Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

April 22, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Directors, Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at UF/IFAS/IRREC, 2199 South Rock Road, Fort Pierce, FL 34945. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM.

Roll was called and a quorum was present. Board members present were John Davis, George Hamner, Matt Machata, Ron Mahan, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter noted the minutes from the January 28, 2025, Board meeting were included in their packet for review. Mr. Hamner made a motion to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.

Public Comments: None.

Executive Committee meeting of February 17, 2025: Mr. Dantzler gave a summary of the meeting. Discussed were:

1. The proposed CRDF trip to Brazil as the guests of Fundecitrus. Details such as expenses and attendees were discussed. The committee was in favor.
2. The committee gave approval to proceed with a new project from Brian Updike to test the longevity of OTC staying efficacious when mixed with ascorbic acid. The expense would be approximately $2,000. Dantzler shared with the committee that he was now 69 and had found himself thinking of retiring on, perhaps, June 30, 2026. Mr. Hamner suggested that the Governance Committee convene and begin talks about where CRDF sees itself in any reorganization or if Dantzler retires.

Executive Committee meeting of March 20, 2025: Dantzler provided this summary:

1. The legislative request was for $6.4 million. The committee discussed potential reductions should it become necessary, which included:
    a. The plan to purchase nursery trees from cancelled orders.
    b. Mass propagation of the Soilcea transgenic rootstock trees.
    c. Research identified in Brazil by half.
    d. The penicillin project could be dropped because of the unlikeliness of it being approved.

    If necessary, the following other cost-cutting mechanisms could be used:

    a. Termination of projects already under contract.
    b. Deny no-cost extensions.

Finance and Audit Committee: Mr. Mahan noted that the F&A committee had not met this month because the committee was waiting for funding clarity from Tallahassee.

The February and March financial statements show that CRDF has about $1.8 million in cash. Total assets are $6.9 million, of which $5 million is allocated for CRAFT. Mr. Dantzler added that by the end of the fiscal year, CRDF will have spent nearly all the $1.5 million allocated for new research. Mr. Mahan moved that the Financial Statements be approved as presented. Mr. Hamner seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. F&A will meet prior to the June board meeting in Bonita Springs to finalize the budget for board consideration.

The draft budget for Fiscal year 2025-26 will be presented to the committee assuming that $5.4 million is appropriated from the Legislature, but CRDF is still requesting $6.9 million to allow for additional important projects being discussed.

Governance Committee: Did not meet.

Plant Improvement Committee: Chair Joby Sherrod presented a summary of the April 15, 2025, PIC meeting, which met to review the Dutt proposal. Its comments were:

1. Receive data on each nomination since little was presented.
2. Plant some trees with IPCs and some without.
3. Reduction of budget, especially in the first year since the trees will be grown by a third party. nursery grower.

Research Management Committee: Chair Matt Machata presented a summary of the April 16, 2025, RMC meeting as follows:

1. Dr. Lauren Diepenbrock proposal on Mealybug management in CUPS. The committee did not feel that she had met the criteria that RMC had requested, so they did not recommend advancing it as a full proposal. There was merit to Objective 1, if the work is conducted in two years, not three. If Objective 2 is pursued, she should include a degradation curve on the life of the pesticidal coating of the netting and possibly expand work on IPCs. The budget was excessive, especially the travel request, which included $10,000 for international travel. There was not a recommendation to advance the proposal at this time, but depending on funding availability after the new legislative funding is in place, CRDF could request the PI to revise and resubmit.
2. Drs. Dutt, Chater, and Grosser proposal on field evaluation of select HLB tolerant sweet oranges on improved rootstocks. RMC echoed Mr. Sherrod’s comments reported by the Plant Improvement Committee. There was a lack of supporting data for the rootstock and scion nominations. The supplemental fertilizer, which was a slow-release blend, would skew the data, so a grower standard should be used. The committee thought that IPCs should not be used. There was also some discussion that this project could be included in CRAFT funding since it is a larger trial if the CRAFT board eliminated the requirement that only released materials could qualify for CRAFT grants. The committee recommended they resubmit the proposal with additional data and address the budget. The funding request for supplemental fertilizer should be stricken and IPCs not used. The first year’s costs were too high.

3. Preproposal from high-school student Cole Arrant on evaluation of commercially available chemicals for use in trunk injection of citrus. RMC suggested that Arrant could join Dr. Michelle Heck so the Grove First group could assist in his project. RMC recommended asking for a full proposal. Mr. Hamner so moved. It was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.
4. B. Morkos preproposal on an investigation of autonomous drug delivery for citrus trees. RMC did not advance this for lack of a motion, which was the same action taken by the board. The concern was that these researchers were new to this work and disease and would be too far behind what Dr. Ampatzidis has developed.
5. Proposed project from Dr. U. Albrecht. She is beginning the third year OTC injections of the 2015 rootstock trials. She wants to modify the design and investigate the difference between single-sided and two-sided injections. It was suggested to inject twice a year (with a half dose in each injection). Mr. Hamner made the motion to approve the modification with the understanding that the PCR work would be done in the Southern Gardens facility. It was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.
6. Proposed project from Dr. C. Messina on the transformation of 51 genes, including the Bt gene from Dr. Bonning. RMC recommended asking for a preproposal. This was moved by Mr. Hamner, seconded by Mr. Sherrod, and passed unanimously.
7. The third was from Dr. U. Albrecht for a discussion of the 2023 rootstock trial injection policy. This is a third-stage rootstock trial. She would like to use half of the plot, which would be one row of 10 trees as untreated control; the other half would be treated with OTC at the label recommended rate. The following season she would go back to the untreated section and treat 5 trees there. Mr. Hamner made the motion to ask for a preproposal. It was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.
8. Dr. L. Stelinski project on macro-scale inoculum measurement in the age of OTC usage. This was presented as a continuation of Project 23-001 and included a state-wide assessment of psyllid infection levels. However, the statewide assessment was deleted and substituted with a study of psyllid resistance to pesticides. The budget request is $100,000. The work would be over the course of 2 years. RMC recommended asking for a preproposal. Mr. Hamner so moved. It was seconded by Ms. Spinosa and passed unanimously.
9. Next was the discussion of an OTC and streptomycin combined product. This was presented to RMC by Laura Fleites of AgroSource and Dr. Ute Albrecht. RMC's position was to not hold up any of the regulatory matters due to not having residue testing done, so the committee recommended that CRDF pay for the residue testing, as well as a pollinator study if it gets to that point, to any company that desires to test such a product. The data would be available to CRDF and disseminated to companies that participate. As of now, those are AgroSource and TJ Biotech. There was no upward limit included in the motion, but RMC would prefer a $30,000 cap. Mr. Hamner so moved. It was seconded by Ms. Spinosa and passed unanimously.
10. Z. Pang, Silvec, discussion on the termination of project 23-044 and re-direction of funds. The recommendation from RMC was to freeze any action until they have clarity on their federal grant funding. CRDF funded this project for $233,000 to bridge the gap while they waited for federal funding. The board concurred.

11. Update on the T. Aglave ‘Curry leaf extract’ project. The recommendation was to ask for a preproposal. Mr. Hamner made a motion to request a preproposal from T. Aglave with the desire that she receive guidance from Dr. L. Stelinski. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.

Pathway 3.0: Mr. Dantzler summarized the draft document. He asked Board members to review the research projects listed in Pathway 3.0 and send comments to him, preferably by the end of the week, so the document could be finalized and sent to Matt Joyner to have available for the House and Senate when they convene.

Report on Brazil Trip: Mr. Dantzler’s report was sent to the Board prior to the meeting, but he touched on highlights. Matt Machata reported that psyllid control is what makes the big difference for Brazil, and that if Florida could implement a state-funded statewide spray program, make it mandatory for all growers to participate, and have a one-mile buffer around the groves, that it would have a massive effect on tree health and yield per acre. He emphasized that we must get growers back to profitability, and this could do it. The pros and cons were discussed.

COO Report: Mr. Dantzler noted that there is a CRDF scion and rootstock trial with Alico. With things changing there, Alico is discussing with a grower the possibility of leasing a large tract of grove land, including the trials. Discussions will continue regarding what happens to the trial sites. Mr. Dantzler reported that he had been contacted by a person who has a technology that uses radio frequencies to kill bacteria, and he believes he can kill Clas. Discussion with him and Dr. Killiny about it will continue.

Partnership Updates: Dr. Kistler, Center Director, welcomed us to the Center and told us about himself and recognized researchers and staff who helped with the meeting. He updated the board on what is happening at the Center, including a strategic planning process for the Center as a whole. They developed a strategic plan of what their future should be, and how the different disciplines could work together to try to solve some of the regional and state issues.

New Business: None

Public Comments: None

Future Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting will be held at the Annual Conference on June 11, 2025, at 2:30 PM, in Bonita Springs.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.