

DeSantis, of ACF Polymers, “Last Plant Was Purchased On A Handshake”

Unemployment is not a four-letter word but it should be. And with the current unemployment rate hovering around the 8.7% mark in Anson County you can understand why so many Ansonians took ACF Polymers at their word when negotiating for an area plastics plant. Thanks to ACF Polymers, our unemployed percentage will NOT dramatically decrease in the near future, as they now seem to be renegeing on the 100-1200 possible jobs they were egotistically flaunting as late as last week.

Negotiations came to a halt when ACF surfaced a list of items to be paid for by local government not previously discussed in their original agreement. Among the list of new demands were: no property taxes, rewire entire facility including materials, lighting, signs, inspection and recertification of building, lighted parking area, discounted power, waste haulage, plumbing, onsite well and sewage at no charge, roof repair, fencing, road signs, street lights, concrete repair, landscaping, additional loading docks, warehouse doors, on site policeman, plywood and plexiglass for all broken windows, and EPA certification. Mayor Don McRorie said with little surprise, “There is no way for us to meet those demands. We can’t just put them in business. Bottom line, I had my doubts from the start and I’ve washed my hands of it.”

In a telephone interview with Mr. John Witherspoon, Wadesboro Town Manager, he confessed confusion over the whole deal. “It’s totally up to them as to whether they really want to stay here. Obviously a handshake isn’t worth a handshake when you say one thing and do another.” Witherspoon refers to the company Vice President, Anthony DeSantis’ words at the plant tour held on January 28 where he proclaimed, “My family is from Brooklyn, a place where family and promises mean everything. Our last plant was purchased on a handshake and our handshake is our bond. Everyone who knows us finds this true.”

Mr. Kevin Gullette of Economic Development said “The next time someone from New York or anywhere else for that matter wants to seal a deal with a handshake, I am going to tell them they better have some cash in that hand if they want to deal with us!”

Certainly those sentiments hold true with local businessman Henry “Punky” Morton who was the prospective seller of the Charles Craft property ACF Polymers intended to purchase. Mr. Morton took the DeSantis team for a tour of the property where a good faith deal was immediately reached and sealed with a handshake. Three days later Morton received a telephone call from DeSantis who said, “The handshake agreement still stands for the amount we will pay for the building, however, we want a ten-year, 0% loan with the Town of Wadesboro as our cosigners! And as if that wasn’t enough, DeSantis also threw in his “want list” afore mentioned. Morton replied, “If you are interested in modifying the original handshake agreement, please put it in writing because obviously the handshake meant nothing.” In a telephone interview with “Punky” Morton he felt understandable disbelief in what had transpired between he and DeSantis. “On Friday he made me an offer and by Monday he had already renegeed. He promised jobs, a research center, even a restaurant. He obviously speaks out both sides of his mouth.”

So what ever happened to the day when a handshake WAS as good as a contract? When the honorable and trustworthy always came through with the promises made or with their commitments completed. Apparently, without a written, binding contract things are not what they seem. There were surely many people listening to the words of ACF Polymers as a new chance, a new beginning, or a possible end to their unemployment. There were those who listened to the words of Mr. DeSantis and believed him, trusted him, and had the utmost faith that he would provide what he said, a company based on family values and trust, and a company that would contribute to the resident economy and focus on the local workforce. And if you believe that, well, I’ve got a bridge I’d like to sell you once located in London now residing on Lake Havasu. We can shake on it. By Melanie Morse