



**CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.**

**Research Management Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, December 4, 2023**

A Meeting of the Research Management Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Monday, December 4, 2023, at UF-IFAS-CREC Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Citrus Hall, 700 Experiment Station Road, Lake Alfred, FL 33850. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman John Updike. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

Members participating were Scott Adkins, Bobby Barben, Holly Chamberlain, Steve Farr, Ned Hancock, Aaron Himrod, David Howard, Tom Obreza, Daniel Scott, Brian Scully, Shannon Shepp, Buddy Strickland, and John Updike.

Also participating were John Chater, Rick Dantzer, Bill Dawson, Stephen Futch, Jude Grosser, George Hamner, Davie Kadyampakeni, Charlie Messina, Audrey Nowicki, Brandon Page, Joby Sherrod, Jim Syvertsen, Barbara Thompson, Eric Triplett, Callie Walker, Rosa Walsh, and Mongi Zekri.

Mr. Updike noted the minutes of the November 14, 2023, Joint Research Management Committee and Plant Improvement Committee meeting were included with the meeting materials. Mr. Hancock made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Himrod seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The first item addressed was the J. Chater Proposal 23-029 – ‘Consideration of citrus breeding plant material to vacate space for Stage 1 and Stage 2 field trials and to exploit tolerant germplasm for gene editing strategies.’ There were three options set before the Committee. Ms. Shepp asked for further explanation on Options 2 and 3, which Dr. Futch reviewed. Dr. Chater commented on Option 2. Mr. Hancock made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal for Option 2. Mr. Himrod seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Updike presented the drone project of Dr. Chater for re-flying areas affected by Hurricane Ian and taking fruit samples. Dr. Scully made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal. Mr. Himrod seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Updike presented the drone project of Dr. Mattia for re-flying areas affected by Hurricane Ian and taking fruit samples. Dr. Scully made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal. Mr. Himrod seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Upon presentation of the C. Messina Proposal 23-031 – ‘Genes, Software, and a Playbook: Combating HLB in Florida Orchards,’ the committee asked for further explanation of the budget. Dr. Messina stated that \$161,000 would be outsourced to external labs that are very efficient at doing these molecular characterizations. Also, \$139,000 would be going to support Lake Alfred. There would be salary funding for three post-docs and undergraduate students. One postdoc would be hands-on, do transformations, and supervise the undergrads which would be the labor to do the tissue culture and other activities; one postdoc

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would work on the software and analytical methods with colleagues from Google; and the third postdoc would look at regulatory issues and possible barriers to help make informed decisions about what genes would help. Dr. Scully asked about cost-sharing. DOC contributed \$1.047 million for the transformation lab. Dr. Scott Angle, Senior Vice-President for Agriculture and Natural Resources at UF-IFAS, is contributing \$2 million over 2 years for hiring two faculty members. Dr. Messina is hoping that the legislature budget next year would support this on a recurring basis to make a 30-year commitment to maintain those faculty members. IFAS committed \$150,000 for renovations. Mr. Himrod made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal. Ms. Shepp seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Updike presented the proposal for E. Triplett – ‘Proof of concept for phage therapy in the reduction CLas titer and HLB symptoms in citrus.’ Dr. Syvertsen gave a summary of the project. The Scientific Advisory Board was intrigued with this proposal. It would be a 1-year proposal covering Objective 1 for \$112,000. Mr. Himrod made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal. Ms. Shepp seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Updike presented the proposal for D. Kadyampakeni – ‘Comparing two new nutrition programs utilizing CRDF to provide year-round elevated levels of secondary and micronutrients with a selected standard commercial nutrition program.’ Mr. Updike voiced that he thought we had done enough on nutrition, and he did not support this proposal. Mr. Strickland noted that although he understood Mr. Updike's point, he thought it would be negligent not to stay in tune with nutritional issues. Mr. Dantzler noted that he had received a letter of support from Dr. Grosser stating that he would offer his staff to assist Dr. Kadyampakeni. This is a side-by-side comparison using two new fertilizer compounds and comparing them to the industry standard. There were comments that the industry standard would be different depending on the region. It was questioned whether this could be handled under CRAFT, but it doesn't fit their criteria. Ms. Shepp was concerned for the need of solutions other than OTC in case OTC falls off. Also, she had visited Dr. Grosser's grove site and it looked phenomenal. Mr. Hancock and Dr. Scully asked if the budget could be reduced. The committee asked if the Board could visit Dr. Grosser's site before the next Board meeting. Ms. Shepp made a motion to recommend that the Board fund this proposal with the understanding that the committee was deferring the question to the board. Mr. Strickland seconded the motion and it passed with one no vote.

Mr. Dantzler presented the Grower Cooperator agreement for the Molecules Trial. Dr. Scully, Michelle Heck, and Rand Niedz have found 13 of 88 that are doing better than OTC trees. They met with the Indian River Citrus League at which Daniel Scott was also in attendance. They would be using a 1% rate. The rate was questioned, and Dr. Scully noted that they preferred to look at more chemicals with one rate instead of fewer chemicals at multiple rates. Mr. Dantzler had drafted a Cooperator Agreement for growers where fruit which had not been destroyed would be compensated for harvesting expenses in the range of \$500 to \$2,000 for reasonable harvesting costs. If the fruit was destroyed, the cooperator would be paid \$2,000 per acre per year, which is the same agreement made with the scion cooperators, plus reasonable compensation for fruit. If the molecule destroys the tree, they would be compensated per tree for replacement costs. RMC was agreeable to this plan to compensate grower cooperators.

Next on the agenda was the possibilities for RFPs. Mr. Dantzler noted that \$1.5 million had been allocated for new research and thus far has not been used. One suggestion from the previous RMC meeting was ‘Can we turn a mandarin into a juice orange?’ Mr. Updike questioned whether there was a spray that could be used that would accomplish this. Ms. Shepp noted that she would like to see treatment options beyond OTC without having to put out an RFP. Mr. Dantzler stated that Directed Research could be used instead.

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Mr. Dantzler had visited Larry Black's trial for Sugar Belle last week and the fruit looked good except for the green on the end that was soft to the touch. He also wondered about trying to develop other income streams for growers such as the previous proposal from Dr. Christopher Vincent which installed solar panels in groves, or possible income-producing cover crops. Ms. Shepp questioned whether this was within CRDF's mission statement, so the idea was dropped. Mr. Dantzler stated that CRDF would be having a Board Retreat in January and would be inviting all former members. They could look at CRDF guidelines at that time.

Mr. Dantzler also reported on the Diaprepes discussions with researchers that he had participated in last week where they came up with a 6-point plan that would be presented to the RMC at a later date. There is a bottleneck in the faculty labs with rearing. ARS used to do this. When they quit, DPI took it over, but they have since quit also. He has been talking with Trevor Smith about CRDF providing funds to restart the DPI lab in Gainesville.

There were no Public Comments, so the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Barbara Thompson.