



## **Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, March 19, 2024**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at the Turner Ag Center, Exhibit Hall, 2260 NE Roan St., Arcadia, FL 34266. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. Vice-President Joby Sherrod called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll was called, and a quorum was present. Board members present were George Hamner, Aaron Himrod, Matt Machata, Trevor Murphy, Joby Sherrod, Taylor Smith, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

Also participating were Rick Dantzler, Bill Dawson, Steve Futch, Jim Graham, Audrey Nowicki, Brandon Page, Jim Syvertsen, Barbara Thompson, and Robert Turgeon.

Vice-President Joby Sherrod noted the minutes from the February 27, 2024, Board meeting were available in their packet for review and approval. Mr. Himrod made a motion to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

**Public Comments:** None

**Executive Committee:** Did not meet.

**Finance and Audit Committee:** Ms. Nowicki presented the February 29, 2024, Financial Summary. There was a cash balance of \$1,888,826 with accounts receivable of \$5,824,535 and accounts payable of \$5,890,944, which leaves net assets of \$1,822,417. The Citrus Marketing Order receipts as of February 29<sup>th</sup> were 12% lower than last year and 66% lower than 2 years ago. Revenue is 24% under projections; research expenses are currently 12% lower than projections with CRAFT having submitted three invoices to date. Overall expenses were 12% under projections. Of the \$1,513,967 uncommitted funds at the start of this fiscal year, 17 projects are under contract leaving a projected uncommitted balance of \$361,000. Of those approved projects, \$101,404 in costs have been invoiced to CRDF. Mr. Hamner questioned why it was so low. It was explained that projects were not approved until December, and most had a start date of February or March, so expenses have not been billed on those projects. Mr. Dantzler stated that the Board needed to start thinking about the amount the Box Tax Committee should recommend to the Commissioner at the June 12, 2024, Annual Conference. Having started out as 3 cents per box, they had reduced it to 2 cents per box. Mr. Hamner made a motion to accept the February Financial Summary as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

**Governance Committee:** Did not meet.

**Research Management Committee:** Mr. Himrod gave his report on the March 14, 2024, RMC meeting. He summarized the following:

23-040 – B. Bonning, ‘Optimal combination of Bt toxins and gene silencing RNAs for management of citrus root weevil.’ This project scored 4 out of 5 with SAB. While this is new to citrus, it is very common with other crops. Mr. Machata had asked about resistance in the future. The researchers were fairly certain that the stacking of the Bt toxins and RNAs would take care of the resistance issue. There were also questions on which rootstocks should be used that would be most useful to growers and that the RMC and Board should convey the choice to the PI. Mr. Himrod moved to fund this proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

23-041 – L. Duncan, ‘Breaking the Diaprepes life cycle with physical barriers.’ The project will use ground cloth as a mulch to prevent diaprepes from getting into the soil. The project was well accepted but it was recommended that an economic analysis should be included to assist growers. This should provide water and herbicide savings data for cost-sharing. Mr. Dantzler noted that the budget provides for \$1,500 each for four researchers to travel to Texas to view their results; Dr. Taylor Smith has been to Texas to see Dr. Setamou’s work with this and recommended approval, seeing that they are now Diaprepes-free on new plantings. This is a 3-year project with a budget of \$213,000, requesting \$93,000 for the first year. Mr. Himrod moved to fund this proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

23-044 – Z. Pang, Silvec Biologics, ‘A combined approach to reduce CLAs and reverse symptoms in orchard trees.’ This project includes using Yellow Vein Associated Virus which has not yet been found in Florida. The SAB reviews showed numerous concerns with the project. RMC voted to not fund Objective 2, but fund Objective 1 only to test CLAs, and to come back to RMC with a revised proposal and budget. Mr. Himrod recommended the Board request a new proposal with a revised budget for the RMC to re-consider, so no further action was taken.

Preproposal for Y. Wang, ‘Using leaf analysis as a predictive tool for fruit production and quality.’ The SAB reviews were not favorable. RMC thought this was just a fishing expedition. Mr. Himrod moved to not invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

Year 2 Funding for 22-020 – R. Turgeon, ‘Protecting citrus trees from citrus greening with anchored antibodies.’ Mr. Himrod noted that RMC found Dr. Turgeon’s project to be intriguing for what it might mean in the future to have a GMO-type of rootstock without calling it a GMO. Dr. Turgeon presented to the RMC and proved his concept in year 1 of the project. His method isolated Clas in the root. Mr. Himrod moved to fund this proposal for year 2. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler read the list of nine RFP suggestions plus two new items. Mr. Himrod reviewed the two topics that he and Mr. Machata suggested, using a higher volume of water for the solution and

whether the OTC delivery device could deliver nutrition as a stand-alone treatment. Mr. Sherrod shared that they had tried this and saw a negative effect of less OTC uptake when using zinc. Mr. Himrod moved to approve the additions to the list of RFP topics. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

Mr. Page reported that CRDF was working with Dr. Ute Albrecht to design a project to overlay various new third-year treatments on her existing trial that has received two years of OTC injections. Mr. Himrod moved to approve for CRDF to proceed with soliciting bids. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod reported that Dr. Scully gave his presentation on the Grove First project and selecting molecules for combatting OTC in the third year with additional input from Drs. Michelle Heck and Randy Niedz. They are applying each compound to three trees. They have five grower cooperators for trials of the most promising molecules. This project is moving forward with anticipation of great outcomes. This will be inexpensive and good for growers. CRDF needs to continue to facilitate this project to whatever extent is needed.

Mr. Dantzler noted that RMC had voted to provide funds to reimburse a grower up to \$5,000 for harvesting costs on the field trial for M. Dewdney's Project 19-010 so that the data is received timely and is accurate. Mr. Hamner made a motion to approve funding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Himrod and passed unanimously.

**Plant Improvement Committee:** Did not meet.

**COO Report:** Mr. Dantzler reported that they were working on the lineup for the presentations at the Annual Conference in June and wanted to know if the Board would recommend having Dr. Turgeon present. Mr. Himrod noted that this was a longer-term solution but provided unique opportunities for a GMO. Mr. Hamner noted the immunological value to the trees. They recommended to extend an invitation to Dr. Turgeon.

Mr. Dantzler also noted that the \$10,000 CRDF provided as sponsorship funds was used entirely for the August Citrus Expo, which meant that CRDF was not listed as a sponsor for the upcoming Citrus Show. He recommended that they go back to the split funding so that CRDF is represented at both functions next year.

The Legislature is recommending \$3 million to CRDF for research and \$15 million to CRDF for large-scale field trials through CRAFT. There is a change to the proviso that sixty percent is to be used for growers with fewer acres.

**Partnership Updates:** There were no updates. Matt Joyner, Florida Citrus Mutual, was in Washington at an APHIS meeting. Drs. Gunter and Mastrodicasa from UF-IFAS were unable to attend, and Scott Adkins, USDA, was traveling to Gainesville and could not join.

**New Business:** None.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Future Meeting:** The next Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at UF-IFAS-CREC, 700 Experiment Station Rd, Lake Alfred, FL 33850. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.