



## **Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 12, 2024**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at the Citrus Annual Conference, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point, Blue Heron Room, 5001 Coconut Road, Bonita Springs, Florida. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 2:35 PM. Roll was called, and a quorum was present. Board members present were Chris Gunter, George Hamner, Aaron Himrod, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Ron Mahan, Jeanna Mastrodicasa, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Taylor Smith, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter opened by explaining that CRDF had 71 projects under contract related to CRDF's ongoing three-pronged approach as well as on Diaprepes and blight. In addition, 32 preproposals received under the RFP for mitigation strategies are being addressed today.

Ms. Porter noted that the minutes from the April 23, 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.

Ms. Porter opened the floor for public comments. There being none, she invited Dr. Eric Triplett to present an update on the effort to get GMO lines through the regulatory process. Documentation has been submitted to EPA on four lines of Dr. Mou's, which could take up to 19 months for action. They have requested that FCM support them in getting a Section 18 label, which could cut the time down to 6 months.

Continuing with the Agenda, Ms. Porter said the Executive Committee did not meet.

Ms. Porter called on Mr. Mahan, Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. Mr. Mahan summarized the May 31, 2024, financial statements and moved to accept the statements as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Spinosa and passed unanimously.

Mr. Mahan asked Mr. Dantzler to provide background on the FY 2024-2025 budget and available funding.

Mr. Dantzler noted that the Crop Transformation Center will receive \$500,000, which leaves approximately \$1.4 million for new projects. The high budget of the plant breeding program request would also limit the funding available for other research.

Mr. Mahan made a motion to approve the FY 2024-25 Budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Himrod and passed unanimously.

Mr. Mahan moved to the list of miscellaneous contracts for subcontractors in the next year and moved to approve the contracts. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story. Mr. Dantzler added that the \$10,000 in sponsorship funding to Agnet will be equally designated between Citrus Expo and Florida Growers Show this year. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hamner reported that the membership of the Plant Improvement Committee will be discussed at an upcoming Governance Committee meeting.

Mr. Sherrod reported the Plant Improvement Committee met to review and provide feedback to the RMC and Board on the Three-Year Grand Plan. While the objectives were favored, the discussion was primarily about the need to scale back the project. Another recommendation was to pursue other funding from Tallahassee in the upcoming legislative session.

Mr. Weston Johnson updated the committee on the progress of the Coca Cola project.

Mr. Sherrod reported that the committee heard a presentation by Mr. Nate Jameson on the concept from Australia of viroids and dwarf trees. After healthy discussion, the matter was tabled until information from FDACS on what would be needed for it to be allowed.

Mr. Himrod reported that the Research Management Committee held a day-long meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and reported on its actions and recommendations:

- J. Chater and M. Mattia Grand Plan Full Proposal – both PIs were directed to scale the project back.
- Southern Gardens Citrus Diagnostic Lab. A lengthy discussion on who was using the lab and whether it had utility given that the PCR test does not distinguish between live and dead DNA of CLAs. Mike Irey explained that Dr. Ping Duan has developed a methodology to estimate live bacteria which SG is willing to implement as a way to address this concern. Mr. Himrod moved to recommend the Board approve an additional year of funding of the SGCDL up to \$250,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story. It was noted that Bayer provided \$100,000 in co-funding for its use of the lab, some of which will carry into the 2024-25 year. The motion passed unanimously.
- L. Diepenbrock, snails project #23-014 – Mr. Himrod moved to approve the second year of funding. Seconded by Dr. Mastrodicasa, the motion passed unanimously after several growers shared that snails are a significant problem for them.
- M. Ritenour, tolerant grapefruit rootstock/scion combinations project #23-003 – Mr. Himrod moved to approve the second year of funding. The motion was seconded by Dr. Mastrodicasa and passed unanimously.
- N. Wang, non-transgenic HLB-resistant sweet orange varieties using CRISPR-Cas technology, project #23-028 – Mr. Himrod moved to approve the third year of funding.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod noted that, due to time constraints, he would group the 29 responses to the RFP for mitigation strategies into three categories with a motion at the end of each group. The groups are Preproposals which are being recommended to invite a full proposal; Preproposals not invited to submit a full proposal; and Preproposals for which a revised preproposal was recommended.

Mr. Himrod moved to invite the following researchers to submit a full proposal on these Preproposals:

- Alferez.1 – Integrating novel copper formulations with brassinosteroids for citrus canker management
- Alferez.2 – Integrating a plant defense inducer to alleviate associated adverse effects of OTC therapy and overcome the "off" third year
- Batuman.2 – Exploring Plant Defense Inducers as Complementary Strategies to Copper Application for Controlling Citrus Canker and Enhancing Citrus Greening Management in Florida Citrus Groves
- Batuman.4 – Evaluation of the breakdown curve of OTC in the plant for control of HLB in the field
- Santra – Protecting trees using nano-GRAS IPM strategy
- Shahid – Optimizing silicon as plant defense inducer to improve plant health and alleviate citrus canker in HLB-affected citrus groves
- Strauss – Short- and long-term assessment of bark, root, and rhizosphere microbiomes and antibiotic resistance genes of oxytetracycline-injected citrus trees
- Vincent.1 – Improve HLB-affected tree health by basing volume, timing, and location of injection on tree physiology and phenology
- Vincent.2 – Injury-Free Root Delivery Device for Therapeutics in Young Trees

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod made a motion that the following researchers not be invited to submit full proposals for the following Preproposals:

- Ancona – Effect of OTC-injections in development of OTC-resistance and beneficial microbes in HLB-affected citrus trees
- Batuman.1 – Elucidating the role of CLas virulence variations on production differences in Florida citrus groves
- Batuman.2 – Influence of degrading trunk-injected oxytetracycline on CLas acquisition and internal microbiota of Asian citrus psyllid populations in Florida groves

- Foucher – A new economical, ecological, and rapid remedy to successfully eliminate the HLB problem in three (3) months
- Gonzalez – Zero Thermal (ZT) an Organic Solution to Mitigate ACP populations in Citrus Groves
- Martini – Investigating natural antifeedants and a multimodal repellent system to control Asian citrus psyllid
- Ojo – Development of a jet injection system for citrus trees
- Patt – Mitigating ACP populations in isolated groves by creating habitat for the natural enemies
- Yang – Green Strategies for Fighting Citrus HLB: Trunk Injection with RejuAgro
- Alferez.3 (committee recommended that this be combined with Bai) – Assessing Blending Strategies with Different Satsuma Juice to Boost Orange Juice Quality
- Bai (committee recommended that this be combined with Alferez.3) – Enhancing Orange Juice Quality Using Satsuma, Satsuma-like Hybrids, and Culled Fruits from Citrus Under Protective Screens (CUPS)
- Stelinski – Evaluation of FANA antimicrobials for tree injection as a rotational alternative to OTC
- Zambon.2 – Effect of N-acetyl cysteine on the control of citrus canker in Florida
- Zambon.3 – Use of plant defense response inducer to control HLB

The motion was seconded by Dr. Mastrodicasa and passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod made a motion to request the following researchers be requested to revise and re-submit their Preproposals for the following projects:

- Ampatzidis – AI-enabled automated needle-based trunk injection system
- Cheng – Development and delivery of a novel intra-species antimicrobial from *Sinorhizobium meliloti* for the control of citrus Huanglongbing
- Minter/Yonce.1 and .2 – Evaluate PT 150 as a systemic insecticide and TPR1, a new bactericide, for control of ACP when injected into Citrus trees.
- Qureshi – Developing knowledge to expand the effectiveness of OTC injection from CLas-infected trees to Asian citrus psyllid acquisition and CLas transmission
- Zambon.1 – Delivery of Mn and micronutrients to HLB-affected trees via standalone injection or mixed with OTC
- Alferez.3 and Bai collaboration – satsuma studies

Mr. Dantzler will convey the recommendations of the RMC to each of the above researchers. The motion was seconded by Dr. Gunter. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod noted that continuation funding was requested by E. Rogers on a project completed a couple years ago, 'Phloem specific responses to CLAs for the identification of novel HLB resistance genes.' Mr. Himrod said the RMC recommendation was to not invite a full proposal for continuation funding and so moved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.

Mr. Himrod said the RMC reviewed a directed research preproposal from Clive Bock, 'Citrus black spot – what is the risk of dispersal of inoculum in FL in relation to current quarantine measures?' Following the recommendation of the RMC, Mr. Himrod moved to invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

**COO Report:** Mr. Dantzler shared that he had requested a higher level of funding from the Legislature, having asked for \$5 million and received \$3 million. He commended Mr. Joyner and FCM for their efforts in Tallahassee and obtaining the funding to keep CRDF's research strategy moving.

**Partnership Updates:** Dr. Michael Rogers reported that with CRDF focused on OTC, UF/IFAS was focusing on new variety development. Such focus has resulted in expanded facilities for Dr. Wang; transgenic plants will be tested side by side; new field sites for conventional bred plants; and development of the DeLuca property. Also, the crop transformation labs at CREC are receiving additional funding to expand their capabilities. New blocks are being cleared for new planting and trials around Lake Alfred.

Mr. Joyner reported they are waiting to hear from the governor whether the budget is being signed. As presented, \$18 million will go to the CRDF for research and large-scale field trials this fiscal year. They are already working with Senator Albritton on the next session funding.

**New Business:** There was no new business.

**Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

**Future Meeting:** The next Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, July 23, 2024, in Lake Alfred.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:31 PM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.