation by the USDA’s Accredited Seed Laboratory Program. Chase Mowry is qualified as a Canadian Seed Grader. Now, seed tested and graded in the MCIA Seed Laboratory can be shipped into Canada without further testing. Thus, saving customers time and expense. Sam Banks recently passed his Registered Seed Technologist exam.
MCIA’s priorities for fiscal year 2020–2021 include, training of new staff, completion of the database project, adding new lab services, supporting the sale of PVP-protected varieties, and continued efforts to identify local, regional, and international opportunities to increase the visibility of MCIA.

Mr. Flegel then presented his Chairman’s Report. He praised the good work and dedication of MCIA staff and notable accomplishments in different departments.

Mr. Flegel then provided a chart showing the business footprint of each MCIA department versus their expense contributions. Organic Services continues to grow. Seed Certification, Field Services, the Seed Laboratory, and Foundation Seed Services, all traditional services of MCIA, continue to be an integral part of the business. Seed Certification is stable, and MCIA has been gaining business in Non-GMO and non-traditional certifications and inspections. All departments contribute to the expenses of the business.

Mr. Flegel then turned to elections for four seats on the MCIA Board of Directors. He introduced the Election Committee, led by Duane Dahlman.

Mr. Flegel announced the nominated candidates. Kelsey Henke and Rodney Moe were candidates for District 3A. Nat Forster, incumbent, was the sole candidate for District 3B. Denise Thiede, incumbent, was the sole candidate for a Related Industry seat. Nancy Ehlke, incumbent, was the sole nominee for the University of Minnesota seat. Each candidate in attendance spoke a few words expressing their aspiration to be elected to the MCIA Board of Directors.

Meeting attendees then cast their votes via an electronic ballot. (Following the adjournment of the meeting, the Election Committee counted the ballots and reported the election results. The results were then posted on the MCIA website.)

Mr. Dahlman expressed appreciation to Kurt Flegel for his 6-year tenure on the MCIA Board of Directors, which included 3 years as chairman. Mr. Dahlman thanked Mr. Flegel for his leadership and credited him for his key role in implementing two board initiatives that have been important for MCIA: succession planning and salary adjustments.

Mr. Flegel then called for other business. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.