

Builder sees green in headquarters move

By Tony Dobrowolski

Berkshire Eagle Staff

LENOX — One of Berkshire County's largest construction companies is planning to move its headquarters from Pittsfield to Lenox by converting a former foreclosed office building into green office space.

Allegrone Construction Co. bought the former Leaning Center of America building for \$900,000 from Legacy Banks in June, began renovating it in August, and hopes to open the Allegrone Office Park by the end of 2011. "We had looked at [the building] a number of times," said company Vice President Louis E. Allegrone. "... It's a gorgeous site, it has a lot of potential, and it's in a great area." The company financed the project with a \$ 3 million bond from MassDevelopment and received a 10- year Tax Financing Agreement from the town of Lenox that voters approved at a recent town meeting.

"It's a very good project for the town," said Lenox Town Manager Gregory Federspiel. "It's the kind we like to see and encourage." Allegrone has gutted the existing structure, and is constructing a 15,000-squarefoot, two-story addition in the rear, which will roughly double the building's size. The addition is expected to be completed by the second quarter of next year.

The addition will serve as the headquarters for Allegrone, which has been located in Pittsfield since the company was founded in 1921. Most of the rest of the building will be leased as "Class A green office space." In the commercial property industry, office space is ranked as Class A, B or C. Class A is considered top of the line, because it is either new or recently renovated.

Allegrone said the company plans to build an array of solar panels on the roof and on a hill behind the building, and dig a series of 200- to 400-foot wells that would allow the site to be heated and cooled by geothermal energy. Allegrone said the company has yet to estimate the energy costs, but expects the green initiatives to reduce the building's utility bills by about 75 percent.

He said the building is being constructed along Leadership in Energy in Environmental Design, or LEED, guidelines established by the U.S. Green Building Council. Allegrone is looking to achieve platinum status, the highest of the four classifications contained in LEED's green building guidelines.

"We happen to be a construction and development company, and we want to be an example of responsible and sustainable development," Allegrone said.

The company will continue to use its building in Pittsfield on Newell Street, which it has occupied since the 1970s, as warehouse space. It also plans to open an office on North Street in Pittsfield.