

**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
**ACCESS REVIEW BOARD**

In the Matter of the Application of  
Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION  
Dated: August 27, 2025

Application No. 25-01

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on August 21, 2025. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley and Board members Jim Weaver and Elise Wehrman were present in person, while Board member Marvin Forbragd was present via teleconference. Board member David Fenley 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.

Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church previously requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota. The church sought to install a straight rail chairlift in the stairway leading to the fellowship hall in the basement. At its March 4, 2025 meeting, the Board reviewed the application pursuant to the factors identified in Minn. Stat. § 471.471, subd. 3 and denied the application for a waiver from the building code to install a stairway chairlift on the stairway at the church because the proposed stairway did not have a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1012.8 and 1009.4.

Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church provided additional information and requested that the Board reconsider its request for a waiver of the State Building Code in order to install a stairway chair lift on the stairway leading to the fellowship hall in the basement of its church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

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 members who have difficulty walking.

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 does not address architectural feasibility and the floor plans and photos do not provide sufficient

information to determine whether an elevator or lift can be provided. The application stated that the congregation consists of only 30 people and the proposed chairlift would be a cost-efficient option.

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 installation cost for a chairlift of \$2,420 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 AmeriGlide, 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, and folding seat, arms, and footrest.

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 48 inches wide and the folded chair protrudes 11 inches. The Board determined that 37 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairway is a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1012.8 and 1009.4 where the occupant load is more than 50. The church has a smoke detector system and an alarm system. The church does not have a fire sprinkler system. The applicant noted that the Goodhue County building inspector gave verbal confirmation for installing the chairlift, but a letter of support was not provided.

After considering these factors, Board member Weaver made a motion to approve the application for a waiver from the building code to install a chairlift in the stairway leading to the basement at Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church in Cannon Falls. Board member Wehrman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board's approval is subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The stairway chairlifts shall comply with all applicable building and elevator code requirements. **Only licensed elevator contractors may install stairway chairlifts. Proper permits, inspections, and certificates for use shall be obtained by the licensed elevator contractor installing the lift.** Licensed elevator contractors may be found by searching the list of licensed stairway chairlift installers on the Board's website at: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/access-review-board>
- 2) The stairway chairlift shall be maintained in the folded position when not in use.

  
KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair  
Access Review Board