

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Grace Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION

Dated: August 6, 2026

Application No. 26-06

This matter came up for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on August 3, 2026. 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.

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 Lutheran Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Lake Benton, Minnesota. The church has a banquet room in the basement. The church seeks to install a straight-rail chairlift in the stairway near the restrooms 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 states that it has several members who have difficulty walking 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 researched installing an elevator, a residential elevator, and a ramp system. The cost of the elevator was not feasible, and the residential elevator was not an option for a public location. The application did not provide any drawing to determine the architectural feasibility of the ramp system. The drawings provided indicate that there may be space for a platform lift or LULA. The application does not indicate whether the church researched platform lift or LULA.

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 estimated cost for the installation of the chairlift of \$6,600 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 calls and sends remotes, 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 36 inches wide and the folded chair protrudes 13.5 inches. The Board determined that 22.5 inches of clear passing space within 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 but does not have an alarm system or a fire sprinkler system.

After considering these factors, Board member Weaver made a motion to deny the application for a waiver from the building code to install a chairlift in the requested stairways at Grace Lutheran Church in Lake Benton, Minnesota because there may be other feasible options that provide a greater degree of accessibility and the stairway did not provide a compliant clearance width as required by IBC Chapter 10. Board member Forbragd 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 at Grace Lutheran Church in Lake Benton, Minnesota is denied.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen Gridley", is written over a horizontal line.

KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair

Access Review Board