Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

January 27, 2026

A meeting of the Board of Directors, Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 10:00 AM in the Alexander Discovery Center at Bok Tower Gardens, 1151 Tower Blvd., Lake Wales, FL 33853. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Board members present were Bill Bohde, John Davis, Chris Gunter, George Hamner, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Trevor Murphy, Ajia Orth, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

Ms. Porter acknowledged the resignation letter received from Audrey Nowicki, the CRDF Office Manager. She recognized Audrey for her invaluable contributions to CRDF since its inception and the efficiency with which she has completed every task. She thanked her for always being prepared to answer questions posed by the Board and keeping everything up to date for the Board and Mr. Dantzler.

President Morgan Porter noted that the minutes from the November 18, 2025, Board meeting were included in their packet for review. Mr. Hamner made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barben and passed unanimously.

Emma Cartwright, Scientific Research Coordinator at DOC, and Ajia Orth, Assistant Deputy Chief Bureau of Citrus Budwood Registration and CRDF's newest Board member, were introduced as new attendees to the meeting.

Executive Committee: Mr. Dantzler summarized the January 13th meeting with UF representatives regarding the exclusive licenses Soilcea has with UF and the royalties connected thereto.

Finance and Audit Committee: In Treasurer Mahan's absence, Ms. Nowicki reviewed the December 2025 financials. CRAFT billings are ramping up and coming in quickly. While there is usually a negative variance in research expenses, the government shutdown also affected the variance. Mr. Dantzler explained that several items listed on the legislative request were either funded by CRAFT or are no longer on the horizon for CRDF. Consequently, we run the risk of having to return significant funds at the end of the year. Also, fewer projects were funded, projects started late in the year, and the RFP didn't result in as many projects as anticipated. However, several large projects are still being considered. Mr. Hamner suggested funding projects in advance of spending – this was the original format for funding but quickly resulted in funds being owed back due to residuals. Mr. Bohde said it is the Foundation's purpose to fund research, and we should work hard to fund worthy projects. Proposals should be taken seriously and each considered for its merit as they are received. Mr. Machata moved to approve the December financial summary as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Spinosa and passed unanimously.

Governance Committee: Mr. Hamner reported on the Governance meeting held prior to the Board meeting on January 27th. Mr. Dantzler previously spoke to the current officers, and all agreed to serve another year. The committee proposed keeping the current slate of officers for the coming year: Morgan Porter – President, Joby Sherrod – Vice-President, George Hamner – Secretary, and Ron Mahan – Treasurer. Mr. Hamner brought this forth with a second by Mr. Bohde, and it passed unanimously.

There were three new appointees for the Research Management Committee. Recommendations were made for the following people to be added to RMC: Riley McKenna for Ned Hancock, Aaron Nelson for Steve Farr, and Dan Bott for Larry Black. Also, Board member Bill Bohde was added to RMC. Mr. Hamner put forth a motion to recommend to the board that they accept these four people on the RMC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously. The UF Board of Trustees have received notice of the two most recently appointed board members, Mr. Bohde and Ms. Orth, and will consider their approval at their next meeting.

The Foundation received a change to the CRDF registered agent from UF. With Mike Ford's retirement, Ryan Fuller is replacing him. The committee also reviewed board member terms and appointments, noting several expiring terms and a new board member, Aija Orth. Mr. Hamner made a motion to have Ms. Orth serve on the Governance Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously. He also noted that six board members' terms end in December and three are eligible for reappointment. Three board members' terms end in December 2027, none of which are eligible for reappointment. Ms. Shepp asked if it would be appropriate to change the Bylaws to permit currently serving members to serve beyond their terms.

Ms. Porter asked if she could get an attendance record for eligible board members for reappointment. It was also suggested that RMC monthly meetings be formalized to be held the 3rd week of each month, one week prior to the board meeting. Mr. Hamner brought this forth as a motion which was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed unanimously.

Plant Improvement Committee: Chair Joby Sherrod gave his report of the PIC meeting held on January 16, 2026. They heard from Dr. Messina and Dr. Dutt, 25-015 'Methods, resources, and synchronous evaluation of 14 genes and 12 rootstocks in field conditions. PIC provided comments and recommendations to the PIs which were made in preparation for the RMC meeting.

Weston Johnson from Coca-Cola gave an update on his two projects, both making good progress.

Mr. Dantzler said we are struggling to find a role for the Plant Improvement Committee which utilizes the talents of the 21 members.

Research Management Committee: Mr. Machata noted that RMC met on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at Bok Tower, Lake Wales, FL, and made recommendations on the following projects:

N. Wang, 25-011 'Shorten the juvenility of non-transgenic Eds1 and Dmr6 edited citrus.' Preproposal Revision. This was a 3-yr project for $643 K. RMC recommended getting more information on the mature tissue CRISPR gene editing issue, the relevance of Soilcea to the project, and a budget reduction prior to approving funding. With the PI having satisfied the recommendations, Mr. Machata made the motion to support funding the mature tissue objective and juvenility portion of the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

K. Bowman, 25-012 'Manipulating Juvenility-Associated Tolerance to Increase Profitability of Sweet Orange.' Mr. Machata noted that there was some merit in objective 3 but the only way it profits growers is saving IPC costs. Mr. Bohde moved to not fund the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed.

C. Messina (& A. Huo), 25-014 'Rapid Development of Transgene-Free, Phloem-Enhanced Valencia Sweet Orange for HLB Tolerance via Mature-Tissue CRISPR Editing.' Mr. Machata reviewed the objectives and noted that the committee was not in favor of the gene targets. Mr. Sherrod suggested using Dms6 and Eds1. The committee requested confirmation of the details and experimental design of their proposal, especially regarding mature tissue transformation/CRISPR, and request a reworked proposal with more clarity and reduced budget focused on methodology that is proven to work. ~~Mr. Machata pointed out that these mature transformations have never been done in citrus, and noted they may have found an innovative way of doing it and claim an 80% success rate.~~ Mr. Hamner moved to request a revised proposal with EDS1 and DMR6 as the target genes, with a focus on mature tissue transformation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed.

C. Messina (& El Mohtar), 25-016 'Developing an efficient system to accelerate flowering in citrus seedlings.' Mr. Machata summarized the objectives and noted that RMC requested additional information as suggested by the SAB, who suggested funding only the first objective focusing on activating positive regulators of flowering. Dr. Killiny and Dr. Hua Lu pulled out of the original proposal invited by RMC after the juvenility RFP. Mr. Machata made a motion to request the additional information, to make a comparison with what's done in Spain and address the concern of over flowering. Mr. Sherrod suggested also getting an opinion from Dr. Leandro Peńa. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

C. Messina (& M. Dutt), 25-015 'Methods, resources and synchronous evaluation of 14 genes and 12 rootstocks in field conditions.' Mr. Machata noted that originally there were two separate proposals and that the PIs were requested to combine them. The RMC recommendation was to fund Dr. Dutt's portion if the budget is reduced by at least half. While there is some merit to Dr. Messina's portion of the project, there is no supporting data on the constructs being used. Dr. Dutt agreed to include grafting transgenic scions onto transgenic rootstocks. Mr. Machata moved to approve Dr. Dutt's portion of the project. Seconded by Mr. Hunt, the motion passed.

Dr. Davis discussed the Crop Transformation Center Advisory Board, suggesting they have a representative at the RMC and/or Board meetings to respond to questions of the CTC and better understand the proposal discussions.

H. Jin, 'Field Evaluation of SAMP-Expressing Carrizo Rootstock for Protection of Citrus Scions Against HLB.' Dr. Jin will collaborate with Dr. Mattia at Pecos Farms. The RMC recommended that leaf samples be tested locally instead of sending them to California, saving time getting the plant material approvals from DPI. Cost-sharing with UC Riverside was also suggested. Mr. Sherrod noted this is the same project that was being considered by Invaio. Dr. Jin indicated this is a continuation of her federal grant. She had contacted Mr. Dantzler recently to see where she could test her findings in Florida; Dr. Mattia agreed to plant her trees. Mr. Machata moved to invite a full proposal with testing and data collection done locally, as well as measuring SAMP peptides. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

A. Levy, 'Establishing Orri Mandarin Management in Florida.' RMC recommended not to invite a full proposal. With minimal interest in the project, Mr. Machata moved to not invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

Z. Mou, 'Enabling transgene-free editing in mature citrus.' ~~Mr. Machata shared the RMC recommendation to request additional detail to include evidence or references supporting the correlation between leaf metabolites and juice chemistry, specifically on HLB-infected citrus and a reduced budget.~~ Mr. Machata moved to invite a full proposal addressing the RMC concerns. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

I. Ojo, 'Ultra-low volume approach to tree injections using a jet injection system for citrus trees.' Mr. Machata said RMC failed to see how low injection could be achieved, suggesting the PI develop a prototype or prove the concept and come back to CRDF for validation. Mr. Machata made a motion to not invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

Y. Wang, 'Using Machine Learning on Juvenile Leaf Chemistry to Predict Future Sweet Orange Juice Quality.' Mr. Machata said that with no data to qualify statements made in the preproposal, the committee suggested that more information be sought on the state of the research, at which time the preproposal would again be considered. Mr. Machata moved to get additional information including the PIs definition of juvenility, obtain information on previous work as there is no grower that will make a decision based on the leaf alone, and account for variances in metabolites. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

Mr. Machata said the RMC also heard a presentation by Dr. Kim Bowman on his USDA Rootstock Trials with Bearss and Eureka lemons scions planted in 2018 and 2020, comparing yield by rootstock for years 2023 through 2025. They will continue evaluation of trees in the three trials. His findings will be featured in the February issue of *Specialty Crop Grower*.

COO Report: Mr. Dantzler discussed the progress Dr. Turgeon has made on his project and his latest discovery. Dr. Stelinski came by with representatives for a company that sprays product on IPCs to control Diaprepes and other diseases. They have a Section 3 already for other crops and were seeking help for a 24C label; the company was not requesting funding.

Partnership Updates: IFAS – Dr. Davis said UF is working hard on the germplasm royalty question and hopes to have success like with Soilcea.

Ms. Shepp had no update from DOC.

New Business: None.

Public Comments: None.

Future Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting is TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 PM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.