

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION
Dated: March 19, 2025

Application No. 25-01

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on March 4, 2025. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

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

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 requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota. The church seeks to install a straight rail chairlift in stairway leading to the fellowship hall in 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 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 \$5,500 is justified.

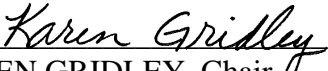
With regard to the fourth factor, the reliability of the proposed device or equipment, the Board noted that the proposed chairlift is manufactured by Stannah, which is a reputable company.

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, 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 15 inches. The Board determined that 33 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairway is not 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 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 Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota because proposed stairway does not have a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10. Board member Weaver 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 Wangen Prairie Lutheran Church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota is denied.


KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair
Access Review Board