



CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.

Research Management Committee Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, March 14, 2024

A meeting of the Research Management Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at UF-IFAS-CREC, 700 Experiment Station Rd, Lake Alfred, FL 33850. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM by Chairman Aaron Himrod. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Scott Adkins, Bobby Barben, Holly Chamberlain, Steve Farr, Ned Hancock, Aaron Himrod, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Jeanna Mastrodicasa, Tom Obreza, Morgan Porter, Brian Scully, Shannon Shepp, Wayne Simmons, Buddy Strickland, and John Updike. Also participating were Rick Dantzler, Bill Dawson, Stephen Futch, Fred Gmitter, Chris Gunter, George Hamner, Michelle Heck, Trevor Murphy, Randy Niedz, Audrey Nowicki, Brandon Page, Joby Sherrod, Matt Story, Barbara Thompson, and Robert Turgeon.

Mr. Himrod noted the minutes of the January 16, 2024, Research Management Committee meeting were included with the meeting materials. Ms. Porter made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler noted the changes to the Committees which allowed each Board member to sit on either the Research Management Committee or the Plant Improvement Committee. At some point, CRDF will need to stagger the term limits so that everyone would not have to come off their committee at the same time.

Next on the agenda was the need to name a Vice-Chair for the RMC. Ms. Porter made a motion to recommend Mr. Machata as Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and passed unanimously.

Consideration of Invited Full Proposals:

23-040 – B. Bonning, ‘Optimal combination of Bt toxins and gene silencing RNAs for management of citrus root weevil.’ Dr. Dawson noted that the proposal has a high likelihood of success because of the team assembled and the fact that these techniques have been used successfully in other crops. It scored 4 out of 5 with SAB. Mr. Machata asked about resistance in the future. Dr. Dawson is not aware of resistance issues developing. There were questions on which rootstocks will be used and comments that the Committee and Board should direct the PI about which should be used. Ms. Shepp made a motion to recommend this proposal to the Board for approval contingent on consideration of researchers using the top five commercial rootstocks, including Super Sour. The motion was seconded by Mr. Scully and passed unanimously.

23-041 – L. Duncan, ‘Breaking the Diaprepes life cycle with physical barriers.’ This is a 3-year project with a budget of \$213,597. An economic analysis is necessary to obtain cost factors for growers. Ms. Porter reminded water savings be included for possible cost-share with WMDs. They would hire one technician for the 3-year term of the project. They would plant trees in Bowling Green using fabric cover and monitor the tree growth and health. Dr. Scully made a motion to recommend this proposal to the Board for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and passed unanimously.

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23-044 – Z. Pang, Silvec Biologics, ‘A combined approach to reduce CLAs and reverse symptoms in orchard trees.’ Mr. Dantzler reminded the Committee that this project was not successful for a NIFA grant possibly because of the transgenic connotation and funds were needed to bridge the gap until the applicant could reapply. They are attempting to fuse the spinach defensive peptides to itself and the other proteins and combine that with CTV to get into the phloem. They believe this will make the spinach defensin peptide more stable, and that it will result in there being far more peptides available to help with the bacterial effect against CLAs. The SAB reviews showed numerous concerns with the project. This is a long-term project and will not help growers at this time. There was no interest in Objective 2. Dr. Scully made a motion to not fund Objective 2 and to fund Objective 1 only to test on CLAs, and to come back to RMC with a revised proposal and budget. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed unanimously.

Presentation of Progress and Consideration of Year 2 Funding for 22-020 – R. Turgeon, ‘Protecting citrus trees from citrus greening with anchored antibodies.’ Dr. Turgeon gave his presentation on progress to date and responded to questions from the committee. Mr. Updike made a motion to fund Year 2. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hancock and passed unanimously.

Consideration of Preproposal for Y. Wang, ‘Using leaf analysis as a predictive tool for fruit production and quality.’ SAB reviews were not favorable. The discussion revolved around this being a fishing expedition with a \$300,000 budget. No information on the metabolites being used was provided. There was a vegetative issue as well as a reproductive issue. Mr. Strickland moved to not invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hancock and passed unanimously.

Dr. Scully gave his presentation on selecting molecules for combatting OTC in the third year. Dr. Michelle Heck was attending via Zoom and added input to the presentation. They renamed the Stelinski Index to Tree Health Index and focused on horticulture and what matters to growers. Three trees per molecule was their baseline control. Dr. Randy Niedz was attending in person and added remarks about his part of the project and answered questions from the committee.

Discussion of RFP Topics – Discussion by Mr. Machata to add why OTC sometimes concentrates in one branch and does not distribute evenly. Mr. Himrod suggested investigating isolated blocks that have outstanding fruit quality. RMC recommended the RFP.

Third-Year Treatment Protocols – Dr. Ute Albrech helped design the trial with Mr. Brandon Page, who will assist in the project. The design discussed was to use 64 trees (8 plots with 8 trees each – using 8 different molecules). These would be 4 treated and 4 untreated. RMC recommended that CRDF proceed.

There was a motion to reimburse the grower for harvesting costs on the field trial for M. Dewdney Project 19-010 for up to \$5,000 so that the data is received timely and is accurate. The motion was put forward by Mr. Hancock. It was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 PM.

Minutes submitted by Barbara Thompson.