

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Solway Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION
Dated: December 29, 2023

Application No. 23-14

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on November 16, 2023. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley and Board member Bill Reinke were present in person, while Board members Marvin Forbragd and David Fenley were present via teleconference. Board member Wehrman 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.

Solway Lutheran Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church Solway, Minnesota. The church is a one-story building with a basement and has a split-level entry in the entry vestibule. The church seeks to install a straight rail stairway chairlift in the stairway in leading from the entry vestibule to the main level.

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 three members with mobility issues who would use the chairlift to get to the main level.

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 there is insufficient common area available to install an elevator and that the congregation is small with a 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 estimated cost of the chairlift of \$5,000 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. The chairlift model includes dual call and send remotes, a folding seat, armrests, and footrests.

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.

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 90 inches wide and that the furthest protrusions for the proposed Stannah model when folded is 19 inches. The Board determined that 72 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairways is a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1009.4 and 1012.8 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 Board noted that the Solway Volunteer Fire Department's Fire Chief provided a letter of support for the proposed chairlift.

After considering these factors, Board member Reinke made a motion to approve the application for a waiver from the building code to install a straight rail chairlift in the stairway leading from the entry vestibule to the main level at Solway Lutheran Church in Solway, Minnesota. Board member Forbragd 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