

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
St. John's Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION
Dated: November 14, 2025

Application No. 25-16

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board ("Board") on November 13, 2025. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

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

St. John's Lutheran Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Frazee, 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 up and down 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 and floor plans indicate that there is insufficient space in the basement for a platform lift or elevator to be installed.

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 and maintenance cost for a chairlift of \$7,750 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 is 48 inches wide and the folded chair protrudes 18.75 inches. The Board determined that 29.25 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairway is not a compliant clearance as required by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1012.8 and 1009.4 where the occupant load is more than 50. Both stairways are required for compliant emergency egress. The church has a smoke detector system but does not have an alarm system or fire sprinkler system. The applicant noted that the City of Frazee Fire Chief provided a letter of support for the installation of the 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 St. John's Lutheran Church in Frazee, Minnesota because proposed stairway does not have a compliant clearance as 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 St. John's Lutheran Church in Frazee, Minnesota is denied.


KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair
Access Review Board