The Police Advisory Board has been facilitating community forums throughout the city of Buffalo, beginning in 2018 through May 2020. At these forums, residents spoke about the need for community policing that is rooted in relationship building with residents, as opposed to only interacting with them when assumed or accused of wrongdoing. Additionally, residents expressed concern about racism and white supremacism within the Buffalo Police Department that resulted in residents feelings targeted because of their minoritized racial identities, specifically young Black men, being treated with aggression and hostility. Moreover, many residents expressed concern about the police’s abuse of power in aggressive and unwarranted investigative activities, including searches of private buildings, stop and frisk, and arrests for low-level offenses.

Attendees also spoke candidly about the ways that people dealing with mental health concerns are often criminalized and treated poorly as a result of exhibited characteristics and behaviors that might be perceived as erratic. One specific parent expressed deep concern about her son having been arrested after having a schizophrenic episode, held in the Erie County Holding Center, and denied medication and treatment needed for his mental health concerns.

Most recently on March 10, 2020, the Police Advisory Board co-hosted a public forum with Black Love Resists in the Rust, where residents shared their concerns, feelings, and experiences about policing here in the city of Buffalo. This catalyst for the meeting was a police-involved shooting that took place on December 29, 2019, resulting in residents feeling shaken, vulnerable, and afraid. Councilmembers David Rivera, Ulysses Wingo, Sr., and Mitch Nowakowski, as well as Buffalo Police Deputy Commissioner Barbara Lark attended the meeting. On May 20, 2020, the Buffalo Police Advisory Board hosted virtual Town Hall meeting, residents spoke of specific incidents of physical mistreatment by the police, the long-lasting impact that these incidents have had on residents, and the need for substantial policy changes and practices within the Buffalo Police Department.