

School names generate few gripes Testy debate absent for this round of picks

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STOCKTON - An astronaut, an advocate and three other people with Stockton ties are to be honored in the naming of five Stockton Unified schools to be opened in coming years, school district trustees decided Tuesday.

The call for school name suggestions drew about two dozen nominations - most citing people with connections to the district or region. The process lacked much of the politically charged debate that marked the district's last school name selection in 2002, when George W. Bush Elementary and Cesar Chavez High were approved.

This year's names were given to three new schools that will open when Marshall, Fremont and Hamilton middle schools are split into two K-8 campuses under the district's reconfiguration plan.

Commodore Stockton Skills School will move to the current site of Webster Middle School, and its name likely will travel with it. The other middle schools each will be split into a traditional K-8 and a magnet campus. The traditional schools will keep the names of the middle schools they replaced. The magnet schools will be called:

- » Clifford Basfield, at what is now Marshall, after the district's first diversity recruiter, who brought many Black teachers to Stockton.
- » Richard Lopez, at what is now Fremont, after a farm-worker advocate.
- » Esther Fong, at what is now Hamilton, after a Stockton native who was the first Chinese-American teacher in the district.

Two more new schools also are to open in the next five years. Trustees voted to name one of them, in northeast Stockton, after Valentine Mason Peyton, who proposed the creation of a Stockton school district and contributed \$50 for its creation in the 1800s.

Another school, planned for south Stockton, would be named in honor of Jose Hernandez, a Franklin High School graduate who recently completed astronaut training with NASA.

"We should give preference to people who have history in Stockton," board President Anthony Silva said. "But nobody's going to agree with a list of five."

All the names were adopted on split votes.

Trustee Sarah Bowden made the last nomination, for Peyton.

Trustee Glen Dolberg questioned whether residents would know the name, suggesting trustees consider former Rep. Norman Shumway. Shumway, a Stockton Republican, served in the House of Representatives from 1979 to 1991.

"To the vast majority of people in our county, he is very much unknown," Dolberg said of Peyton.

Trustee Katrina Rios said Peyton's lack of notoriety could be an asset. "The more names we can

put before our children and our community, that's the more enriched we are."

The selection process ended with quiet applause. "Those are your schools, folks," Silva said.

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