

Maize Genetics Cooperation Board of Directors
June 19, 2025 on Zoom
Meeting Minutes

BoD members present:

Matthew Hufford (Chair)
Norman Best (Secretary)
Mike Muszynski (Communications)
Mark Lubkowitz (Incoming Chair)
John Fowler (At Large Member)
Thomas Slewinski (At Large Member)

BoD members absent:

Erin Sparks (Treasurer)
Wojtek Pawlowski (Outgoing Chair)
Andrea Eveland (At Large Member)

Visitors present:

None

Meeting Began at 5:00pm EST

Motions in blue

1. Approval of Minutes from the April meeting

Motion made and seconded to approve April minutes. Unanimously passed (6/6).

2. Advocacy:

- **Update on recruitment/selection for MGAC**

We are still working to identify members for MGAC. Within the next month this will be finalized, and updates will be given in July.

- **Update on the COOP Stock Center**

Advocacy on behalf of Stock Center was positive. There is still no official plan for the Urbana location, but it appears the support from the community was received well.

- **Proposal submitted to USDA for PI Station and MaizeGDB support**

There are still ongoing concerns about limiting funding. Genotyping and regeneration of material is still behind schedule. There is still community support for characterizing germplasm to battle pests and pathogens. Efforts are ongoing to support work at MaizeGDB and PI station through a NACA. The 2026 budget indicates that the current administration's direction appears to align with MaizeGDB and PI station.

PI station has no plans to increase stocks this summer. There are other labs that are working to increase some stocks this summer (~120 accessions). In the next few years an effort to increase accessions should be a priority.

- **Plan for advocacy trip to DC**

There was a suggestion to have an MGM in DC. This will likely not be able to happen soon. 2026-2028 locations are already planned.

We should have a well-organized trip to DC this fall that should have targeted meetings. We should possibly identify a mentor so that we can maximize our exposure during the trip. We should leverage our contacts with ASPB and align with them to be more effective.

The trip should be well-organized to identify the correct people to meet with and formulate the correct message. We need to think about what messaging will move this administration to recognize that maize research is important.

Suggested Messaging: Only 12% of the corn is exported from the US. Corn is a sustaining crop and key to US agriculture. It is generating materials and jobs for US citizens. It drives the US industries. We are the science behind a 90-billion-dollar industry. Research on corn has a 200-250% return.

3. Recommendation for retaining Bathabile Mthombeni as Ombuds for 2026 MGM. Discussion and Vote.

From Brandi Sigmon: "In lieu of no other viable, more local options, CODIE recommends retaining Bathabile and Untangled Resolutions for the 2026 MGM. At our CODIE meeting in April, we discussed options for ombuds services, and the committee agreed it would be best to continue to provide a neutral ombuds for the conference as a best practice. Also, the committee thought that it would be best to continue with Bathabile's services since she has done so for the last couple years and has built a rapport with the maize community."

We have been relatively happy with her services. There was concern about the set of recommendations and the report being delayed in 2024. There were not clear goals presented on how to make the community more inclusive and welcoming space. We could be more specific about the requests we have for the ombuds. We should add a scope of work in the contract with actions and outputs. This should be started right now, well before the meeting. A pre-workshop could be added to get more training, but this would likely be an additional charge.

Motion made and seconded to vote to approve Bathabile Mthombeni to be ombuds for the 2026 MGM on condition that we attempt to modify the contract with suggested additions.
Unanimously passed (6/6).

4. Update following discussion with NSF about RCN to support the MGM from 2027-2029.

Spoke with NSF about potential funding sources for the MGM. Conference grants are difficult to get approved right now because most of these funding decisions are internal. A Research Coordination Networks (RCN) grant is more likely to get approved and funded. Internships are being used between academia and industry which could be leveraged. It would be good to have other members of BoD to be a PI or Co-PI on these grants to have continuity from the BoD. Next step is to develop a one-pager to be submitted to NSF.

5. Discussion of next steps for reaching out and coordinating with groups organizing the European and Chinese Maize Genetics Meetings.

We could set up a zoom meeting with the equivalent of the BoD from these communities to begin a conversation. We need to identify the potential for collaboration and possibly schedule at least a once-a-year collective meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:07pm EST.