**Minutes of the IOIA AGM (Annual General Meeting)**

**Thursday, March 4, 2021**

**3pm – 6pm PST**

**Held remotely via GoToMeeting**

**Board Members Present:**

* Lois Christie (Outgoing Chair)
* Janine Gibson, Vice Chair
* Heather Donald, Secretary
* Rachel Cherry Myers, Director
* Charles Mitchell, Director
* Philippe Descamps, (Outgoing Director)

Board Member absent:

* Ryan Sitler, (Outgoing Treasurer)

**Welcome & Call to Order by Janine Gibson at 3:00pm**

**3:07 pm - Meet the Board Candidates**

Candidates gave short introductions:

* Allan Benjamin, Missouri USA
* Elizabeth Dominick, California USA
* Terrance Layhew, Iowa USA
* Tom Page, California USA

Voting remained open until 4pm.

**3:15 pm - Keynote Presentation**

Jochen Kleboth presented on “Improving Audit Performance and Planning with Artificial Intelligence Tools”. He explained how AI tools can help us “see more, find more, do more” as we deal with the issue at the forefront of industry - fraud. He reassured inspectors that they will not be replaced by AI.

**4:00 pm - Business Meeting**

**1.   Quorum Established**

* 60 Inspector Members in attendance - more than 15% of voting members

**2. Approve the 2021 AGM Agenda**

Agenda amended to add a discussion on the Inspector Coop and Human Capital.

Motion:  Brian Magaro

No dissents.

Motion to accept agenda passed unanimously.

**3.** **Secretary’s Report (Heather Donald)**

* Highlights from the 2020 AGM Minutes were read by Heather.

**Motion to accept the Minutes as written**:  Beth Dominick

No dissents.

Motion passed unanimously as amended.

**Terrance Layhew** facilitated the first interactive poll questions.

**4. Annual Report Overview from the Chair and Committee Reports - Summary:**

* Annual Report – Lois Christie, Chair

IOIA had 867 training participants across 60 training events and 28 unique courses in 4 languages in 2020, including 5 on-site trainings in 5 countries, which is an impressive increase in participation of 13% over 2019. In response to the pandemic, IOIA developed an online Remote Inspection Protocol training that trained 169 people in 17 countries, including a Spanish language option. The pandemic also resulted in the creation of weekly (and then bi-weekly) Town Hall Meetings put together by a volunteer committee and open to all inspector members. New Global Partnerships were formed with AOI (the Alliance for Organic Integrity) and CIAO. IOIA Membership totaled 344 members in 16 countries.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, IOIA and its staff and trainers were able to pivot and create accessible, remote training options, reallocate staff hours and cut operational expenses, and pursue alternate funding opportunities including the forgivable PPP loans and a grant from the State of MT. The OILC Enhancement Project provided work opportunities for 20 Inspector Members (10% of the Inspector Membership) and 70% of the funds went directly to inspectors. Lois asked for a minute of silence to remember our four members who passed away in the past year (David Dahmen, C. Arden Landis, George Danner, Jack Reams).

* Asia Pacific Committee – Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, Japan (Chair)

Members: Mutsumi Sakuyoshi (Japan), Isidor Yu (Korea), Maheswar Ghimire (Nepal), Vitoon Panyakul (Thailand), Sandeep Bhargava (India), Kathe Purvis (Australia).

2020 was the initial trial year for the Asia Pacific Committee running their own trainings, and they are now developing their format to plan trainings in each region using the national or local standards to be able to adapt to local situations. Kathe Purvis and Vitoon Panyakul are developing the format for the training. The Committee is focusing on Grower Group training in each region to better serve those producers.

* Scholarship Committee – Arthur Bassett, Mexico (Co-Chair)

Members: Lisa Pierce, Margaret Weigelt, JJ Mack, Philippe Descamps (BOD Liaison), Stuart McMillan.

Claudia Arellano (Mexico) was awarded the Andrew Rutherford Scholarship and Laura Gutierrez (Mexico) was awarded the OCI Scholarship. Thanks were given to all committee members and staff coordinator Diane Cooner.

* Canadian Committee – Janine Gibson, Canada (BOD Liaison)

Members: Bill Barkley (Chair), Kelly Monaghan, Garry Lean, Kim Snarr. All Canadian inspector members are considered members of the Canadian Committee. Active at Guelph in 2020, thanks to Bill & Tom Cassan who staffed our table. Guelph was cancelled for 2021. The Biodiversity training (March 2021) and Advanced Inspector Training planned for this past November have been postponed. Kelley Monaghan continues to represent IOIA on the Canadian General Standards Board Organic Technical Committee. A Live Online training is in the works for Canadian Standards, as well as the development of Self Directed 100 Level courses in all 3 scopes. Margaret Scoles and Janine met with CFIA to support unified inspector training across Canada. We hope to inspire a similar cooperation as between IOIA and the ACA in the US, in Canada between Canadian certifying bodies and IOIA. Special thanks to all committee members.

* Policy Committee – Rachel Myers, USA (BOD Liaison)

Members: Leonard Pollara, Garth Kahl, Kate Newkirk, Margaret Weigelt, Allan Benjamin, Terrance Layhew, Pam Sullivan, Luis Brenes

NOP came out with the Human Capital memo, which IOIA submitted comments for, in addition to comments on NOSB topics as well as SOE. Conversations will be continuing through the year and we encourage members to reach out with input so IOIA can continue to give voice to our members in the industry.

* Fundraising Committee – Janine Gibson, Canada (Chair)

Members: Janine Gibson, Lois Christie, Heather Donald

Appreciate all donors and sponsors supporting IOIA. The Committee’s main goal is pursuing diversified income streams. We have developed a fundraising plan and are utilizing a fundraising tool to help us find grants and foundations to approach who are most likely to work with IOIA. We welcome members to join the Committee and to offer ideas or suggestions for foundations or organizations that we can approach. Also, welcoming donations towards the cost of this year’s AGM.

* Mentorship Committee – Amanda Birk, USA (Chair)

Members: Amanda Birk, Angela Wartes-Kahl, Pam Sullivan, Janine Gibson, Terrence Layhew, Trish Dougherty, Lois Christie.

Goal of the committee is to create an apprenticeship program that meets the staffing needs of the industry, while strengthening and securing the standing of inspectors and reviewers. The Committee was formed in September 2020 in response to organic staffing shortages and the NOP Human Capital memo. The Committee is guided by 3 Principles: Urgency of on-the-job training, Sustainability – the apprenticeship program be supported by IOIA and the industry, Quality – inspectors and reviewers that understand a wide array of production methods as well as international trade and investigations at an advanced level. Currently developing a Pilot Apprenticeship Program, which will be funded by donations and partnerships, while also researching a more comprehensive apprenticeship program as outlined by the US Dept. of Labor that would be industry recognized and include paid apprenticeship, mentoring, and credentialing.

**Ib Hagsten:** Loved the Town Halls and all of the information and education that was shared and gained. How can we get more certifiers to allow more remote / virtual inspections?

**Margaret Scoles:** Would like to appreciate all of our cosponsors that have supported IOIA and our work.

**5:00 pm – 10 Min. Break**

* Latin American Committee – Philippe Descamps, Costa Rica (BOD Liaison)

Increased member outreach in Spanish including a Spanish language newsletter and online forum. Membership is growing with 21 members now from Latin America. Developing a partnership with CIAO – Inter-American Committee on Organic Agriculture, an organization that gathers the Competent Authorities of several countries including the NOP, 17 countries in Latin America as well as Spain and Portugal. A result of this partnership was a free Remote Inspection training in Spanish with over 80 participants. The Committee’s goal for the coming year is to provide accessible Spanish language training in Latin America.

**5. Alliance for Organic Integrity - Michael Sligh**.

AOI grew out of work with IOAS – a global seminar was held in 2017 where we attempted to evaluate the challenges and gaps in the global organic guarantee systems. Arranged mission and work around 5 areas to address these key challenges. 1) Harmonization – between certifiers and accreditors, the system of oversight to be consistent across the globe. 2) Risk Based – moving from competency based to risk based inspection, certification, accreditation. 3) Professional – raising competent and quality inspectors and certifiers – developing a joint project with IOIA on training, credentialing and establishing CEU’s for organic professionals. 4) Fraud – early warning systems to deter and prevent fraud. 5) Organic Hub – recruiting partners and mapping of global organic integrity initiatives.

Thank you for being a partner!

**6. Treasurer’s Report (Margaret in place of Ryan)**

2020 Balance Sheet, Revenue & Expense Statements:

Major Income Factors:

* $100,000 contract for OILC Enhancement Project offset loss of gross income from training
* About $100,000 short for gross training income compared to budget (70% of OILC funds went to paying 20 inspector members for their work)
* $12,500 COVID grant from MT

Significant Expense Factors:

* Cut staff and board travel after February
* Cut most of Promotion budget
* Committees spent almost none of their budgets
* Reduction in staff and staff hours (subsequent reduction in taxes, worker’s comp, unemployment)
* Operational expenses down $30,000
* No scholarship awards were utilized

Budget vs. Actual – even with the changes due to COVID, we stayed close to on track for the budget, but the technology upgrade was not paid in full and we expect a deficit in 2021. Membership Income was $16,000 less than budgeted – had planned to do a big membership drive which was arrested by COVID, and a lot of members paid their dues after the first of the year.

Balance Sheet – shows we have about $80,000 less in our bank accounts than last year, which is what we spent from our cash reserves.

Bottom Line:

* Board felt it important to continue with technology upgrade
* Investment in people with an increase in funding for staff and contractors
* Essential to diversify revenue streams
* Cash reserve cushion is essential and still have $200,000 in reserve
* Using COVID resources responsibly

**Don Persons** – Why do we need to diversify revenue streams? Concerned we don’t go against our mission just to diversify revenue streams.

**Margaret Scoles** – IOIA’s revenue mostly comes from basic trainings, and we’re not able to train as many people with LOL trainings and thus not making as much money. We’re relying almost entirely on training new inspectors. Thank you for the comment and we’ll make sure it gets to the treasurer.

**Silke Fuchshofen** – can you speak to the Inspector Evaluation Program?

**Diane Cooner** - The Inspector Evaluation program has been suspended for the time being. No one was evaluated in 2020 due to the pandemic. The discussion has not been started for this year, and we normally would not be doing anything at this time of the year.

**Margaret Scoles** – We planned to bring in about $37,000 and to spend about $32,000 on the Peer Evaluators & Coordinator. We ended up not having any expenses and still made about $4,000 by selling reports completed in previous years (valid for 3 years).

Proposed Budget was brought up on screen. No questions or comments from the attendees.

No motion required.

Thank you to the Finance Committee – Ryan Sitler, Pam Sullivan, Brian Magaro, Eric Feutz, Heather Donald. Special appreciation to Treasurer Ryan Sitler for all of his hard work in the toughest year for IOIA in a long time.

**Motion to Accept the 2020 Financial Reports:**Matthew Miller

No dissents

Financial Reports are unanimously approved.

**7. New Business**

**a. Reynaldo De la Rosa Scholarship for Mexican Inspectors – Angela Wartes-Kahl**  
Ronaldo’s death had a deep impact and spurred the need to give more attention to Mexican inspectors and the dangerous conditions they have to work in. Angela and Garth have volunteered to fund the Scholarship for the first 5 years. It needs to include travel, food, lodging and the cost of Basic Training ($3000-4000 / year). An invitation is open for others to join them in funding the scholarship. They are requesting approval from the Fundraising Committee.

**Lois Christie** – would like to give a donation and help in any way she can.

**Margaret Weigelt** – would this fall under the purview of the Scholarship Committee?

**Angela Wartes-Kahl** – would like feedback from members, and if positive to bring it to the SC

Support from numerous members in the chat and vocally.

**Arthur Bassett** – can’t speak for everyone, but think it’s a good idea. The Committee was a little short on help this year.

**Margaret Scoles** – important to do this as a way to remember that inspectors are on the frontline.

**Diane Cooner** - We have staff support for this scholarship. We did have a lot of people officially on the committee but there were actually very few that did the work. So, if we could get a couple of more interested people on the committee it would be easier.

**Margaret Scoles** - Training in Latin America is much less costly so even including travel, it might not be that much more expensive than our current scholarships that are only for tuition.

**Gabriela Soto** and **Beth Dominick** volunteer to participate in the Scholarship Committee

**Gabriela Soto** moves to implement the new scholarship.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Unrelated Comment: **Lois Christie** thanked Lisa Spicka, Phillipe Descamps, Luis Brenes for connecting IOIA with CIAO.

**b. 2022 and 2023 AGM Location Discussion**

Slido poll done to collect ideas for locations.

**8. Announce New Board & Acknowledge Outgoing BOD Members**

* Many thanks appreciation given to the tremendous work of Lois Christie, Philippe Descamps and Ryan Sitler during their 3 years of service.
* Ballot Committee announced: Diane Cooner, Brian Magaro, Margaret Anne Weigelt
* **Allan Benjamin, Beth Dominick and Terrance Layhew** were introduced as the new BOD members.
* Vote Counts for the BOD: 120 voted of 210 eligible voters.

**Allan Benjamin - 51; Beth Dominick - 85; Terrance Layhew – 79; Tom Page – 33; Philippe Descamps – 86 (withdrew his candidacy shortly before the AGM)**

**Door Prizes –** Pam Sullivan (Intellectual Agrarian mug) and Cheryl Laxton (coffee and an IOIA cap)

**Meeting was Adjourned at 6:28pm**

Submitted **By Heather Donald, Secretary**