

Opinion

Riverdale leaders give town bad name

In Larry McMurtry's 1985 novel "Cadillac Jack," the protagonist, a professional antique dealer, visits a home in Riverdale to inspect a huge collection of birds' nests. The house is stacked nearly to the ceiling with nests: robins' nests, eagles' nests, huge nests, tiny nests. There are nests in every room, nests in the garage.

The owner of this collection is a harmless eccentric, and McMurtry leaves the reader with the impression that the man is not out of place in Riverdale — that, as a matter of fact, this is an odd little old man living in an odd little old town.

It is not a flattering portrait of Riverdale and its denizens, although not malicious either. But as it happens, it probably is more flattering than what Riverdale's elected officials are painting with their real-life antics.

The town's elected officials are giving Riverdale a bad name.

A yearlong series of political squabbles, lawsuits, resignations, bad appointments and assorted other gaffes has made Riverdale town government into something of a soap opera. "All My Children" or "Another World," perhaps. Or maybe "The Young and the Rancorous."

Well, you can joke about it, but the fact is, Riverdale's 4,900 residents deserve better.

They deserve better than a town government that is run by seven persons, five of whom have been appointed rather than elected by the voters. They deserve better than appointments to the council like the most recent one: the former mayor who was resoundingly voted out of office just last year.

They deserve better than public officials who resign in mid-term (as the mayor and a majority of the council have), call each other names, sue each other for assault and battery, and seem to work hard at keeping public business private. Better than police chiefs who have to resign because they make up wacky stories about judges.

Riverdale will hold elections next year. Maybe after that, the townspeople will get more of what they deserve.