



With fiber-optic network coming, local developer can begin building

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POCONO MANOR — The Penn Regional Business Center now truly can begin, according to its planner.

Local developer Larry Simon, who is undertaking the five-phase project, said Thursday the agreement to build a fiber-optic network from Manhattan to the Poconos will allow him to break ground on Phase I of the Penn Regional Business Center next month.

Simon, of Smithfield Township, is building the \$125 million, 300,000-square-foot building on Route 209 in Minisink Hills next to the south end of LTS Builders Headquarters.

When Simon announced the project two years ago, he hoped to break ground sometime this month, but he said Thursday it looks more like the end of July.

"Things happen," he said. "But it should be ready for then."

Simon said once ground is broken, it will take about 15 to 18 months to complete construction. That would be ahead of the construction timetable for the fiber-optic network.

Jeffrey Allen, vice president of offer management for Level 3 Communications, the Colorado-based company awarded the construction contract for the network, said it will take about one year to begin construction, and another year to complete the network for use.

The network will be built from Manhattan to East Stroudsburg, then extended to any business park that wishes to use the network, he said.

"I'm sure we will be able to make it work," Simon said of the conflicting schedules for readiness. "I'm sure there is something we can do to make it mutually beneficial to both of us."

Simon said all five phases of the PRBC could eventually bring as many as 5,000 jobs to the region. He said at least four companies have expressed interest in locating their backup systems in the PRBC. The companies' needs range from 75,000 to 250,000 square feet and from 100 to 1,000 jobs.

Simon is the founder and former CEO of LTS Builders Inc. in Minisink Hills. He left his position with the company to form the Synchronium Group to build the PRBC.

He was singled out during the press conference by both U.S. Rep. Paul E. Kanjorski, D-11, and Gov. Ed Rendell as one of the innovators of the Wall Street West concept.

"He was the first one to put his money where his mouth is," Rendell said via phone.