



Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, April 23, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at the UF-IFAS-CREC, 700 Experiment Station Rd, Lake Alfred, FL 33850. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. Roll was called, and a quorum was present. Board members present were George Hamner, Aaron Himrod, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Ron Mahan, Jeanna Mastrodicasa, Trevor Murphy, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Taylor Smith, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter noted that the minutes from the March 19, 2024, Board meeting were available in their packet for review. Mr. Sherrod moved to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Himrod and passed unanimously.

Rick Dantzler provided an update on the recent HLB conference that was held in California in March. Representation at the conference from CRDF were Larry Black, Rick Dantzler, Jim Graham, Aaron Himrod, Brandon Page, and Joby Sherrod. Taylor Smith attended in her capacity with FDACS. Some of the highlights from the meeting were:

- In grove visits prior to the meeting, a lot of fruit was seen on the ground. Growers indicated that this past crop was larger than normal, and supply exceeded demand for some varieties. Also, there were psyllids in the grove but apparently none were hot. Should that happen, HLB would likely spread quickly. If citrus becomes infected with HLB, water shortage will likely increase stress on the trees, which would increase the impact of HLB.
- The conference had 99 speakers and moderators plus numerous posters and side meetings to address HLB management.
- Keynote speakers were:
 1. Dr. Leandro Peña said HLB should be treated as a parasite and not a pathogen, and that living with HLB required driving titer down as low as possible. He told Mr. Dantzler afterwards that our strategy should be to kill CLAs as much as possible while waiting for a resistant or tolerant tree to become available.
 2. Dr. Michelle Heck reported on the Grove First project.
 3. Michael Knoblach spoke on phloem physiology and how much more there was to learn about it in citrus.
 4. Denise Manker presented an update on the Bayer project. It was not as successful as hoped, but there is a molecule they hope to commercialize.

5. Dr. Ute Albrecht provided an excellent update on OTC injection and the positive results she has documented.
- Other notes from speakers:
 1. Dr. Kim Bowman presented findings on how he moved germplasm through the plant breeding pipeline, ultimately leading to the release of the latest SuperSours.
 2. Dr. Sarah Strauss indicated that OTC does not appear to kill beneficial bacteria in the citrus plant.
 3. Dr. Graham showed that CLas titer reduction is greater in roots than in leaves when treated with OTC injection. He indicated that roots do not plug like the phloem in tree. Root longevity is greater in OTC treated trees than in non-treated trees. In his work with Syngenta, they found that when using products for foot rot control, it showed yield increases with increasing root numbers. Increasing root mass leads to greater yield.
 4. Dr. Yongping Duan shared his breakthrough in culturing CLAs. Mr. Dantzler noted that he called Dr. Duan after the conference and Dr. Duan offered to put on a workshop to show other researchers how to do it. The workshop may incur limited expense, but the board was supportive.
 5. A person from Dr. Stelinski's lab noted that they were seeing a significant reduction in CLas in psyllids from OTC usage. Mr. Dantzler pointed out that at the recent RMC meeting the committee heard a presentation from Dr. Stelinski on this and it was quite encouraging.
 - Other attendees offered comments on the conference.
 - Overall, attendees thought it was a good conference and provided an excellent overview of the work being conducted in many locations in the world on controlling/managing HLB in citrus.
 - Ms. Porter indicated that CRDF needs to work with other states and countries to see how we can better share our findings with other regions to help them learn from our experiences and to aid them in avoiding mistakes we made. Taylor Smith noted there was a NIFA grant that was compiling HLB research and making it user friendly.

Public Comments: None

Executive Committee: Did not meet.

Finance and Audit Committee: Mr. Mahan presented the March 31, 2024, Financial Summary. He noted that spending is behind in many projects, which is not uncommon; however, the underspend is a significant amount of funds. The Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable numbers are related to the money in and out for CRAFT. Mr. Mahan moved to approve the F&A committee's recommendations. The motion was seconded by Sara Spinosa and passed unanimously.

Mr. Mahan noted that the proposed budget for FY 2024-25 was in their packets and made a motion for the Board to approve. He asked Mr. Dantzler to go over the budget reduction items. Options for next year regarding the budget draft include:

- Eliminating the funding for Southern Garden PCR lab, which is about \$275,000 per year. If not funded, Mr. Hamner noted that PIs would likely build it into their project costs. Other board members thought that might be a better way of doing it. This will be discussed at RMC.
- The Plant Improvement ‘Grand Plan’ request by UF and USDA was reduced to \$400,000 per year for each institution.
- No funding for the Bayer projects, which was about \$124,000. This work will be transferred to a NIFA grant that has \$736,000 remaining. Bayer is willing to do so and NIFA has tentatively signed off on it.
- The Grove First project is at \$60,000, which equals \$10,000 per current grower participation.
- Elimination of AgerPoint contract of \$27,000 per year for drone coverage for our rootstock trials. We will make a contract for \$10,000 to cover the newer trials that are currently underway.

The adoption of the above changes would result in funding for approximately \$1.4 million in new research for FY 2024-25 budget year.

An additional option for cost savings to allow redirection of funding would be the non-renewal of existing projects not critical for industry survival, or by not granting NCEs if the project was not critical for industry survival. Also, FDOC receives approximately \$2 million for plant improvement, and we may be able to move some of our funding for plant improvement to FDOC if FDOC was willing. Mr. Dantzler is meeting with Ms. Shepp about this soon.

Regarding plant improvement, Mr. Dantzler said several board members had told him their priority is bioinformatics.

It was noted we need to have a way to communicate reductions to researchers as the CRDF funding level is decreasing, and the urgency within the industry for solutions has never been greater. The need is for more focused short-term approaches to finding solutions.

CRDF, on the request of the legislature, has spent down Box Tax reserves to \$1.5 million, and that funding will likely decrease due to declining yields within Florida. We are nearly totally dependent on legislative appropriation.

Mr. Mahan moved to approve the proposed budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

The last item for F&A was a motion by Mr. Mahan to recommend that CRDF continue with the audit firm of Bunting, Tripp, and Ingley. The motion was seconded by Mr. Himrod and passed unanimously.

Governance Committee: Did not meet.

Plant Improvement Committee: Did not meet.

Research Management Committee: Aaron Himrod gave a report on the April 16, 2024, meeting. The RMC actions and recommendations are as follows:

Project Funding Consideration:

- 23-044 Pang, Silvec Biologics, ‘A combined approach to reduce CLAs and reverse symptoms in orchard trees.’ The committee recommended adding a payback clause to the contract if Silvec is successful in commercializing a product. The funding request was \$233,139 after deleting Objective 2 and focusing on Objective 1 while using CLAs, not crescens. IR-4 will handle the registration process. Mr. Himrod made a motion to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.
- Henry Yonce won the bid for the RFP “Third-year treatment protocol field trial” for \$36,000. Mr. Himrod moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.

Consideration of Continuation Funding:

- 23-002 – K. Pelz-Stelinski. ‘Effects of trunk-injection oxytetracycline on tree infection and health, psyllid pathogenicity, and vector population.’ In the additional year of funding, streptomycin will be added to the trial, which may increase the budgeted amount by \$5,000. Mr. Himrod moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.
- 23-002 – U. Albrecht. ‘Evaluating different rates of oxytetracycline administered by trunk injection in mature sweet orange trees.’ Mr. Himrod moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.
- 23-003 – M. Ritenour. ‘Evaluation of potential HLB tolerant grapefruit rootstock/scion combinations in Florida.’ The project budget is \$96,000 for next year. The RMC chose to defer action on the project until it could be determined if East Coast growers were supportive. Also, there was a concern regarding whether data collection on fruit and quality mattered much since the trees were so young. After the meeting, CRDF received a letter from Daniel Scott and an email from Doug Bournique saying East Coast growers supported the project. Dr. Ritenour also clarified that personnel would be 1.5 FTEs and they would not be new hires. They are personnel who are already in place and know the project. Dr. Mastrodicasa noted that in mid-June IRREC

was getting a new director and she expected him to be more responsive to needs in the area. No action was taken by the CRDF Board, which left it open for the project to go back to RMC.

- 21-008 – K. Bowman. ‘Development of Next -Generation SuperSour rootstocks with tolerance to HLB.’ Mr. Himrod moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.

Potential Funding Consideration:

- 23-013 – H. Yonce. Bactericide Trial #8 – Yield comparison between bactericide and non-treated control blocks on yield and tree health – Additional year. The budget will be increased to \$16,000. Mr. Himrod moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.
- The Bayer NIFA project was deferred to the next meeting by RMC, so there was no action at the Board level.
- Michelle Heck, Brian Scully, Randy Niedz – NIFA Project – Expansion of field testing of molecules. This project needs more grower cooperators so they would like to offer grower participation in other regions of the state. Ms. Porter suggested a webinar to get the message out to growers. This was mainly for information, and a good discussion ensued.

Mr. Machata is participating in a trial that contains ‘Wakeup’ and found the product difficult to mix and apply. He suggested that researchers provide better instructions or develop a better understanding of how growers will be mixing the product in the field.

COO Report: Mr. Dantzler encouraged Board members who are not on the RMC to sit in on the review of new proposals. We expect to have a great number of preproposals back at the end of April from the new RFP for practical OTC treatments. These will be reviewed at the June 3, 2024, meeting.

At the June Board meeting, the Box Tax rate will need to be approved.

The Ninth Circuit opinion on streptomycin as a spray may cause issues with the use of adding streptomycin to the OTC injection label. A good argument will be that the injection request will be greatly different than the recommendation to spray streptomycin and should not impact pollinators. Mike Aerts states that the approval will be more difficult, but not impossible. Discussions with FDACS are underway.

Partnership Updates: A partnership update was given by Chris Oswalt, who thanked CRDF for its continued funding support for the Citrus Grower Institute that was in early April at South Florida State College in Avon Park. He reminded everyone that the videos of past presentations over the last 15 years can be found on the Citrus Agents website.

A CRAFT update was provided by Ms. Tamara Wood, who indicated that 90,000 acres are in the current program and consisted of approximately 15,000 acres of new plantings and 75,000 acres of therapies in existing trees. All reviews and approvals for Cycle 5 have been completed. Contracts have been mailed out to growers who have until May 1, 2024, to return them. They anticipate that they will get another round of funding, in which case applications would open for Cycle 6. They moved up the second payment to growers for existing tree therapies. Ms. Wood suggested that growers make reservations for the Mutual conference in June prior to April 30 to get the conference room rate. At this year's conference, the CRDF Board meeting will be on Wednesday afternoon, June 12, and the educational session will be on Thursday, June 13. The Educational Session includes Dr. Albrecht – Update on OTC; the CRAFT Grower Panel; Grove First and Symbiont Technology update from Dr. Heck; Accelerated budwood program escape trees update from Dr. Hodges at FDACS; IFAS recommendations for third year OTC; Root health post direct systemic application from Dr. Graham; and Healing trees in an HLB era using anchored antibodies to eradicate CLAs from Dr. Bob Turgeon.

New Business: None.

Public Comments: None.

Future Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting will be held Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point, Blue Heron Room, 5001 Coconut Road, Bonita Springs, FL 34134. The RMC meeting prior to this meeting will be held Monday, June 3, 2024, at the Government Town Center Community Room, 1069 US 27 North, Lake Placid, FL 33852.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.