CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.

Research Management Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2026

A meeting of the Research Management Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at the Grove House, 20160 US Hwy 27, Lake Wales, Florida. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman Matt Machata. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Bobby Barben, Bill Bohde, Dan Bott, Holly Chamberlain, Dr. John Davis, Deeley Hunt, Ed Leotti, Matt Machata, Charlie McKee, Riley McKenna, Morgan Porter, Daniel Scott, Dr. Brian Scully and John Updike.

Mr. Machata stated that the January 20, 2026, Research Management Committee meeting Minutes were included with the meeting materials. Ms. Porter moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata requested that in the future, materials for review be made available sooner to allow the committee more time for their review. In the future, the preproposals and proposals will be shared with the committee sooner, following up with the staff summaries and analyses once the SAB reviews are received and the staff reviews are completed.

Mr. Machata asked Mr. Dantzler to update the committee on available funding. He explained the reason that the uncommitted funds remain high due to some projects that were presented in the legislative request for the current year are no longer being pursued. This results in the potential for additional funds to be made available to fund additional CRAFT projects currently on the waiting list. Mr. Dantzler also noted again that the committee and board should recommend and approve all projects they felt were appropriate and staff would be sure to locate the funds.

Mr. Dantzler also spoke briefly on the proposed merger of CRDF with CRAFT, and that interested board and committee members may have an opportunity to continue their service with CRAFT.

H. Jin, 25-018 ‘Field Evaluation of SAMP-Expressing Carrizo Rootstock for Protection of Citrus Scions Against HLB’ – Dr. Graham reviewed the objectives of the project, noting the planting will be at Pecos Farm and the SAB reviews were supportive of the project. Dr. Scully moved to recommend the Board approve funding Dr. Jin’s project. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed.

Z. Mou, 25-017 ‘Enabling transgene-free editing in mature citrus’ – Dr. Dawson had recused himself from the review of this project. Dr. Graham summarized the objectives and noted the editing process is highly novel and could result in a lot of return on the investment if successful. Mr. Dantzler added that Dr. Mou had a lengthy phone conference with Dr. Pena and came up with several ideas to improve the project. Staff was requested to ask whether Soilcea would have rights to whatever comes from Dr. Mou’s lab since he will use a derivative of CAS-9. Mr. McKee moved to recommend the Board approve funding. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter 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’ – Dr. Dawson summarized the project; the main purpose is to develop mature CRISPR. He suggested Dr. Pena’s input could improve the project. Mr. McKee moved to have the PI confer with Dr. Pena prior to committee action. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

D. Norman & P. Schirard, ‘Development of SP2 as a Biological Biostimulant to Mitigate Huanglongbing in Florida Citrus’ – Mr. Schirard and his team were invited to summarize their project. After introductions, Dr. Norman summarized the project and findings to date with streptomyces and their collaboration with growers and researchers. The funding request will allow more data to be collected from field trials, which will include grapefruit. Dr. Scully moved to recommend Board approval of funding. Discussion continued on the different rates, application methods and effects on trees of different ages, noting that drenched trees looked the best. They should have answers in two years. The motion to recommend Board approval was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed with Ms. Porter and Mr. Scott abstaining.

R. Turgeon project 22-020, ‘Protecting citrus trees from citrus greening with anchored, single-chain antibodies’ – Dr. Dawson summarized the project, noting the transgene and GMO will require EPA approval. There was general support for the project which will be on grapefruit and sweet orange. Staff was directed to find out what approvals will be required prior to the Board meeting and to confer with Dr. Pena. Ms. Porter made a motion to determine the regulatory pathway and speak with Dr. Pena prior to Board approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bohde and passed.

C. Messina and C. El Mohtar 25-016, ‘Developing an efficient system to accelerate flowering in citrus seedlings’ – Dr. Syvertsen summarized the project, noting they would use the Mexican lime to change the flowering genes. The SAB questioned if the CTV vector would be removed from the flowering tissue, would it flower normally after? Initially Dr. Scully moved to decline funding the project. Continued discussion pointed out that results would take four years and concerns on flowering were expressed. Ms. Porter re-stated the motion to recommend the Board decline funding but asked Staff to run Dr. El Mohtar’s answers by the SAB to see if their concerns were assuaged prior to the Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed.

Y. Wang, ‘Using Machine Learning on Juvenile Leaf Chemistry to Predict Future Sweet Orange Juice Quality’ – Dr. Syvertsen summarized the project, and noted questions were raised about the leaf quality and juvenile leaves which the PI responded to. If successful, this would be a good tool for breeders and researchers. Mr. Bohde moved to recommend the Board invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. McKenna and passed.

Mr. Machata invited Dr. Dutt to present his results on investigating the enhanced tolerance in Parson Brown, a recently concluded project funded by CRDF.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM.