

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Grace Gospel Church of Grand Rapids

FINAL DECISION
Dated: January 8, 2025

Application No. 24-13

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on December 19, 2024. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley was present in person, while Board members Marvin Forbragd, David Fenley, and Elise Wehrman were present via teleconference. Board member Jim Weaver was not present.

The issue in this application is whether the application for a waiver of the State Building Code for the purpose of installing a stairway chairlift should be granted.

Grace Gospel Church of Grand Rapids requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Taconite, Minnesota. The church has a common area in the basement for after-church activities. The church seeks to install a chairlift in the stairway leading to the basement.

The Board reviewed the application pursuant to the factors identified in Minn. Stat. § 471.471, subd. 3.

With regard to the first factor, the need for limited accessibility when a higher degree of accessibility is not required by state or federal law or rule, the Board noted that the church’s application indicates that it has several elderly members who are not able to use the stairs.

With regard to the second factor, the architectural feasibility of providing a greater degree of accessibility than would be provided by the proposed device or equipment and the cost of providing a greater degree of accessibility, the Board noted that the church’s application indicates that it would cost the church over \$100,000 to install an elevator. The church averages about thirty members and operates on a very limited budget.

With regard to the third factor, the total cost of the proposed device or equipment over its projected usable life, including installation, maintenance, and replacement costs, the Board determined that the total estimated cost for a chairlift of \$16,000 is justified.


With regard to the fourth factor, the reliability of the proposed device or equipment, the Board noted that the proposed chairlift is manufactured by Stannah, which is a reputable company.

With regard to the fifth factor, the applicant's ability to comply with all recognized access and safety standards for installation and maintenance, the Board discussed that the chairlift device allowed the user to fold the chair out of the way when not in use for safety and to maintain the device in good condition. The chairlift model includes dual call and send remotes.

With regard to the sixth factor, whether the proposed device or equipment can be operated and used without reducing or compromising minimum safety standards, the Board noted that the proposed stairway is 47 inches wide and the folded chair protrudes 16 inches. The Board determined that 31 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairway is not a compliant clearance per IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1012.8 and 1009.4 where the occupant load is more than 50. The church has a smoke detector system but does not have a fire sprinkler system or an alarm system. The Taconite Fire Department Chief provided a letter of support for the installation of the proposed chairlift.

After considering these factors, Board member Forbragd made a motion to deny the application for a waiver from the building code to install a straight rail stairway chairlift in the stairway in leading to the basement at Grace Gospel Church of Grand Rapids in Taconite, Minnesota because proposed stairway does not have a compliant clearance required by IBC Chapter 10. Board member Wehrman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The application for a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift leading to the basement of Grace Gospel Church of Grand Rapids in Taconite, Minnesota is denied.



KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair
Access Review Board