

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Hancock Christian Reformed Church

FINAL DECISION

Dated: March 3, 2026

Application No. 26-01

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on February 19, 2026. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley was present in person, while Board members Jim Weaver, Marvin Forbragd and Elise Wehrman 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.

Hancock Christian Reformed Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Hancock, Minnesota. The church is a one-story building with a split-level entrance having an entrance landing area. The church seeks to install two straight rail chairlifts: one in stairway leading to the sanctuary, and in stairway leading to the fellowship area and restrooms 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 states that it has three 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 is not architecturally feasible to install a 3-stop elevator or a platform lift without creating an addition to the building.

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 total estimated cost for the installation for both chairlifts of \$16,000 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 Bruno, 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, 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 leading to the sanctuary is 64 inches wide; the stairway leading to the basement is 62 inches wide; and the folded chair protrudes 18.375 inches. The Board determined that 45.625 inches and 43.625 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairways are compliant clearances as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1011.2 and 1014.8 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 church's application also included a letter of support from the Hancock Fire Chief.

After considering these factors, Board member Weaver made a motion to approve the application for a waiver from the building code to install the chairlifts in the requested stairways at the Hancock Christian Reformed Church in Hancock, Minnesota. 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